MUHAMMAD IQBAL
ON RELIGION

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Introduction

For all who are interested in, and concerned with, contemporary religious thought in Islam, it must be immensely encouraging that the IQBAL ACADEMY (UK) has organized in 1987 not one but two seminars in the West Midlands devoted to Iqbal's ideas expressed in poetry and prose. The first was held in the City of Coventry where the Academy was founded and where the Iqbal Library continues to find its home in the Cathedral. Symbolizing the nature of the Academy as an enterprise of Muslim-Christian cooperation. The second took place in the City of Birmingham where the Academy's Chairperson and principal Iqbal scholar, Dr. Saeed Durrani, energetically inspires the Academy's activities from his base in the University with cooperation from the Cathedral and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in the Selly Oak Colleges. In my capacity at that time as Director of that Centre it was my privilege to address fellow members of the Academy and other guests on both Muslim Colleagues who invited me to speak on the specifically religious themes in Iqbal's thought. In responding to the invitation to record the content of my lectures in writing, I admit again my inadequacies as a scholar of Iqbal. Yet I draw strength from the assurance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that intention is the greater part of the act. I confess that my intention is inspired by the hope of making a humble but useful contribution to interfaith discussion of the universally-important issues to which Iqbal draws our minds and hearts.

Iqbal: A Man of our Time

It is extremely difficult to speak of a man of the immensity of intellectual and moral stature of Muhammad Iqbal: a poet of consummate skills; a philosopher-theologian with a subtlety o thought which easily eludes our lesser minds; a political visionary and activist who is rightly esteemed as the political visionary and activist who is rightly esteemed as the Father of Pakistan. Bu what makes it so important that we should try to take the measure of the man and his ideas is that Iqbal struggled wit] what Dr. Abid Husain has insightfully termed "a crisis of life' He did so with all the individual particularity of an Indian Muslim caught up in an historic moment in the modern evolution o his people, his religion and his hind. In these specifics we may feel that he is distant from our situation in the West Midland: and you may judge from mine in particular. But precisely because his was a struggle of life. I find it to be one of a universe significance in which others of us may still share, whether we are Muslim, Indian, Pakistani, English or Christian. Truly Iqbal was man of our age, and the best way we can esteem his thought is to engage creatively with it.

Iqbal: An Invitation to Interfaith Dialogue

Iqbal's concern for religion permeates the totality of his writing, whether we turn to the most lyrical of his verses or the dens systematic discussion of his famous lectures on The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam. The more I have become familiar with his thought, the more am I convinced that h expresses a profound understanding of Islamic orthodox) enriched by a passionate personal piety which gives authenticity to the often-novel ways in which he restates Islamic tradition ft the modern age. Moreover I find myself interacting with his ideas not merely as a student of Islamic thought, but as a Christ a

concerned intellectually and spiritually with many of the same issues as he rises. His abiding significance is that he challenges us all to think of religion not simply in terms of our own religious confessions or traditions, important though these were for Iqbal and rightly are for ourselves. Beyond these, however, he struggled with the meaning of religion in its universal and cosmic sense, dealing with issues which challenge religions and religious people everywhere, Truly he was a man of religion, and the breadth of his thinking and the depth of his piety throws light o many of the contemporary concerns we have as Muslims and as Christians.

I believe we should face these together, and alongside people of other religious traditions, in the multi-religious society which we enjoy in the West Midlands and in so many others parts of Britain today. In his own life Iqbal was, I believe, a man of dialogue, if not in the way we have the opportunity to be in Britain today, yet in such manner and quality to challenge us in out con temporary situation,

The Possibility and Necessity of Religion

"Is religion possible?" asked Iqbal in the last of the lectures on The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam. He asked the question in face of the challenge of modern science and philosophy which has grown immeasurably more powerful in our own times. Like Iqbal we want to say "yes", but we do well to remind ourselves of the conditions upon which he argued his affirmative reply. Religion's ultimate possibility rests not upon adherence to outward form and discipline, valid as these are in giving direction to the lives of individuals and communities. Nor is religion validated in ultimate terms by rational arguments and metaphysics, necessary as these are for an intelligent view of the universe with God as its creator. What makes religion possible in the final analysis, he argues, is the spirit of discovery, the spirit which gives each of us the courage and freedom to experience what Iqbal termed "direct contact with the ultimate Reality." The reality of religion, and that which makes it not only possible but necessary, is "a search for a larger life." In this search religion may not immunize itself against the discoveries of modern science or the discussions of modern philosophy, but must seek to penetrate through them in the certainty that the essence of all reality is spiritual. Let me repeat: for Iqbal this in no sense meant that religion is a spiritual escape from reality. On the contrary, religion enables us "to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and to illuminate its whole being."

For fear that this may sound too highly theoretical, let us ground Iqbal's view of the necessity of this authentic religious spirit in the two most urgent ethical, or practical, tasks which confronted him in his day, and are of no less relevance in out own.

Religion and Spiritual Value

Firstly, we must recall that Iqbal's struggle to vindicate religion's possibility and necessity was part of India's historic struggle for independence from British imperial rule. Yet Iqbal's participation in this struggle continues to have implications fat us long after the repossession of independence with the establishment of the modern states of India and Pakistan. He saw religion as necessary, and urgently so, as the way of withstanding the pervasive materialism of western culture, exported in the age of European empires and exposed as morally deficient by what he termed "the Great European War" − which, to Europe's shame, we must now put in the plural. These wars and mud that has happened since serve to underline the rectitude of Iqbal's castigation of "intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich."

Would that this had remained the sin of European national and international politics alone. That it has not is a fact which again gives universal significance to Iqbal's understanding of the task of true religion in confronting and overcoming materialism's

hindrance of human ethical advance. Within the harsh arena of politics, he argued, religion is necessary to restore three essential facilities to humanity: a spiritual interpretation of the universe the spiritual emancipation of the individual; and basic principle of a universal import to direct the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.

Religion and Change

Secondly, however, we must emphasize that Iqbal saw this necessary and urgent task of religion to be possible only if religions can transform themselves from archaic, tradition-boon and often irrational monuments of the past into dynamic forces, of change. In place of intellectual, social and moral inertia he called for "a principle of movement" as the necessary accompaniment of religion in the spirit of discovery. He found this best set forth in the teaching of the Prophets, in Jaudaism and Christianity, and ultimately in the message of the Prophet Muhammad to whom he gave his most devout personal allegiance as we shall see in a later part of this paper.

Prophetic religion is by nature dynamic in that it partakes of the movement of God who created and sustains the universe not as an inert mass but as an intricate interaction of space, time and motion. Iqbal saw reality as being ever in a state of movement from which religion cannot be exempted. To the reality of change, indeed, religion must relate its own self-understanding, itself engaging in a constant process of inner evolution in order to give spiritual and ethical direction to the movement of change in the rest of human society.

Iqbal expressed this concept in the classical Islamic juristic word ijtihad, which he elaborated in his memorable lecture on "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam". Ijtihad means "to exert oneself with a view to forming an independent judgements", and as a fundamental principle of Islamic thought Iqbal drew his understanding of it from the Qur'an and the hadith. "To those who exert themselves We show Our Path", God is heard to say in the Qur'an; and on many occasions in his ministry the Prophet .Muhammad encouraged his followers to exercise their own judgment over a wide range of issues after giving careful consideration to the guidance of the Qur'an and his own example (sunnah). Once again the principle of Iqbal's point is of universal significance for all religion, though we must acknowledge that of all religions it was in Islam that he saw this principle of movement most clearly embodied in the structure of its juristic foundations. The more deplorable, therefore, did he find the sloth of inertia within the ranks of the Muslim community which he criticized for having exchanged the emancipation of the Prophet Muhammad's message for the spiritual slavery which had existed in Arabia of the jahiliyyah (so-called pre-Islamic) age. With all urgency, therefore, did he appeal to his Muslim audience in particular: "Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam?"

But we should caution ourselves at this point against misrepresenting Iqbal's concept of movement in religion. Movement implies change, certainly, though Iqbal was never an advocate of change simply for change's sake. This is perhaps a vogue, or is it a heresy, of our own times! In his own day he saw Islam to be irrevocably in a process of reformation − a word which he used with neither qualification nor apology; indeed, he thoroughly approved of it. But he was also concerned that it should "move forward with self-control and a clear insight into the ultimate aims of Islam as a social policy:"

Religion and Reformation

Iqbal partly explains what he meant by contrasting his hopes for the future of the Islamic reformation against the reformation through which western Christianity passed in 16th century Europe. In his judgment the latter lacked the self-discipline of the universal

ethics set forth in the New Testament, with the result that the modern states of Europe − and he would no doubt wish us to add North America − have displaced "the universal ethics of Christianity by systems of national ethics."

As a child of this Protestant Reformation which Iqbal criticizes, I wish that he had argued his historical point more precisely so that I should understand it better. But if he is saying that a negative result of Christianity's movement of reformation in Europe has been the tendency of the church to withdraw from the public arena of social policy and political activity, I cannot but agree with his strictures. Indeed, I would confirm his view that such a separation of religion and politics (church and state in Christian terminology) is a betrayal of a permanent and, I believe, revolutionary responsibility of religion. Thank God, therefore, that Christians in other parts of the world, particularly in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the church is active in non-western cultural and social environments, .are intent upon restoring this proper emphasis in Christian theology and life, and are themselves become the tutors of the western church.

I suspect that the logic of Iqbal's argument would lead him to approve of this development were he alive today. In any event, we would be wrong to interpret his criticisms as a blanket condemnation of Christianity; rather, by focusing upon one historical specific he was identifying a problem inherent in all religious reformation, The movement of change is the authentic dynamic of all true religion, but in Iqbalian terms it should be seen as a constant process of inner growth or evolution, in which universal principles and ethical norms find new and varied out-working in different times and places, without the latter diminishing or distorting the former… or the former constraining the latter as stimuli in the process of change itself.

A consequent tension is inevitable between permanence and change. There is a related tension of which Iqbal was ever aware: between the individual believer who is open to change and the community which is socially more resistant. Ijtihad, he emphasized, is the task of the individual, for religion never changes it-self except in response to the dynamic of individuals who are themselves open to and involved in change; and if religion fails to respond, it dies.

Hence, in certain respects Iqbal had a sharply individualistic understanding of reality and religion. This is evident furthermore in his concept of God as "the Perfect Individual" (which we shall try to clarify later in this paper), and the idea which he shared with the Swiss philosopher, Henri Bergson, that "the tendency to individuate is everywhere present in the organized world." Yet religion, he rightly insisted, is always a polity, involving a community of believers in the totality of their lives. In Islam's case Iqbal identified the community with the polity of tawhid which he saw as providing "the foundation of world unity". This in turn, he stressed, laid upon the Muslim community the task of "making this principle a living factor, in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind."

I do not think I am wrong in suggesting that these tensions are ones which we all feel today in our contemporary struggle to stimulate religion's dynamic power of change in our own lives and that of our communities, thereby undertaking the mission which Iqbal lays upon us, whether we be Muslims or Christians. If Iqbal's challenge comes to us equally, how can we respond adequately but in dialogue?

Prayer

Would that I could see more clearly how these tensions are to be resolved? My difficulty, which in dialogue with you I freely admit, gives me reason to sympathize with Iqbal in his failure, in my judgment at least, to fathom the problem more deeply at the intellectual and ethical levels. Yet I find myself profoundly moved by, and in agreement with

the spiritual perspective which he brings to the problem: that the way forward is to be found in prayer.

In his brief but truly eloquent discussion of the psychology of prayer in the third of the lectures to which I have already referred, entitled "The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer", Iqbal confirms the view of the American psychologist of religion, William James, that prayer is a universal human impulse. Whether it is recognized or not, it gives reality and validity to our humanity. "I pray, therefore I am," Iqbal might have said, though he actually stated that "prayer is instinctive in its origin." Activated and disciplined under the religious rules about methods of praying, preconditions and inner intentions, authentic prayer surpasses intellect as the means of understanding the dynamic movement of reality. Scientific understanding is excelled, as prayer, to quote Iqbal in one of his most powerful passages, "rises higher than thought to capture Reality itself with a view to becoming a conscious participator in its life." Prayer alone is ultimately able to fulfill our deepest individual yearnings for a response to "the awful silence of the universe". What wonderful, powerful language to express such profound ideas!

Once again, however, we must take care not to misrepresent the thought of our master. Iqbal is not seeking refuge from intellectual tension in mystical flight. The true spirit of prayer, he continues, is social; its object is achieved "when the act of prayer becomes congregational." This socialization of spiritual illumination is a matter of special importance in Islam, Iqbal reminds us, where the obligation of the five daily prayers trains Muslims to find their unity upon the common axis (qiblah) of the Ka'bah: and where the rites of hajj as it were enable the pilgrims to travel to the qiblah to experience their unity in the Holy Mosque in Makkah.

The Islamic significance of all this is as clear as it is definite. As a Christian, however, I am always impressed, and thankful, that the disciplines of prayer are duties that we share in common, though we may practice them differently. And I am reminded that the great rites of hajj are as importantly a commemoration of the spiritual example of the Prophet Abraham upon whom Christians and Muslims alike, together with Jews, invoke God's blessing as we strive to embody the quality of his sacrificial faith in the continuing pilgrimages of our own lives. Is it surprising, then, that Christians experience the same individual and associative dimensions of prayer as do Muslims, and like Muslims know them to be inseparable from one another? Tensions remain, to be sure, but in the mystery of prayer we find them to be given a new perspective. As Iqbal put it "It is a psychological truth that association multiplies the normal man's power of perception, deepens his emotion, and dynamites his will to a degree unknown to him in the privacy of his individuality." I wonder whether we can realistically hope to grapple with these shared tensions in our religious lives until and unless we learn to pray together?

God, "The Perfect Individual"

To whom, then, do we address ourselves in prayer, in hope of becoming, each of us in relation to the other, "a conscious participator in its (Reality's) life"? In answer of this question we must turn to Iqbal understands of God as we find it in his discussion of the first "word" (kalimah) of the Islamic testimony of faith (shahadah): "I bear witness that there is no god but God."

I begin with a disclaimer before we try to follow Iqbal's thought at this critical point. It is neither from false modesty nor cautious academic convention that I confess my inability adequately to represent his theology of the first kalimah. The fact is that his thought is expectedly complex but, I find, tantalizingly elusive in its nuanced subtleties. Poetry rather than lectured prose is the characteristic mode of his finest theological expression; prayer his

more reliable way to understanding than metaphysics. Neither offers itself easily for systematic treatment and you may therefore think me rash to proceed. My sole though slender confidence in doing so is that, like you − and this much we may all have in common with Iqbal − I have a personal faith in God which is more valuably experienced in feelings than expressed in words. Of one thing I am sure, however. My faith is not in a presumed "Christian" God, distinct from a presumed "Muslim" God. The very thought is as repugnant as it is alien to the theology of Iqbal. His reflections upon God far transcend the doctrinal straight-jackets of any religious system, and though he is ever loyal to the true orthodoxy of Islam, he expresses his thoughts in a manner which invites the harmonious interaction of believers of other religious traditions. I can do no more but share with you those aspects of his perception of God which speak to my faith experience, and if I am able to do so with even a small measure of clarity, it is in tribute to Iqbal's influence upon me.

God as Personal

What strikes me first and foremost is Iqbal's vital sense of the personal nature of God. To speak of God being personal is, I re-cognize, to court controversy, the more so when we recall Iqbal's repeated use of the terms "the Perfect Individual" and "the Supreme Ego"'. Hard is it, it may seem, to reconcile such language with the careful creedal formulations of orthodox Sunni theology, faithful follower of Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari as Iqbal claimed to be. It is precisely here that we find the clue to understanding his role as a metaphysical philosopher and theologian: he tried to take traditional dogmatic formulations and re-express them in the language of the contemporary philosophy of his day. Our understanding of theology cannot be insulated from the process of change in which Iqbal saw the whole of the universe and human Endeavour to be involved. Reformation of religion requires the reformation of theology as a sine qua non, though as we have seen Iqbal understood the most creative process of reformation to be that which treated seriously with the tradition within which it evolved.

As a devout reader of the Qur'an Iqbal believed intensely in a personal God, holding fast in his devotions and intellectual life to the reality of the Beautiful Names (al-asma al-husna) which, in the Qur'an, God discloses to be His, so that we might call upon Him in prayer and grow in understanding, The Names became for both Islamic theologians and philosophers the "attributes" (sifat) of God which, as it were, named the qualities of His being and action. But against many a philosopher, al-Ash'ari and count-less orthodox theologians insisted that the Names or attributes have an eternal reality; and though they must not be regarded as identical with God in any human understanding of their meaning, they are not other than He in the mystery of their Quranic meaning which is known to none other than God Himself.

This is a difficult distinction − the difficulty of which is as evident in Christian theology as well as in Islam. It is the distinction which Iqbal, I think, seeks to preserve in his concept of God as "the Perfect Individual" and "the Supreme Ego". Borrowing these terms from Henri Bergson and others, Iqbal insists that the qualities of God manifested in His Names are eternally real, so that God is in truth a personal God with whom we can relate in intimately personal terms. Yet as a theologian he also insists that the eternal Names neither introduce plurality into the being of God, nor impose any limitation upon Him. Iqbal may have felt certain sensitivity against Christian theology at this point, and he rejected Christian notions of Incarnation and Trinity. Without seeking to elucidate the Christian doctrine of God let me simply say from within the Christian tradition that I have no difficulty in accepting Iqbal's formulations. Indeed, I warmly confirm his notion of God as "the Perfect Individual" in the four main senses in which I understand him to use the term as I shall now

attempt to summarize.

God in Personal Relationship with Us

Firstly, there is Iqbal's sense that God is the Perfect Individual in His having a real personality which humans can recognize and which we can address in prayer and worship. Because His personality is real, we may have a truly personal relationship with Him, though without His being limited thereby. God's personality remains qualitatively other than ours, for it is perfect and our personalities are subject to all kinds of imperfection. So the relationship we have with God, "the Perfect Individual", provides the ground of hope that, through prayerful participation in the life of Reality (to recall Iqbal's phrasing of the purpose of prayer), we can learn to reflect more clearly the perfection of God's personality in, the individuality of our own persons. Jesus Christ, I believe, taught us the same hope when, in his Sermon on the Mount, he bade us: "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The Unicity of God

Although human "beings may potentially be perfectible by the grace of God's perfection, we are actually far from being perfect in our actual individuality, and this brings us to the second point which I hear Iqbal to be making. We recognize and invoke God's perfect personal qualities, His Names, in terms of our imperfect human experience. This is marked by our multiplicity in which we cling to that which differentiates us one from another, inevitably we tend to think of God in these terms, and Iqbal re-minds us that to do so is itself an expression of our imperfection. God indeed relates Himself to our differentiated world of human experience, as He does to the differentiated universe of nature in its infinite complexities. This Iqbal fully accepts. Multiplicity is part of the universal process of change which he likens to "an infinite series". God is involved in that series, "but (He) is not that series." The reality of God's being is beyond the imperfection of multiplicity, and as the Perfect Individual His Names, which we construe as many, exist.in eternal Unicity. "Say, God is One (ahad); all things depend on Him (al-samad)", to quote the opening verses of Surat al-Ikhlas, "The Chapter of Unity" from which Iqbal derived his decisive direction at this point.

The Uniqueness of God

Iqbal's third point follows from the continuation of this Quranic chapter: "He begetteth not, and He is not begotten, and there is none like unto Him." Neither a self-serving apologist nor a demeaning polemicist, Iqbal consciously turns aside from those who would misuse the verse to attack Christian theology. This is not the Qur'an's point, he rightly maintains; the real issue, he says, is "the characteristic of the Perfect Ego (which) is one of the most essential elements in the Quranic conception of God."

His argument is actually against pantheism which he sees as a tendency in all religions to escape from "an individualistic conception of the Ultimate Reality" and to conceive of God rather as "a vague, vast and pervasive cosmic element." In contrast, Iqbal interprets the Qur'an as protecting the definite otherness of God from imperfect creation, while yet affirming the immediacy of His relationship to it. Again he makes his point by differentiating the Perfect Individuality of God from the imperfect individuality of created beings. Quoting Bergson, he argues that "while the tendency to individuate is everywhere present in the organized world, it is always opposed by the tendency toward reproduction." Hence, we human beings like all other animals harbour an enemy within ourselves which, as the instinct for reproduction, places us in a state of dependency upon others, and militates against the perfectibility of our individuality. God alone is beyond this animal force of reproduction and this is what Iqbal understands the Qur'an to be affirming in surat al-Ikhlas and consistently

throughout all its other chapters. In contrast to our imperfect individuality, God is "the Perfect Individual closed off as an Ego, peerless and unique", begetting nothing whether it is physically or pantheistically understood.

The Infinity of God

The fourth and last point I want to make about Iqbal's meaning in the term "the Perfect Individual" concerns the issue of infinity. To put it another way: Is there not a danger that any notion of the Individuality of God, although intended to affirm His specific relationship to the "infinite series" of the created universe, actually ends up by imposing upon Him the limitation of finitude in our mathematical sense of space and time?

This is a monumentally difficult question, but one which none of us may ignore whether we are Christians who perceive the divine relationship with creation in the person of Jesus Christ, or Muslims who perceive it in the book of the Holy Qur'an. Does a belief in an individualizing self-disclosure of God impose the imperfection of finitude upon Him?

No, says Iqbal! And his answer evidences his knowledge of contemporary physics, as well as his understanding of modern • philosophy and psychology. The problem lies not with God, but with the partial nature of human conceptions of space and time, indeed of the essence of nature itself. "Modern science", he stated in his lecture dealing with "The Conception of God", "regards, nature not, as something static, situate in an infinite void, but a structure of inter-related events out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time." Hence they are relative concepts, or as he says, "interpretations which thought puts upon the creative activity of the Ultimate Ego." Far from interpreting space and time as limitations upon the Perfect Individual, Iqbal teaches us to see them as belonging to "the infinite inner possibilities of His creative activity of which the universe, as known to us, is only a partial expression." Now I acknowledge that to repeat Iqbal's theories does not necessarily help to elucidate them for those of us who are less familiar than he with the theories of modern physics, so I shall not attempt to follow him any further. But let us enjoy, and hopefully remember, the pithiness of his own conclusion: "God's infinity is intensive, not extensive."

God as Light

I hope these paragraphs have not disheartened those of you −and I expect we may be many who find metaphysics difficult, or even to distaste. However it is part of Iqbal's thought about religion in general and Islam in particular, and to ignore it would be seriously to misconstrue his message to us as a theologian.

But in the sum of his writing we can see that Iqbal depended as much upon the power of metaphor, particularly when speaking about God, as upon intellectual discussion of theories. The best of his metaphors are those which he draws directly from the Qur'an, and nowhere more poignantly than from the "Light Verse" in surat al-nur, "The Chapter of Light". I rehearse the well-known verse in English rendering of Yusuf Ali:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and with it a Lamp:
the Lamp enclosed in Glass:
the Glass as it were a brilliant Star:
Lit from a blessed Tree,
an Olive neither of the East nor the West,
whose Oil is well nigh luminous
though fire scarce touched it:
Light upon Light!"

Light gives life, Iqbal reminds us, recalling other Beautiful Name's of God in the

Qur'an: al-hayyu'l-qayyum. But it is again in physics that he finds his key to interpreting the Quranic metaphor of God as Light. The velocity of light cannot be exceeded, and so light is the nearest approach to an absolute that is known to us in nature. Iqbal's sense of the Quranic metaphor, therefore, is that God discloses Himself as Light. His Light is everywhere present as that which illuminates all that is in the heavens and earth. But this is not pantheism, Iqbal warns, for the Quranic metaphor continues to individuate the Light by focusing it specifically in a Niche, a Lamp, a Glass, which is then likened to the pin-prick exactness of the Star, brilliantly lit by the blessed Olive Tree, though not a terrestrial tree of earth with its eastern and western divisions.

The point Iqbal is making is that the absolute universality of God, the Perfect Individual and Supreme Ego, is disclosed not in formless cosmic platitudes, but in particular individual realities while God remains unlimited in His perfection. It is by these particular disclosures, Iqbal argues, that we know the truth of tawhid to be that "the world in all its details is the self-revelation of the great I AM", a spiritual reality which therefore calls for human understanding and participation through the refinement of intellectual sciences into ultimate spiritual perception.

Iqbal's Love of the Prophet

Iqbal's careful exposition of the relationship between the universal and the particular in his doctrine of God brings us, in the logic of Islamic faith, to the second kalimah of the shahadah, where we must enquire into how he understood his confession: "And I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

Without a doubt, his love of and for the Prophet ran deeply through the piety of his own life, throughout which he meditated upon the beauty (jamal) and majesty (jalal) of what he held to be the perfection of Muhammad's humanity as the Chosen One (al-mustafa), the Seal of the Prophets (khatim al-nabiyyin). In this he identified himself intimately with the living tradition of na't poetry, so strong within the mystically-inclined Sufi devotional piety of traditional Islam. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is in his poetic stanzas that he expressed most sonification of fulfilled human potentiality. Nor does Iqbal recall the Prophet merely as a hero of the past, but relates to him as a living inspiration in the lives of devout Muslims through all ages.

In the great Javidnama, for example, he captures the Quranic mystery of spiritual intimacy between the believers and the Prophet who is nearer to them than their own souls (33, 6): "A beloved is hidden in your heart; in the Muslim's heart there is Muhammad's home; all our glory is from his name." His use of pronouns in this stanza skillfully underscores the inseparability of individual and community which, as we have seen, inheres his understanding of the polity of Islam, and which now we see to be animated by the spiritual reality of the Prophet. Hidden in the heart of the believer, the glory of the entire community derives from his name; or as Iqbal expressed it on another occasion: "love for the Prophet runs like blood in the veins of his community."

A Christian's Reflection

You may wonder how a Christian can relate to these verses and the many others of similar kind to be found throughout Iqbal's poetry, treating as they do with that which is evidently most particularly "Muhammadan" of Islamic faith and piety. The second kalimah, we are often told, excludes by its particularity the non-Muhammadan believer whose monotheism and at least partial credentials as a Muslim are acknowledged in the first word of the Shahadah. Are we not at this point confronted by an inevitable and necessary parting of the ways, honestly to be recognized if painfully to be endured? There are, I respectfully recognize, many in our two religious traditions who would say so, without their wishing to

impair our dialogue as Christians and Muslims who continue to share much else in common. Others, I know, argue that there is here a parting of the ways of such magnitude that all else is invalidated, Muslims and Christians necessarily alienated from on another by a great historical divide between right guidance and error, though with such a view I have no personal agreement. Nor, I feel, would Iqbal, even if certain of his more stunning hyperboles were to be marshaled into the argument: for example, his statement that: "You can deny God, but you cannot deny Muhammad." Taken literally, this would exclude Muslims in their totality before ever it addresses Christians, and this, I think, Iqbal clearly did not intend.

Speaking for myself as a Christian who seeks to confess God in Christian faithfulness without denying the faithfulness of Muhammad and the Muslims' faith in God which he inspires, I would like at this point to enter two personal concerns, without in either of them attempting so suggest a particular Christian appreciation of the Prophethood of Muhammad. The first is, I think, relatively straight-forward. Without requiring Christian acceptance of the Prophethood of Muhammad in Muslim testimony, or Muslim acceptance of Christian belief in Jesus Christ, cannot a deep spiritual sympathy exist between Christians and Muslims deriving from the rich spiritual psychology which binds them to Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad respectively? In other words, we are indeed marked and distinguished by the particularities of our faith traditions, the one Christian and the other Muslim. But the way 'we each relate psychologically to our distinctive historical particularities Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad in particular − are so strikingly common in spiritual terms as to give each of us a real potential for the appreciation of the other.

My second point is, I recognize, more difficult. As a Christian I happily acknowledge that Muslims have a deep appreciation of the Prophet Jesus, different from my own in some respects, but legitimately theirs by a double right as I see it. First is the fact of Quranic hospitality for Jesus as the Prophet of the Injil to the Children of Israel, a mercy from God, a word and a spirit from Him: Secondly, if my Christian resurrection faith is sure, then surely the Resurrected Christ is free to visit Muslims in the intimacy of their own faith in whatsoever manner he chooses, the mystery of which I am content to uphold in prayer. Is it, then, possible to say something comparable about how I as a Christian may appreciate the Prophet Muhammad, without yet being able to define his Prophethood? I like to think so. If the Bible as I interpret it − and I know that many Muslims would interpret it otherwise − makes no specific mention of Muhammad or his ministry, the message he preached inheres much of the spirit and word of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments alike. The spirit of Muhammad's teaching is written clear on many a Biblical page. If this falls short of Muslim understanding of Muhammad's Prophethood, as I fear it must, let me honestly assure my Muslim friends that I am making not the least allusion to the knit-picking theories of many non-Muslim scholars about the historical origins of scripture. I speak only of an important way in which, through my own scripture, I find myself in Christian possession, as it were, of much that Muhammad preached, for which I hold him in deep spiritual esteem. But is there not still another dimension of such esteem? If Iqbal and millions of like-minded Muslims throughout the ages are right in sensing that the spirit of Muhammad, his Light if you will, remains spiritually active, though his body lies in the grave awaiting the Day of Resurrection, why should this spirit of Muhammadan Light not visit others besides Muslims, in whatsoever manner it chooses?

I raise these questions, without disguising the implicit answers I intend, in prelude of my attempt to interpret something of Iqbal's thought about the spiritual perfection of the Prophet Muhammad. If you cannot agree with me, I trust you can accept that it is not my intention to trespass as a Christian into the deep emotional intimacy of Iqbal's faith, or that

of any other Muslim. But at the same time these questions are not irrelevant to our concern for the nature of Iqbal's religious thought itself, for they return us to the issue of how we are rightly to understand the relationship between the particular and the universal, the historical and the eternal, the spiritual and the material − and how we are to discern this relationship within the experience and perspective of true religion as "discovery".

The Book and the Person

Let us, then, examine Iqbal's appreciation of the Prophet Muhammad under the conceptual principles of his particularity and his universality, "You are the Well-Preserved Tablet, you are the Pen", he wrote, and again: "He is the meaning of Gabriel and the Qur'an; he is the watchman of the wisdom of God; his wisdom is higher than reason." Here we have but two short examples of the many Iqbalian stanzas in which the author interprets the chosenness of Muhammad by identifying him with divine revelation itself. It is critical, therefore, that we under-stand how Iqbal intends this identification to be understood, though his lack of systematic clarification renders our task difficult. He is not, of course, substituting the Prophet in place of the Qur'an as the locus of revelation. But he is implicitly rising again, though now in a different way, the issue of relationship: this time the relationship between the Book and the Person.

Comparative religious study of Christianity and Islam has only partially been facilitated by the observation that the focus of divine revelation in Christianity is a Person, while in Islam it is a Book. It is in a sense true that Christ is for the Christian what the Qur'an is for the Muslim: the Word of God. But it is also true to the historic traditions of the two religions that Christians find the Word of God in Biblical scripture as well, and that Muslims find it also in the person of the Prophet. Christians and Muslims may argue within their respective traditions as to the correct way of understanding the relationship between the Person and the Book in the one case, and the Book and the Person in the other. A relationship there most certainly is in both cases, however. Within his Islamic piety it is the Prophet as the living embodiment of the divine revelation vouchsafed in the Qur'an that fascinates Iqbal. This at once elevates Muhammad above the finite limitation of mortality, at least in spiritual terms, and ex-tends the perfection of the Qur'an's literary quality into the personal attributes of a human life lived in fullest potential.

Let us examine more closely what this means. Within Islamic piety each Prophet of God is seen to have embodied in a particular way certain of the qualities of human perfection by spiritually manifesting the attributes of the Word of God revealed to him. The one chosen to be the Seal of the Prophets, however, is the living repository of all these attributes, with a perfection of nature exceeding the sum of the individual qualities themselves. I he measure of Muhammad's perfection is the Qur'an, held by Iqbal as by all orthodox Muslims, to be the perfect revelation of God's Word. Its perfection is inclusive of all that was revealed to the former prophets, confirming the truth recorded in the previous scriptures (musaddiq); it is the decisive "canon" or measure of God's Will as the criterion (furqan) of prophetic revelation; it provides the guidance (huda) of the Straight Path to the Last Day, but is neither historically contingent nor bound by the duration of the historical order; it pertains to the mystery-of eternity as the uncreated (ghayr makhluq) Word of God (kalam allah). These are in turn the qualities which the Qur'an "seals" upon the personality of its human transmitter, the Prophet Muhammad. His humanity is perfected by the transcendent perfection of God's Word, which lifts him spiritually beyond the natural and moral limitations of "sub-prophetic" human existence, including our particular comprehension of space and time. Chosen as the human vehicle of the Qur'an, as the "watchman" of its eternal wisdom and meaning, the Prophet Muhammad was, for Iqbal, the

human being who, beyond all others, surpassed the stage of intellectual knowledge of God to become the "conscious participator" in the spiritual reality of the universe. This reality cannot, you will remember, be separated in Iqbal's thought from "the self-revelation of the great I AM", though neither are they identical. Similarly, without identifying the Prophet with God, Iqbal esteemed the Prophet Muhammad to be "The Perfect Man as he worshipped God as "the Perfect Individual".

The Prophet's Night Journey and Heavenly Ascent

This concept of "the Perfect Man" has a long history in the spiritual psychology of the Sufi tradition of Islamic mysticism, where it is rooted in Sufi meditation upon that most mysterious moment in the Prophet's life known as the isra or mi`raj, the "Night Journey" or the "Heavenly Ascent". You are all familiar, I am sure, with the supreme Quranic allusion to this moment in the opening verse of surah bani isra`il, "The Chapter of the Children of Israel (17, 1), but let us be reminded of the words in English rendering, so important were they for Iqbal:

"Glory to (God)
Who did take His Servant
For a Journey by night
From the Sacred Mosque
To the Farthest Mosque,
Whose precincts We did
Bless, in order that We
Might show him some
Of Our Signs: for He
Is the One Who heareth"
And seeth (all things)."

This passage held deep spiritual fascination for Iqbal who returned to it repeatedly in his poetry, finding it to express the mystery of the Prophet's personality more evocatively than is possible in rational intellectual terms. The hadith tells us that the Prophet was in the state of sleep when this mysterious event occurred − the state which we may think of as being "sub-conscious". The Sufi masters, however, have always considered it to be a state of "supra-consciousness" in which the dream takes on significance far greater than the disclosure of our sub-conscious thoughts, and is valued rather- as a means of objective experience of Reality. It is not my intention here to enter into the historic debate as to be nature of the Prophet's mi'raj: was it a physical journey to heaven, or a spiritual experience? This was not, so far as I am aware, a choice which Iqbal saw necessary to make. He accepted the certainty of the event on the basis of the Quranic witness, and within the broad interpretation of the sufi tradition he held it to be the moment of the Prophet's mushahidah or "Beatific Vision". His interest was less in knowing the precise circumstances of the event itself, and more in perceiving its significance for a right spiritual understanding of the Prophet's ministry. Let me emphasize just two points which he made.

Firstly, there is Iqbal's perception of the Mi `raj experience representing, as it were, the conjunction of the first and second "words" (kalimatay) of the shahadah. It was conjunctive not merely in the extensive sense of bringing together the two testimonies of faith. For Iqbal it was "intensive", to use again one of his most favored theological terms. As he taught us to under-stand God's infinity as intensive more truly than extensive, so he saw the second kalimah to be intensive of the first, providing the key to its secret in the pattern of a single human life which, by its God-given perfection, exceeded the limitations of material mortality and matured to fulfillment in spiritual reality. This, at least, is what I understand Iqbal to

have meant in a thought-provoking line which serves as an elliptic commentary upon the Quranic verse I have quoted (17, 1): "His Servant is nothing but the secret of God."

Iqbal and the Sufi Tradition

This brings us, secondly, to the critical issue of where Iqbal stood within the Sufi tradition from which he drew much intellectual and spiritual nurture, yet which drew from him some of his most strident criticism. Sufism, as you know, presents itself as the spiritual path (tariqah) of Islam, and we may imagine Iqbal standing at a fork in the road: In one direction lay the way of spiritual absorption into a sense of Reality as being nothing but God. Metaphysical language expresses this as "undifferentiated monism", and it has a long history in the development of Sufism from the early centuries through Abu Yazid al-Bistami who revelled in spiritual "drunkenness" (sukr) to Muhyiddin ibn `Arabi who conceived Reality as the divine "Unity of Being" (wahdah al-wujud). This school of mystical thought has been widely influential in South Asia and had a marked impact on the early life of Iqbal himself.

Leading in another direction from our imaginary fork, however, lay the path trodden by another group of Sufis, also from the earliest centuries of Islam: Abu Qasim al-Junayd emphasized spiritual "sobriety" (sahw) over against al-Bistami's drunkenness; the great Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali taught the ethical discipline of Sufi spirituality, notably in his major work entitled

The Revivication of Religious Sciences (ihya`ulum al-din) which set the model for Iqbal's lectures on The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam; and in India Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wall Ullah opposed ibn 'Arabi's concept of wahdah al-wujud with that of wahdah al-shuhud, "the Unity of Witness", which affirmed the validity of the highest mystical experience as a subjective sense of the spiritual reality of all being, but nonetheless insisted that there remains an actual distinction between God and creation.

In his mature thought Iqbal emphatically chose this second path in his affirmation of the insights of the Sufi tradition. From this position he could be stridently critical of ibn `Arabi and the so called "wujudis" whom he accused of propounding a world-denying spirituality' which undermined human energy, responsibility and activity. There are moments, indeed, when Iqbal seems to reject the entire mystical tradition for this reason, opposing it with the alternative of what he termed "prophetic religion" which gives full and firm place to ethical dynamism. But we must recognize here an element of hyperbole, characteristic of the way Iqbal frequently expressed himself. He certainly subjected aspects of Sufism to searching criticism, but he never renounced the validity of the spiritual, psychological and ethical concerns which inhere much of Sufi thought and practice. Indeed, that which he valued in Sufism he saw to be personified in the life of the Prophet which itself contradicts what he judged to be the aberrations of some Sufi thought. Nowhere in his writing does he make the point more forcefully than in the opening paragraph of his lecture on "The Spirit of Muslim Culture":

> "Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest heaven and re-turned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.' These are the words of the great Muslim saint, `Abdul Quddus of Gangoh. In the whole range of Sufi literature it will probably be difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the prophetic and mystic types of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of `unitary experience'; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The Prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the

repose of 'unitary experience' is something final; for the prophet it is the awakening, within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated completely to transform the human world."

The Universal Ethic of the Prophet's Teaching

I have quoted Iqbal at length because what he has to say brings us to the core of his appreciation of the Prophet Muhammad and the nature of true religion. Recall what we said earlier: for Iqbal the three-fold purpose of religion is to disclose the spiritual reality of the universe, so as to emancipate human beings from the shackles of materialism, and advance human society upon universal principles of spiritual and ethical truth. This was the achievement of the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad as Iqbal commends it, and he urges the Muslim community to continue in the Prophet's path in its mission in the world.

In the Javidnama Iqbal more than once draws attention to what, in light of the socio-political challenges of his own life in India, he saw as the greatest ethical transformation of human values affected by the Prophet. With a high sense of the dramatic, he recalls the complaint against Muhammad by Abu Jahl, the clear-minded leader of the Prophet's opponents in Makkah who better than most understood the revolutionary character of the Quranic message . . . . but rejected it from self-interest in the pagan status quo:

"We are utterly sick because of Muhammad!
His teaching has put out the lights of the Ka'bah!
His religion abolishes the distinctions of race and blood –
Though himself of Quraysh, he disowns the superiority of the Arabs.
In his religion the high and low are one;
He ate from the same dish as the slave!"

There is no need to enlarge upon Iqbal's thought in these lines, so clearly do they present his vision of a human society where spiritual kinship between all participants excludes the false superiorities of race, ethnicity, class and economic status, as well as what Iqbal condemned as improper expressions of religious particularity which lead to ritual exclusivism. I, for one, do not feel that his moral challenge has lost anything of its relevance from India of his day to ours in Britain or Pakistan.

So far we have noted three emphasis in Iqbal's estimation of the Prophet Muhammad: the inseparability of his Person from the Book of revelation; his spiritually-transforming experience of the mi'raj or heavenly Ascent; and the radical universalism of his preaching. From these we can see a clear pattern emerge. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Mutallib, an Arabian of particular time and place, was ordained by God, "the Perfect Individual", to become the human bearer of His perfect revelation. The human individual was thus conjoined with eternal Word, and losing nothing of his personal particularity he became the conscious participator in the spiritual dynamism of Reality itself; as "the Perfect Man" his humanity was fulfilled in the in-expressible mystery of mushahidah, or Beatific Vision. Manifesting himself more truly as Prophet than mystic, however, his consciousness of the universal impelled him back to the particular situation of his historic ministry where he created "a fresh world of ideals" which transformed the tribal fiefdom of the Quraysh into the Abode of Islam friar al-islam).

This pattern of thought moves along the axis of the particular and the universal, the former leading to the latter to become transformed by it. This, surely, is the key to Iqbal's understanding of the true spiritual direction and religious value in life. It is the essence of his conception of the nature of prayer in the life of the individual believer and of the faithful community. In the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad he shows us one who responded to

this movement within his own person in a life of prayer which, effective in action, radically challenged and reshaped the social environment of his day and of all days thereafter.

The Prophet and the Hijrah

Let us move now to the fourth moment in the Prophet's ministry which Iqbal draws forward for our reflection: the hijrah, when Muhammad migrated with his Makkan followers, the muhajirun, to Madinah and brought the new Muslim community into being, founded and fashioned upon the universal values which he had taught in the particularities of the Makkan situation.

At the historical level Iqbal interpreted the hijrah as the Prophet's rejection of parochial or provincial nationalism. It demonstrates that God's purpose always calls us to move toward wider horizons as we strive "in the Way of God" (fi sabil allah as the Qur'an puts it in Arabic) for the universal: "To leave one's native country is the sunnah of the beloved of God," wrote Iqbal, with the exemplary precedent of the Prophet in mind, and the re-iterated assurance of the Qur'an that God's reward awaits the emigre in this world and beyond.

While recognizing the importance of this concept in Iqbal's thought, we should not of course belittle his role as a "nationalist", one-time leader of the Muslim League and conceptual Father of Pakistan. As he was never prepared to separate the individual from the community, equally his conception of the Muslim community combined ideology with geography. The Arabic-Urdu word watan appears frequently in his writing, but it is a word that is notoriously difficult to translate into English: `native country'? `nation state'? `love of one's homeland'? Iqbal was aware of the problem of meaning, however, and interestingly gives us some assistance in a line from the Javidnama: "Watan is something different in the right teaching of the Prophet than in the words of politicians"; idolatry (shirk) so often inheres the rhetoric of the latter, whereas "the greatest miracle the Prophet performed was the formation of a spiritually-united nation." This was the Prophet's goal in the hijrah; to go forth "in the Way of God", breaking links with the racially-defined society of the pagan Quraysh in order to create in Madinah a new community based on the social kinship of faith in God − a society which, in the Prophet's day, you will recall, included both Muslims and Jews, and maintained cordial relations with Christians. Iqbal measured the quality of the Muslim community of later history against this high-calling, and held up the same vision in his commitment to Pakistan.

Iqbal Understands of Culture

Neither history nor politics can be separated from the spiritual in Iqbal's thought. This brings us to a second aspect in his understanding of the significance of the hijrah: the cultural. In the heroic event of migration Iqbal saw the Prophet immersing himself in "the sweep of time… the tide of history", not as the instrument of some predetermining fate (for Iqbal firmly rejected any notion of predestination), but as the active progenitor of "a fresh world of ideals." He thought of history in Quranic terms as "the days of God", an infinite series of events inter-related with one another by two universal principles disclosed in the Qur'an: the unity of the entire human family, and the reality of time. History therefore becomes "a continuous collective movement" which Iqbal contrasted against pre-Islamic classical concepts of history as cyclic or recurrent. In this he identified the difference between the cultures of the classical world and what he saw to be the new culture of Islam, a culture based on the principle of "forward movement" in which, through the processes of change, the purposes of God can be discovered anew within history, within the affairs of human societies and within the lives of individual human beings.

Let us not suffer any ambiguity at this point. Iqbal saw history as "a continuous collective movement" of societies, nations and peoples. Culture, in his sense, is the

continuous discovery of the knowledge of God within the historical process, and he therefore had no hesitation in including history within the Quranic concept of wahy or "inspiration". Hence, when Iqbal defines Islamic culture as "historical", he means that the Muslim community is one that will evolve through change as it struggles to treat history with all seriousness not merely as a sequence of events, but as a way of attaining such knowledge of God as will bring it to "a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and finally a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time." The historical process is, for Iqbal, the complement of supernatural revelation, and he judged it "a gross error to think that the Qur'an has no germs of an historical doctrine."

Iqbal draws out this relationship yet more clearly in one of his most striking assessments of the Prophet's achievement which I quote in conclusion, of our discussion of his sense of the spiritual, historical and cultural significance of the hijrah:

> "Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. Insofar as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; insofar as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam… is the birth of inductive intellect."

The Finality of Prophethood with Muhammad

The distinction Iqbal here draws between the "source" and the "spirit" of revelation is, I think, a helpful one. The "source" to which the Qur'an refers in the word tanzil with the sense of "descending revelation", is transcendent; the "spirit", which the Qur'an refers to as wahy, is immanent within history, society and indeed the whole of nature, for Iqbal believed it to be nothing less that "a universal property of life". The former is vouchsafed through prophecy (nubuwwah) and registered in scripture (kitab); the latter is accessible to the exercise of intellectual and scientific reason. Each was fully present in the Iqbal emphasized, by the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad, finalization of the former (tanzil) the Prophet liberated his followers to pursue the path of reason in search of the continuing wahy of God. This is what he meant in closing the passage which I have just quoted with the unforgettable statement: "In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition."

It is in these terms, then, that Iqbal adheres as an orthodox Muslim to belief in the finality of Muhammad as "the Seal of the Prophets" (khatim al-nabiyyin), to use the most decisive of his Quranic appellations. The seal which he sets upon tanzil brings humanity to age in rational adherence to true religion, and frees us to search positively for the wahy of God's continuing guidance within the forces of history, scientifically discerned. The scientist, therefore, is the true and only successor of the Prophet, a conviction which Iqbal frequently aired in interpretation of the Prophet's own statement that "the heirs of the prophets are those of under-standing." But if science is the true complement of prophecy, we must remember that Iqbal saw prayer as the true complement of science. It is in the interrelationship of these three that Iqbal esteemed the Prophet Muhammad as "the Perfect Man", and held his sunnah before the Muslim community of his own day as both the challenge and the inspiration for a new ijtihad.

Conclusion

There are just three things which remain for me to say by way of conclusion, two of them reflecting points which Iqbal explicitly made in his writing, while the third is something which I, a Christian, draw from his thought as a Muslim.

Iqbal's Warning to Muslims

Firstly, Iqbal presents the Prophethood of Muhammad, personifying the nature of true religion, as both a challenge and an inspiration to the Muslim community. The positive emphasis in his thought at this point is not infrequently accompanied by negative and sometimes harsh criticism of Muslims for failing to rise to the challenge and inspiration which the Prophet presents. He was particularly critical of the mindless adulation of the Prophet which is perpetuated in certain strains of Islamic piety by almost-exclusive attention to what are held to be his super-natural miraculous capabilities. "That 'kind of prophethood is hashish for the Muslim, in which there is not a shred of the message of power and energy," he stormed in terms reminiscent of Marx's condemnation of the slavery of religion to superstition:

Iqbal's Challenge to Christians

Secondly, and with equal emotion, Iqbal condemned the defamatory characterization of Muhammad in the western polemical tradition and, under the skilful disguise of historical criticism, the Orientalist tradition of modern western scholarship. Nowhere does he disqualify non-Muslim scholars of Islam on the a priori grounds of their non-acceptance of the Prophethood of Muhammad. With his acute sense of history, however, he affirms the validity of "another way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience (as being) to examine the type of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message." As seriously as I take this opportunity to confess my personal sense of shame at the polemical disfiguring of Muhammad and .much else of Islam in the west, I hope that my Muslim audience will judge me to have taken this piece of Iqbalian advice seriously to heart in this lecture.

Iqbal's Inspiration for Muslim-Christian Dialogue

Thirdly and finally: if I have interpreted Iqbal's thoughts on religion in very positive terms as a Christian, it is because I find himself in profound agreement with much of what he has to say. My agreement is based on my study of Christian theology in which a similar understanding of the nature of true religion is given by, for example, Thomas Aquinas in medieval times, or by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in our own troubled century. From within our different traditions of faith, therefore, I find that we are talking a common theological language, and I believe this is something we should gratefully affirm by listening to one another and working together in dialogue. Iqbal addressed himself to Muslims within the intellectual context of his deep personal dialogue with western thought. In the Iqbal Academy I hope we can continue to honour his memory by addressing ourselves to the contemporary world of East and West alike within our collective experience of Muslim-Christian dialogue for which we have here in the West Midlands a God-given opportunity, challenge and inspiration.