

Reconstruction of Islam

*Rindi se bhi agha, shariat se bi waqif
Pocho jo tasuf ki to Mansoor ka shani
Is shaks ki hum par haqiqat nahin khulti
hoga ye kisi aur hi Islam ka bani*

Aware of the way of drunkenness, familiar with the sharia,
Asked about Sufism he proves to be the equal of Mansoor,
It is not possible to get to the truth of his reality,
He must be the advocate of a different Islam.

Iqbal¹

In his autobiographical poem ‘Zuhd aur Rindi’ (‘Piety and Libertinism’), Iqbal described himself as the harbinger of a ‘different Islam’.² The Allama’s political philosophy was founded upon his interpretation of Islam as a comprehensive system which could be presented as an ideology of protest against western physical and ideological domination. The aim of this chapter is to discuss salient aspects of Muhammad Iqbal’s reconstruction of Islam, particularly his assertion that Islam was ‘something more than a creed’³ – that is, a complete system and ideology – and his promotion of it as an empowering ethic for Muslims and the colonised East in general. Such a construction contested, on the one hand, universalist ideologies such as Marxism and, on the other, what were perceived as the other-worldly and ascetic tendencies of religions such as Christianity and Buddhism.

¹ A stanza from Iqbal’s autobiographical poem, *Zuhd aur Rindi*. Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, pp. 59–60.

² Ibid.

³ Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections*, edited by S. A. Vahid (Lahore, 1964), p. 51.

Although his interpretation of Islam as a 'system' and an 'ideology' was to influence Maududi and others who were to give shape subsequently to a more defined 'political Islam', Iqbal's views were by no means unchallenged. It was noted in the previous chapter that a number of prominent ulama refuted the right of new western-educated intellectuals like Iqbal to practise *ijtihad*. Iqbal's attempts to shape an Islamic polity were lambasted by figures like Madani, who suggested that Iqbal's work reflected the fact that he lacked any understanding of either Islam or politics.⁴ Iqbal's interpretation of Islam will be compared and contrasted here with those of other leading Muslim figures of the period.

Finally, the chapter will also explore Iqbal's views on the Ahmadiyya movement. As noted in the Introduction, Iqbal's views on the Ahmadiyya have been the source of considerable controversy. Scholarly work on Iqbal's views on the Ahmadiyya movement has thus far been limited to highlighting his rejection of the founder's claim to prophethood as un-Islamic. Iqbal's concerns over the wider social and political implications of the movement, for both Islam and India, remain unexplored. It will be shown in this chapter that Iqbal rejected the movement as an attempt to provide a theological and revelational basis for Muslim decline and disempowerment. Such a study provides an interesting comparison of Iqbal's reconstruction of Islam with a contemporaneous movement dismissed for failing to provide an empowering and 'authentic' interpretation of Islam.

'RETURN' TO AN EMPOWERING AND 'AUTHENTIC' ISLAM

The previous chapter highlighted Iqbal's call for Muslim intellectuals to provide a new interpretation of Islam suited to the modern context, an interpretation which would provide a message of physical and intellectual empowerment for Muslims as well as the colonised East. Such calls for a new interpretation/re-interpretation/reconstruction essentially encapsulated a call for a return to '*thet*', '*sacha*' or 'true' Islam.⁵ Individuals as varied as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Iqbal, Madani and Maududi strove to provide authentic Islamic solutions to contemporary problems. The attempt by scholars to locate some theological arguments – as well as political

⁴ See page 97. Also see discussion of the debate between Iqbal and Madani over nationalism in the next chapter.

⁵ Sayyid Ahmad Khan described his discourse as a restatement of the '*thet* Islam'. See, for instance, Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, iii, 23–27. Others such as Iqbal, Madani and Maududi spoke of their own writings as a return to '*sacha*' or 'true' Islam.

actions and ideas – as ‘Islamic’ while dismissing others as ‘un-Islamic’ or ‘extraneous to Islamic culture’ has detracted both from a proper analysis of the work of Muslim thinkers and also from an understanding of the evolution of Islam.⁶

The evolution of Islam must be understood in the light of wider developments in the concept and definition of religion itself. The concept of religion has not remained static; its relationship with nature, science, society and politics has been re-negotiated over time. Muslims, like non-Muslims, have re-interpreted their religious traditions in view of these developments. It is, therefore, important to study modern Muslim thought in the context of developments in religious thought that occurred in the wake of the Enlightenment. The ‘rise’ of reason and science and the work of figures such as Newton and Locke challenged older notions of religion and gave rise to newer conceptions of the role of religion and theological stances. Two post-Enlightenment strands of religious thought will be discussed here – the demarcation of a ‘religious’ and ‘temporal’ sphere, and the idea of ‘natural religion’. As modern Muslim intellectuals mainly encountered these developments in the colonial setting, their responses need to be understood in the light of orientalist writings and missionary activities and, more generally, within the context of colonialism.

The dominant contemporary definition of religion⁷ as an autonomous realm of belief and activity separate from the ‘temporal’ realm of politics and economics emerged only in the wake of the Enlightenment. Influenced by the work of intellectuals such as John Locke, who sought to ‘distinguish exactly the Business of Civil Government from that of Religion, and to settle the just Bounds that lie between one and the other’,⁸ religion

⁶ Hamid Enayat, for instance, states that his concern is not with ideas put forward by Muslim thinkers but with ideas which are Islamic. He writes that ‘it is not enough to extol a writer for his brave new ideas without first ascertaining the extent to which his creedal, epistemological and methodological premises have ensured the continuity of Islamic thought’. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. ix.

⁷ Anthropologists have debated the utility of using the term ‘religion’ and the possibility of reaching a universal definition of the term. Talal Asad, for instance, has argued that it is not possible to have a universal definition of religion, because its constitutive elements and relationships are historically specific and because any definition will itself inherently be the historical product of discursive processes. See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 27–54. Others such as Benson Saler have defended the use of the term religion as an autonomous category of study and argued for the possibility of providing a universally acceptable definition of the term. See *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (New York, 2000).

⁸ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Indianapolis, 1983), p. 26.

was now defined as having an essence which was autonomous from the essence of economics, science or politics. It was thus relegated to the purely private realm, having no influence in the economic, legal and political organisation of society. Although such a conception of religion had developed in response to problems specific to Christian theology,⁹ its prevalence as the 'modern' definition of religion ensured that non-Christian and non-western intellectuals had to respond to it. It should be noted, however, that although such a definition of religion is dominant, it is by no means universally accepted. In many societies religion was – and is – not seen as a separate category of action and experience.

Another product of post-Enlightenment thought was the concept of natural religion, which stressed that the validity of a religion was based on its compatibility with the laws of nature and science.¹⁰ This view emerged out of the writings of Isaac Newton and others, who developed the ontological argument that the clear design in nature indicated that there was an Intelligent Designer. The workings of nature were in themselves evidence of God. Newton, for instance, wrote that the fact that nature was rightly ordered and dispatched demonstrated that there is a Being that is incorporeal, living, intelligent and omnipresent. The order in nature could not spring from any natural cause but an Intelligent Agent. In response to challenges posed to religion by developments in scientific knowledge, it was argued that the 'work of God', nature, could never be opposed to the 'word of God', revelation. This strand of religious thought was perhaps summarised best by Thomas Paine, when he wrote that it

is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh a universal language, independently of human speech or human languages, multiplied and various as they may be. It is an ever existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.¹¹ (*italics added*)

The idea of natural religion not only implied that true revelation, as opposed to false revelation, never contradicted the laws of nature and

⁹ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p. 42.

¹⁰ Newton, 'The Argument for a Deity' in *Enlightenment Reader*, Isaac Kramnick (ed.) (New York, 1995), pp. 96–100.

¹¹ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Boston, 1852), pp. 31–32.

science, but also that religious texts could only be truly interpreted in the light of scientific knowledge.

Although these strands of religious thought stemmed from differing theological stances, both culminated in the argument that religion was compatible with modern intellectual, political and economic developments. In the case of the former, religion was clearly demarcated from 'temporal' affairs, hence, its authority was limited to the 'private' or 'spiritual' realm. For the proponents of natural religion, religion could never go against principles, ideas or systems which had emerged from the application of reason. In short, the two chief strands of religious thought which emerged in the wake of the Enlightenment essentially concluded that religion could adapt to any new developments in the socio-political environment. The following discussion will show that Muslim modernist responses to the post-Enlightenment developments in the concept of religion coalesced around two positions – first, that Islam was in no way incompatible with the laws of nature and, second, that the division between the public and private was implicit in Islam.

ISLAM IN THE MOULD OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

A number of Muslim figures ranging from Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Nawab Nizam Jung (1871–1955) spoke of Islam as a 'natural religion'¹² and the Quran as a 'rational book'.¹³ In an article published in the *Tehzib al-Akhlaq* in 1879, Sayyid Ahmad Khan spoke of a 'modern approach to religion' that was opposed to the 'traditional approach'. Just as there had been a change in the principles of philosophy over time, there was a clear shift in the principles of religion in the modern period. The 'traditional approach to religion' was characterised as one where the individual searched for God in the dark with his eyes closed, and the 'modern approach' was described as one where the individual looked for Him in the light with his eyes wide open.¹⁴ The need of the day was for a re-interpretation of Islam in the light of the 'modern approach' which was guided by developments in knowledge and science. The Sayyid argued that Islam was in no way opposed to developments in modern knowledge or to the laws of nature and science. As Islam was a 'natural religion', nothing in Islam

¹² Sayyid Ahmad Khan described Islam as a 'natural religion' and even argued that God has described Himself in the Quran as 'nature'. Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, xv, 146–153.

¹³ Nizam Jung, *An Approach to the Study of the Quran* (Lahore, 1947), pp. 10, 13, 14–15.

¹⁴ Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, iii, pp. 23–27.

or the Quran could contradict the laws of nature, reason and science.¹⁵ The 'work of God',¹⁶ he argued, echoing Paine, could not be opposed to the 'word of God'.¹⁷ The belief that Islam was incompatible with modern intellectual developments stemmed from the false association of Greek philosophy with Islam.¹⁸

The Sayyid called for revelation to be interpreted in the light of modern knowledge of the laws of nature and science. In his *tafsir* on the Quran, miracles and other supernatural phenomena are explained in terms of science and natural developments, and verses which seemed to indicate phenomena opposed to the laws of nature and science were explained as metaphorical.¹⁹ Both the Sayyid and other proponents of natural religion suggested that if future progress in science and knowledge invalidated the foundations of contemporary knowledge systems, Islam and the Quran had to be again re-interpreted in the light of the new intellectual developments.²⁰ The wider implication of interpreting Islam as a 'natural religion' was to posit it as an elastic religion that was able to adapt to new intellectual and temporal developments. Islam was thus compatible with any political and economic system that emerged out of the principles of reason and intellectual development.

Such presentations of Islam as a 'natural religion' did not go unchallenged. Mohsin-ul-Mulk, who was a staunch supporter of Aligarh, accused the Sayyid of going beyond the reconciliation of religion and science or nature into deliberate misguiding and deception.²¹ Reflecting Calvinist reactions to the concept of natural religion, modern Muslim proponents of natural religion were attacked for shaping a concept of God on the basis of their scientific views.²² Revelation, it was argued,

¹⁵ He uses the discredited notion that the sun revolves around the earth as a case in point. He argues that there has been a misconception that the Quran holds to the view that the sun revolves around the earth. This view is not found in the Quran; it was the result of the work of thinkers of the past and has been unfairly attributed to the Quran. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Akhiri Mazamin* (1898), pp. 21–23.

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the Sayyid directly transliterated the English terms 'word of God' and 'work of God' into the Urdu script and did not attempt to coin Urdu expressions for them.

¹⁷ Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, ii, 206, 229–237.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, vii, 213–215.

¹⁹ For a good discussion of this, see Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, pp. 177–187.

²⁰ See, for instance, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, ii, 256–257.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

²² One of the axes of the ensuing theological debates was the position and power of God. The Sayyid was accused of displacing God from the day to day functioning of the universe through his focus on nature. He responded by arguing that his theological views did not in any way reduce the power or the position of God, and that God was the Cause of

could not be equated with science. In fact, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was mocked by some of those opposed to his views as a *nachari* (naturist) for reducing God to nature. For instance, in a lecture delivered to the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam in 1893, Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan attacked Aligarh for being a *nachargarh* (nature-house).²³ In response to his critics naming him 'Hazrat Nachariya' ('Sir Nature'), the Sayyid declared himself shocked and stated that those accusing him of inventing a new Islam did not realise that he was merely going back to true Arab Islam: They were accusing him of inventing a new Islam through *ijtihad* when they themselves were failing to practise *taqlid* of Arab Islam.²⁴

An alternative strand of modern religious thought was represented by Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Shibli. Reacting to the view that the sources of Islam could only be interpreted in line with the laws of nature and science, they argued that religion and science essentially dealt with different realms of activity. Religion and science were defined as having their own 'bounds', each unconcerned with the activities of the other. Any 'trespass' on the part of one into the 'bounds' of the other was to be 'taken as a declaration of war'.²⁵ Nevertheless, even for Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Shibli, Islam and science did not conflict with or invalidate each other. The idea that there was an 'opposition between the religion and the science is an outcome merely of a mistake, or of trespassing the boundaries of either'.²⁶ Although Shibli has been portrayed as an intellectual with a 'medieval mind' who reacted unfavourably to the Sayyid's modernist interpretation of Islam,²⁷ both his and Mohsin-ul-Mulk's theological stance was actually in line with modernity's conception of religion as an autonomous sphere distinct from science, politics and other temporal fields of activity.

In essence, both the strands of modern Muslim religious thought previously described stressed the adaptability of Islam to modern intellectual and socio-political developments. Proponents of both schools drew from a number of examples from within the tradition of Islam to demonstrate

the ordered functioning of nature. Khan, 'Kya Nachar Ke Man-ne Se Khuda Mastad Ho Jata Hain' in *Tehzib al Akhlaq*, 1, 5 (1895), pp. 75–76.

²³ Khan, *The English Translation of Fitratala: A Lecture, Delivered in Urdu by Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan of Delhi on the 8th Anniversary of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* (Lahore, 1893), p. 7.

²⁴ Khan, 'Nachar' in *Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid*, xv, 146–153.

²⁵ Mohsin-ul-Mulk, *The Propagation of Islam: A Lecture Delivered in Urdu*, translated and published by The Mohammadan Tract and Book Depot, Punjab (Lahore, 1893), pp. 37–50. Numani, *Maqalat-i-Shibli*, vii, 58–60.

²⁶ Mohsin-ul-Mulk, *The Propagation of Islam*, pp. 41–42.

²⁷ Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, p. 83.

this. In contrast, Muslim intellectuals who spoke of Islam as a system or polity had either to assert the uniqueness of Islam or to critique the modern concept of religion. As noted earlier, a number of Muslim intellectuals rejected the apolitical interpretation of Islam and emphasised the space of the political in Islam. We should take note in this regard of Muhammad Ali's response to the British journalist Valentine Chirol's writings on Sayyid Ahmad Khan. With specific reference to the Sayyid's educational reforms and his political stance of non-involvement in political agitation and unstinting loyalty to the British, Chirol stated that he was fundamental in achieving a synthesis between Muslim orthodoxy and western learning.²⁸ He declared that no other Muslim leader 'has deserved or enjoyed greater influence over his co-religionists'.²⁹ Chirol rejected the politically active generation of Muslim intelligentsia typified by the Ali brothers: He felt they were not only moving towards political upheaval, but because of their tendency to mix religion and politics, they were also straying from the Sayyid's attempts to convert Muslims 'to a more liberal and tolerant interpretation of their ancient faith'.³⁰ This elicited a strong response from Muhammad Ali, who stated that

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan is very much revered by us but the world knows that the Musalman public never went to him to learn the Islamic law. There were many things in which he excelled ... but in spite of this, no one relied upon him to the extent of believing that as Islam which Sir Syed laid down. Sir Valentine Chirol is welcome to such an Islam and such a faith, but this is certainly not our faith.³¹

In addition to deriding the accretion of un-Islamic practises, Allama Iqbal lamented that even at an intellectual, philosophical and theological level the message of Islam had been clouded by Greek classical, Judeo-Christian and modern or western ideas.³² He argued that the interpretation of Islam in the light of modern western conceptions of religion had served to detract from the empowering and authentic principles of Islam. Prefiguring more recent critiques of the binary juxtaposition of the 'spiritual' and the 'material' by figures such as Foucault and Asad, Iqbal spoke of Greek classical thought and Christianity themselves as complex

²⁸ Valentine Chirol, *India, with an Introduction by H. A. L. Fischer* (London, 1926), p. 147.

²⁹ Chirol, *Indian Unrest: A Reprint, Revised and Enlarged from 'The Times', with an Introduction by Sir Alfred Lyall* (London, 1910), p. 131.

³⁰ Chirol, *India*, p. 148.

³¹ Speech delivered at the Second Khilafat Conference at Lucknow on 26th February 1921. Home Department (Political), May 1921.

³² Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, iii, 695–698.

exercises of power which effected 'religion' as a sphere detached from the sphere of the 'material', that is, science and politics. The influence of Greek philosophy and Christian thought detracted from an understanding of the centrality of power to Islam and also led to Islam being limited to the private realm.

This is not to suggest that Iqbal's religious thought should be approached as an autonomous Islamic discourse. The influence of dissenting voices in the West on colonised intellectuals should not be neglected. Like many other Muslim figures, Iqbal drew heavily from the work of critics of contemporary western society, such as Matthew Arnold, Nietzsche and Tolstoy. Muslim intellectuals and preachers had long sought to respond to the attacks by Christian missionaries in India by drawing on western critiques of Christianity. In their early debates with missionaries, the ulama based their arguments upon secondary references and lacked any deep insight into the philosophical and theological debates occurring in Europe. Their arguments thus tended to focus primarily on issues such as the corruption of the Bible.³³ Iqbal was part of a burgeoning group of western-educated intellectuals who were more aware of western philosophical works and knowledgeable of the intellectual climate in Europe. Not only were they better placed to provide an intellectual response to anti-Islam polemics, they also incorporated western ideological developments and methodologies into their interpretations of Islam.

In Iqbal's reconstruction of Islam, one can locate a resonance of the views of a number of western thinkers such as Marx, Engels and Nietzsche, who attacked religion for functioning merely as a source of solace for the exploited while allowing the exploiters to perpetuate their social control.³⁴ Christianity, they argued, had served such purposes especially well because of its stress on other-worldliness and its promise of rewards for the poor and the weak in the hereafter.³⁵ Particularly salient was the work of Nietzsche, who had argued that the ascetic and other-worldly nature of Christianity had given shape to a 'slave morality'.³⁶

³³ See Powell's discussion on the *munazara* (public disputations) between the ulama and Christian missionaries in *Muslims and Missionaries*; see especially pp. 217 and 242–254.

³⁴ See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels on Religion* (Moscow, 1957).

³⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, translated and with a preface by Walter Kauffman (New York, 1995), pp. 30–33.

³⁶ Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollindale, *Ecce Homo*, translated, edited and introduction by Walter Kauffman (New York, 1989), pp. 34–35.

In a telling adaptation of Nietzsche's portrayal of the attempt by the lambs (Jews) to subdue the conquering birds of prey (Romans) by winning them over to their religious and moral views,³⁷ Iqbal used the imagery of the conquest of the race of the tigers by the race of the sheep. He did so to illustrate his point that Muslims had declined because they had been lured away from the true empowering message of Islam. The tigers were lured away from their true nature of conquest and sovereignty by the sheep, who convinced them that paradise was for the weak alone and that life is rendered unstable by the exercise of power. The tigers who embraced the religion of the sheep were lulled to slumber and eventually conquered.³⁸ Plato was portrayed as one of the 'philosopher[s] of the sheep' whose influence drew Muslims away from action and self-assertion.³⁹ The tale of the tigers and the sheep needs to be contextualised within the light of the physical and intellectual conquest of the Muslim world by the West.

Iqbal conceptualised power as a constructive and positive force. He derided the post-Enlightenment approach of dichotomising the material and the religious, as well as the even earlier intellectual tradition that viewed power as repressive. His entire reconstruction of Islam as an empowering ethic was founded upon the view that power, and political concepts, could not be viewed as belonging to a separate material realm. The dominant view of seeing power as a repressive structure that needed to be controlled, argued Iqbal, was itself the result of divorcing power from the realm of religion. This is brought out in a number of his poems, such as 'Quwaat aur Din' ('Power and Religion'):

*Shikander-o-Changeez ke haton se jahaan mein
sau bar hoyi hazraat-i-insaan ki qaba-chak
tarikh-i-umim ka yeh paigham azali hain
'sahib nazraan! nasha-i-quwaat hain khatarnak'
is sheel-i-subak sibaar-o-zameen gheer kea gay
aql-o-nazar-o-ilm-o-hunur hain khus-o-khashak
la-din ho to hain zehar bilalil se bhi bar kar
ho din ki hifazat mein to har zehar ka taryak.*

At the hands of Alexander and Genghis on this earth
Numerous times has mankind been tattered and torn.
The history of mankind calls out
'Attention Sir! The intoxicant of power is dangerous'.
A quickly flowing flood it spreads over all,

³⁷ Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 34–36, 40–46 and 52–54.

³⁸ Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, pp. 52–55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–58.

Art, insight, intellect and skill are carried along like straw.

If it is divorced from *din* then it is the worse of poisons

But if it is in the protection of faith then it is the antidote of all poisons.⁴⁰

Moreover, the adoption of modern conceptions of religion detracted from an appreciation of the proper role of Islam, which provided principles for guidance in every field of activity. The ancient cultures of Asia as well as Christianity, he argued, had approached Reality exclusively from within and moved outwards. Christianity sought an independent content for spiritual life that could be elevated, not by forces of a world external to the soul, but by the revelation of a new world within. With Islam, the ideal and the real were not two opposing forces; the life of the ideal consists not of a total breach with the real, but in the endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view to eventually absorb it.⁴¹ Islam recognised the world of matter and pointed to a way to master it with a view to discovering a basis for a realistic regulation of life.⁴² The relegation of Islam solely to the private realm went against the spirit of 'true' Islam, which provided a basis for the social, economic and political organisation of society.

ISLAM, AN EMPOWERING ETHIC

In his *Memorial Verses*, Matthew Arnold quotes Goethe as having said that 'Art still has truth, take refuge there'.⁴³ Referring to this line, Iqbal stated in a letter to Sheikh Aijaz Ahmad that he brought a similar message to the Muslims of the day, just as Goethe had to the German people during the upheaval and disempowerment in the wake of the Napoleonic conquest. The only difference was that he sought to replace the word 'art' with 'religion'. Art, he argued, provided peace but lacked power. Religion encapsulated both peace and power.⁴⁴ Unlike Christianity, which denounced power, Islam embraced power as a constructive force. Contrasting the Christian and Islamic approaches to God and power, Iqbal wrote that 'Christianity describes God as love' and 'Islam as power'.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, p. 491.

⁴¹ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³ Charles W. Elliot (ed.), *English Poetry From Tennyson to Whitman: Harvard Classics* (Montana, 2004), p. 1182.

⁴⁴ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, ii, 373.

⁴⁵ Iqbal, *Stray Reflections*, p. 10.

Contesting the views of critics such as the German scholar Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), who argued that the decline of Muslims had been a result of the centrality of the idea of destiny in Islam and its ‘life negating theology’, which had led to the complete negation of the ego,⁴⁶ Iqbal stressed that true Islam was an action-oriented and self-affirming system. He refuted the view that Islam culminated in the negation of the ego. The self-affirming or ego-affirming message of Islam was central to his reconstruction of Islam. Although he conceded that the idea of destiny runs throughout the Quran,⁴⁷ he explained that according to the Islamic view on God, the future pre-exists in the organic whole of God only as an open possibility and not as a fixed order of events with definite outlines.⁴⁸ The kind of fatalism which critics of Islam speak about when they use terms such as *qismat* and *taqdir* (both translated loosely as fate) had only crept into the fold of Islam as a result of Greek-inspired philosophical thought, political expediency and the gradually diminishing force of the life-impulse that Islam had originally imparted onto its followers.⁴⁹

Iqbal's views on Sufism have been the centre of a considerable amount of controversy. Whereas some have portrayed him as an opponent of Sufism who rejected it as an un-Islamic practise,⁵⁰ others point to the heavy influence of Sufi poetry and ideas in his work, particularly those of Rumi.⁵¹ It is clear that Iqbal did not reject the validity of mystic consciousness. In his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he stressed that ‘the region of mystic experience is as real as any other region of human experience and cannot be ignored merely because it cannot be traced back to sense-perception’.⁵² Iqbal asserted that Islam provided a system of belief in which thought and intuition were organically linked.⁵³ In order to secure a complete vision of Reality, sense perception had to be supplemented by the perception of the heart or a mystic conscience:

⁴⁶ See discussion on Spengler's views on Islam and religion in *Reconstruction*, p. 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Shahid A. Chaudhary, *Sufism is Not Islam: A Comparative Study* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 193–206.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Erkan Turkmen ‘Perfect Man in the Eyes of Rumi and Muhammad Iqbal’ in *Iqbal Review* (Oct. 1999), pp. 95–106 and S. V. R. Nasr, ‘Iqbal's Impact on Contemporary Understandings of the Islamic Polity’ in *Iqbal Review*, 42, 4 (2001), pp. 2–22.

⁵² Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2. See especially his critique of Ghazzali and Ibn Rushd for their failure to understand that intuition and the intellect were complementary. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6.

The 'heart' is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. It is according to the Quran, something which 'sees', and its reports, if properly interpreted, are never false. ... [T]he vista of experience thus opened to us is as real and concrete as any other experience. To describe it as psychic, mystical, or supernatural does not detract from its value as experience. ... The total-Reality, which enters our awareness and appears on interpretation as an empirical fact, has other ways of invading our consciousness and offers further opportunities of interpretation. The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. There seems to be no reason, then, to accept the normal level of human experience as fact and reject its other levels as mystical and emotional.⁵⁴

On the other hand, Iqbal did sharply criticise Sufism for failing to provide an empowering intellectual, artistic and spiritual response to the modern age. Iqbal recorded in a letter to Hasan Nizami that he had an inclination towards Sufism, and that this inclination was further accentuated after he studied western philosophy. A critical study of the Quran, however, brought a change in his views.⁵⁵ In fact, he felt that Sufism, as practised in India, had been one of the chief contributors to the ethical and intellectual decline of the Muslims of India.⁵⁶ Essentially, he sought to differentiate between early/Arab/'higher' Sufism and contemporary forms of Sufi beliefs and practises that he labelled as 'false Sufism'.⁵⁷ As a result of the work of Sufi theologians and philosophers such as Ghazzali, Sufism, which in its 'higher' manifestation referred solely to the pure mystic consciousness, had gained metaphysical and philosophical bases.⁵⁸ Both resulted in disempowerment, and Iqbal described his own work as a *bagawat* (revolt) against this.⁵⁹

The attempt to demarcate between a 'true' and 'false' Sufism indicates that it is possible to locate Iqbal's critique of Sufism within the ambit of neo-Sufism, a twentieth-century reform movement, inspired by the work of figures such as Ibn Taymiyya and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, which sought to reassert the transcendence of God and the importance of sharia.⁶⁰ Of

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 15–16.

⁵⁵ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 448–449.

⁵⁶ Ibid., iii, 542.

⁵⁷ See, for example, his reference to 'false Sufism' in Ibid., i, 614.

⁵⁸ *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 24, fo. 5.

⁵⁹ Iqbal, *Iqbal Nama*, p. 203.

⁶⁰ The term 'neo-Sufism' was coined by Fazlur Rahman to describe the reformist efforts that arose from within the fold of Sufism in the late nineteenth century. For a critical

note here is Iqbal's association with Hasan Nizami, who himself actively sought to reform Sufism as it was practised in the twentieth century and, in his own words, aimed to present 'Islamic Sufism in a new way and a fresh manner'.⁶¹ Apart from publishing a number of works on the topic, Nizami also organised the Halqa-i-Mashaikh (Circle of Masters), which sought, amongst other things, to reform the practises and ceremonies performed at Sufi shrines, which were not seen to be in line with the sharia and *tariqa* (path, Sufi order).⁶² Responding to the charge that he was an enemy of Sufism, Iqbal argued that he was opposed only to Sufis who taught a message of renunciation and resignation, and that he was merely repeating criticisms that had been made by numerous Sufis themselves.⁶³

Iqbal's writings on Sufism echoed Nietzschean views on the disempowering interpretation of religion provided by the ascetic priests. Much like Nietzsche's 'life negating priests' who negated the will to power through the spread of ascetic ideals and practises, the Sufis were attacked for perpetuating disempowerment through their philosophy, metaphysics and art. For Nietzsche, the ascetic priest – described by him as the ultimate 'agent of nihilism' – responded to disempowerment and decline by invalidating the 'value' of struggle and glorifying suffering and poverty instead. While the priest provided some meaning to the suffering of the people, he only served to weaken and perpetuate enfeeblement, turning Christianity into a storehouse of 'consolation' and 'narcotics'. Nietzsche stressed that ascetic beliefs had emerged as a reaction to the decline in life. By turning the will against itself, the priest led to self-laceration and mortification of the will.⁶⁴ He further warned that the ascetic priest is confined to no particular age or race; he is a universal phenomenon that prospers everywhere and emerges in every society.⁶⁵

Iqbal's call for a poetics of action and power and his description of his own work as a *nala-i-jung* have already been noted in [Chapter 2](#). Sufi poetry was attacked for its excessive lamentation and self-negating themes. Iqbal argued that such themes predominated primarily because much of Sufi literature had been produced during periods of political

discussion of 'neo-Sufism', see Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Surrey, 1999), pp. 11–21.

⁶¹ Quoted in Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chisti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond* (New York, 2002), p. 114.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 113–118.

⁶³ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 485–486.

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 125–143.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 117.

decline.⁶⁶ It sought to reconcile the disempowered individual to his position of decline by stressing the ideal of self-negation and rejection of the material world. Works by Sufi luminaries such as Hafiz (1325–1389) were deprecated for serving to lessen the will to life and action.⁶⁷ Iqbal's criticisms of Hafiz in his *Asrar-i-Khudi* sparked off protests from sections of the Muslim community, forcing Iqbal to clarify his views. In a letter to Akbar Allahabadi,⁶⁸ he expressed his concern that Sufi literature acted as 'narcotics' which lured the people away from the realities of the situation.⁶⁹ The people of India, both Hindus and Muslims, were drawn to the life-sapping literature of the Sufis because they had yet to realise the true cause of their 'disease' and decline. This, he argued, was characteristic of Asia in general and only served to instil the wrong worldview, which encouraged the disease to fester.⁷⁰

Much of Sufi metaphysics and philosophy were founded upon the idea of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) and the attendant concepts of *fanaa* and *baqa*. The twelfth-century Sufi and philosopher Ibn Arabi had formulated the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, which stated that there was no true existence except for the ultimate Truth or God and that everything had emerged from it. This laid the philosophical basis for the pantheistic idea that the spiritual aim was to merge into God. This self-negation and merger into God was known as *fanaa* or *baqa*.

Iqbal sought to demonstrate that pantheism was alien to the teachings of true Islam and an inauthentic Sufi concept. He argued that there was no concept of pantheism in the early stage of Sufism. Such ideas only seeped in with the influx of Persian and neo-Platonic influences. Shaped by the ideas of Plotinus, who stressed the essential unity of God and the individual, Sufism came to perceive the rise of egoism, or the separate existence of the individual from God, as the cause of the Fall of man.⁷¹ In direct contrast to this, Iqbal argued that the 'Quranic legend of the Fall has nothing to do with the first appearance of man on this planet'; its aim is rather 'to indicate man's rise from a primitive state of instinctive appetite to the conscious possession of a free self'.⁷² Iqbal argued that

⁶⁶ Iqbal, *Iqbal Nama*, pp. 44–45.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 515.

⁶⁸ Sayyid Akbar Hussain (1846–1921), better known by his nom de plume Akbar Allahabadi, was renowned for his satirical poems which critiqued contemporary society and individuals.

⁶⁹ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 723–726.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 485–487.

⁷¹ *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 24, fo. 2.

⁷² Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 85.

the legend of the Fall did not represent any moral depravity, nor did it narrate the tale of the casting of man to earth as a punishment for the original sin. Instead, he celebrated it as the rise of self-consciousness and the birth of free choice.⁷³

Iqbal's philosophy and religious thought centred upon his construction of a *khudi*⁷⁴ (self, individual or ego) which continually strove for its development and self-affirmation. He argued that '[o]nly that truly exists which can say "I am",' and that it is 'the degree of the intuition of "I-amness" that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being'.⁷⁵ The *khudi* fortified its 'I-amness' through struggle and the assertion of its selfhood. Contrary to the ideal of the Sufis, Iqbal argued that the *khudi* did not negate itself even in the direct presence of God. The *miraj* (the accession of Muhammad to heaven) and his return to earth without being merged into God was presented by Iqbal as evidence to argue against the concept of *fanaa*. The direct experience of God as the Other Self was itself a stage in the development of the *khudi*; by not merging into God the *khudi* returned stronger.⁷⁶ He stressed that *fanaa* was not an authentic Islamic or Sufi idea, but a late accretion into the fold of Sufism resulting from Buddhist and Indian influences. Whereas Islam strove to empower, the twin ideas of *fanaa* and *baqa* served only to disempower Muslims. Interestingly, he argued that the ulama, in the course of their criticisms of the Sufis, had attached the later concept of *fanaa* to the earlier stages of Sufism as well, thus helping to feed the image that it was an authentic Sufi doctrine.⁷⁷ The Allama suggested that 'higher Sufism' propounded a stage beyond *fanaa* and *baqa*; it did not entail the extinction of the self, but a complete surrender to the divine Ego.⁷⁸ He pointed out that his

⁷³ Ibid., 84–85. He went on to argue that free choice and self-consciousness were essential for goodness. 'Now goodness is not a matter of compulsion; it is the self's free surrender to the moral ideal and arises out of a willing co-operation of free-egos. A being whose movements are wholly determined like a machine cannot produce goodness. Freedom is thus a condition of goodness'.

⁷⁴ Iqbal's choice of the term *khudi* is interesting. It is reflected in his notes that the term *khudi*, which was used in Persian 'in a simple sense' to refer to the 'colourless fact of I', was chosen because he wanted a term without any metaphysical or ethical significance to describe the uniqueness of each individual. 'Allama Iqbal's Essay on Nietzsche', *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 25, p. 1. It was meant to be a translation of the English term 'individual', as he could not find a sufficient term in Urdu for it. Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 504.

⁷⁵ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 23 and 117–118.

⁷⁷ *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 24, fo. 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. 25, fo. 13.

condemnation of self-negation was not tantamount to a condemnation of self-denial in the moral sense; he was only focussed on refuting those forces of conduct that led to the extinction of the self as a metaphysical force.⁷⁹

The link between the *khudi* and society was indispensable to the individual's development. Iqbal postulated that the *khudi* was linked to society by the mysterious force of *bekhudi*. In Sufi usage this term essentially referred to the stage of losing awareness of one's selfhood and was associated with the idea of *fanāa*. Iqbal, however, re-worked the concept in line with his re-empowering interpretation of Islam. Although Iqbal's views on the *khudi* have received much attention, his attempts to re-configure the Sufi concept of *bekhudi* have been neglected. The concept of *bekhudi* and its link with the individual will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but suffice it to note here that although Iqbal maintained *bekhudi* as the power that links the individual to the social body, he rejected the notion that it entailed a negation of the self.

Iqbal stressed that Islam recognised and empowered the individual more than any other religion because the idea of individuality was a guiding principle in the entire system of Muslim law and ethics. The position of the *khudi* in Islam was contrasted with that of the individual in Buddhism, Christianity and other Magian religions. Analysing the structure of Buddhism, he concluded that it taught the message of inaction and that it negated the individual.⁸⁰ Whereas Christianity recognised the reality of human personality, the individual was believed to be too weak to free himself and was thus stuck in constant expectation of a redeemer or saviour.⁸¹ Magian culture – which included Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism as well as Chaldean and Sabeian religions – was generally characterised by the constant expectation of a messiah.⁸² In contrast to this, Islam not only recognised the personality of the individual, but it also enhanced it by disengaging it from the coattails of prophethood. He stated that the 'idea of Finality [of prophethood] is perhaps the most original idea in the cultural history of mankind'.⁸³ Furthermore, Islam provided the message of an ever-expanding world that was continually being shaped by God and his co-worker, the individual. The adoption of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., fo. 2.

⁸⁰ Iqbal, *Islam as an Ethical and Political Ideal: Iqbal's Maiden English Lecture 1908*, edited by S. Y. Hashimy (Lahore, 1955), pp. 59–60.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁸² Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, pp. 94, 106.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 94.

Aristotelian idea of the fixed universe by theologians and philosophers had clouded the original Quranic view of a dynamic and ever-growing universe.⁸⁴

Individual personality was the central fact of the universe, and it had the quality of growth and corruption.⁸⁵ Iqbal argued that the theory of evolution had brought despair instead of hope and enthusiasm for life to the modern world because of the 'unwarranted modern assumption' that man's present structure, mental and physiological, was the final stage in biological evolution.⁸⁶ Although he appreciated Nietzsche's ideas on the immortality of man, he felt that they presented similar problems as the 'modern' theory of evolution. These were contrasted with the Islamic conception of evolution. Iqbal argued that it was possible to locate the genesis of the idea of evolution in the work of figures such as Rumi, and that this was completely in consonance with the view of the Quran. Iqbal asserted that unlike the modern theory of evolution, which robbed man of his faith in his own future, the formulation of the theory of evolution in Islam brought tremendous enthusiasm for the biological future of man.⁸⁷ In Iqbal's reading of the Nietzschean superman, he was purely a 'biological' creation as opposed to the 'Islamic' concept of the *insan-ikamil* (ideal man) who was the product of moral and spiritual forces.⁸⁸ The Allama also disagreed with the Nietzschean idea that the rise of the superman was an inevitability, stressing that such a view – just as was the case with the 'modern' theory of evolution – failed to inspire mankind to strive and struggle for its development.⁸⁹ On Nietzsche's concept of the superman, he wrote:

His birth is inevitable; how can the prospect give me any inspiration? We can aspire only for what is absolutely new, and the absolutely new is unthinkable in Nietzsche's view, which is nothing more than fatalism worse than the one

⁸⁴ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 67–70.

⁸⁵ 'On Nietzsche', *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 25.

⁸⁶ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 121.

⁸⁷ He argued that one can locate the genesis of the idea of evolution in Rumi's work and that this is completely in consonance with the view of the Quran. It is interesting to note that Iqbal compared the 'modern' concept of evolution with the 'theory of evolution in the world of Islam'. Iqbal points out that the same idea can affect different cultures differently. Whereas the 'modern' man was robbed of his faith in his own future, the theory of evolution in Islam brought into being Rumi's tremendous enthusiasm for the biological future of man. See Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 120–122 and 186–187.

⁸⁸ 'Allama Iqbal's Essay on Nietzsche', *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 25, pp. 6–7.

⁸⁹ This was part of a wider critique of Nietzsche's ideas on time and the theory of eternal recurrence. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 115–118 and 187.

summed up in the word 'qismat'. Such a doctrine, far from keying up the human organism for the fight of life, tends to destroy its action-tendencies and relaxes the tension of the ego.⁹⁰

The Allama's views on the development of the *khudi* through the cultivation of a particular type of character will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters. It is, however, important to note here that he spoke in terms of three broad periods in the development of religious life – faith, thought and discovery. In the first period, religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or the group must accept as an unconditional command, without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of the command. Although this attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, it is not of much consequence with regard to the individual's inner growth and development. Perfect submission to discipline is followed by a rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority. In this period, religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics – a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the last period, metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate Reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness. The final period of religious life is characterised by the discovery of the 'ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual selfhood'.⁹¹ Iqbal emphasised that he used the term religion (read 'true Islam') in the sense of the last phase.⁹²

The lack of understanding of religion in its 'highest manifestation' (third phase) fed the view that religion was merely a kind of well-meaning biological device calculated to build barriers of an ethical nature around human society to protect the social fabric against the otherwise unrestrained instincts of the ego. This had culminated in the prevalence of the view in Europe that Christianity had already fulfilled its biological mission.⁹³ Islam, however, had a role to play in guiding both the individual and society. Intellectual developments in the West and the failure of

⁹⁰ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 116.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181–184.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 191–192.

religious leadership in the East had forced the people to look to alternative non-religious systems such as socialism and nationalism to guide and order society. Islam, rather, was as an ideology and a complete system for the organisation of society.

ISLAM AS AN IDEOLOGY OR COMPLETE SYSTEM

In contrast to a number of Muslim intellectuals who spoke (and continue to speak) of Islam as an 'ideology' without elaborating on what they meant by the term, Iqbal presented Islam as an ideology that could be contrasted with modern western ideologies such as nationalism and socialism.⁹⁴ Describing Islam as a 'social *nizam*' (order),⁹⁵ he argued that it provided a solution to the economic and political problems of the day.⁹⁶ The Allama believed that amongst the religious systems in the world, Islam was the best suited for the organisation of life as it applied to every aspect of the life of the individual and society. In a letter to the under-secretary of state for India, Lord Lothian, Iqbal stressed that it was time for England and Europe to take a serious interest in Islam, not just as a culture and religion, but as an 'economic system' which provided practical solutions to contemporary problems.⁹⁷

Iqbal's reconstruction of Islam contested modern notions of religion that stressed the clear demarcation between the public and private, and challenged conceptions of ideology which sought to differentiate the psychological functions of ideology from its cognitive beliefs. Clifford Geertz has argued that where 'science is the diagnostic, the critical, dimension

⁹⁴ Interpretations of Islam as a system or ideology have been influential in shaping the views of contemporary 'Islamists'. It should be noted, however, that even self-proclaimed liberals and modernists have described Islam as a system or ideology. In the early 1950s, Syed Abul Latif, who was based in Osmania University, Hyderabad, attempted to gather an international body of intellectuals in India to draft a comprehensive and definitive work on Islamic law and *hadith*. In his report on the proposed gathering, Latif noted that terms such as 'light of the Quran' or 'Quranic ideology' have been used loosely by Muslim intellectuals without any attempt to define what they meant. He thus proposed that one of the aims of the gathering should be to define these terms and to debate if terms such as ideology could be used with regard to the Quran and Islam. Syed Abul Latif, *Toward Reorientation of Islamic Thought (A Fresh Examination of the Hadith Literature): A Critical Resume of Views Advanced by Scholars on the Memorandum of the Academy Suggestion of the Need for a Fresh Examination of the Hadith Literature* (Hyderabad, 1954), pp. 20-21.

⁹⁵ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, ii, 494.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

⁹⁷ 'Allama Iqbal's letter to Lord Lothian dated 17 March 1933', *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 5, fo. 404.

of culture, ideology is the justificatory, apologetic, one'.⁹⁸ A distinction is thus made between religion as a symbolic system, where it has made an important psychological and therapeutic contribution to society, and a cognitive explanatory system, where it has appeared weak.⁹⁹ For Iqbal, Islam as an ideology had an important symbolic as well as cognitive role. As an ideology, Islam was not a superstructure built upon a specific economic base; it was the basis upon which economic, political and social structures were constructed. The cognitive role of Islam was central to the construction of it as a complete system. Iqbal's letters and notes, particularly his correspondence with Suleiman Nadwi, provide an insight into his attempts to inquire into the 'Islamic viewpoint' on a host of non-religious temporal issues, such as taxation,¹⁰⁰ the right to private property¹⁰¹ and the powers of the executive.¹⁰²

In his early writings on Islam and politics, Iqbal heralded the democratic and liberal credentials of Islam by locating precedents for democracy and liberalism within Islamic socio-political principles and practises.¹⁰³ He had even argued that by spreading democracy and 'improving the political ideals of Asia', the British were essentially continuing the task that Muslims had started but failed to accomplish.¹⁰⁴ His construction of Islam as a complete system, however, rested on the premise that Islam was a distinct ideology. Although aspects of Islam could be similar to aspects of other systems and ideologies, Islam was not to be equated with these systems. This clearly marked him off from figures who argued that Islam could adopt modern ideas and institutions without affecting its basic principles.

The genesis for the construction of Islam as an alternative ideology lay in Iqbal's belief that the problems of the day – capitalist exploitation, aggressive nationalism, incessant warfare – were the direct consequence of western forms of organising society. In a letter to Suleiman Nadwi written in January 1934, for instance, Iqbal recorded his concerns over the failure of political ideologies and systems in Europe. Europe, he noted, was witnessing the decaying of democratic structures and the emergence

⁹⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York, 1973), p. 231.

⁹⁹ See 'Introduction' in Robert Bock and Kenneth Thompson (eds.), *Religion and Ideology* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 6–8.

¹⁰⁰ Iqbal, *Iqbal Nama*, p. 132.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, iv, 36.

¹⁰³ Iqbal, *Islam as Ethical and Political Ideal*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

of dictatorship. It was also in the throes of a war against capitalism. It was such concerns that led him to study if Islam could provide a solution to contemporary problems where other ideologies had failed.¹⁰⁵

Contrasting Islam with Christianity, he described the latter as a purely monastic order which had gradually developed into a 'vast church-organization'.¹⁰⁶ Unlike Islam, Christianity was not a polity. Europe's uncritical adoption of the Manichean duality between spirit and matter had further spurred the separation of the spiritual and the temporal, resulting in the total exclusion of Christianity from the life of European states.¹⁰⁷ Unlike Christianity, Islam was a 'civil society' from its origins, although Sufism, with its emphasis on detachment and asceticism, had detracted from an understanding of Islam as a social polity.¹⁰⁸

The difference between Islam and Christianity was traced by Iqbal to the special role of Muhammad as a *nabi* (prophet) and the fact that Islam, unlike Christianity, promulgated a law. As Christianity emerged as a powerful reaction against the spirit of legality manifested in Judaism, it stayed clear from setting a law and emphasised other-worldliness as its spiritual ideal instead.¹⁰⁹ Quoting from Friedrich Naumann's *Briefe über Religion* (1903), Iqbal claimed that Christianity 'attached no value to the preservation of the State, law, organization, production'.¹¹⁰ More interestingly, Iqbal argued that there were essentially two aspects to *nabuyiyat* (prophecy) – the first being the revelation of a path towards spiritual development and the second being the establishment, or laying the foundation for the establishment, of a socio-political institution. If only the first aspect was fulfilled, as was the case with a number of religions, the founder of the religion had not performed the functions of *nabuyiyat*, but rather only *waliyat* (guardianship).¹¹¹ Muhammad was a *nabi*. He had thus fulfilled both the functions of *nabuyiyat* and had laid the basis for a socio-political organisation. Iqbal further argued that the

¹⁰⁵ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, iii, 449–450.

¹⁰⁶ Iqbal, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, edited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani, 3rd (Revised and Enlarged) edn. (Lahore, 1977), p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ He thought that the best thinkers of Europe were realising this mistake, but its statesmen were indirectly forcing the world to accept it as an unquestionable dogma. Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁸ In addition to the other-worldliness preached by Sufism, Iqbal felt that Sufism had also attracted the best Muslim minds, thus leaving the state in the hands of intellectual mediocrities. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

¹¹⁰ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 166.

¹¹¹ Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, iv, 213 and 219–220.

khatam-i-nabuyiyat, or the culmination of the chain of Prophethood in Muhammad, meant that no one coming after Muhammad would fulfil both aspects of *nabuyiyat*.¹¹² As the final revealed system, Islam provided the basis for the ideal and most complete system of social, political and economic organisation.

So, for Iqbal, whereas Christianity accepted the adoption of a separate political creed alongside its religious creed,¹¹³ Islam united religion, politics and ethics. Echoing Iqbal's views, Abul A'la Maududi argued that the chief difference between Christianity and Islam was that the former was not a 'social creed'. It was concerned solely with the salvation of the individual, not society, and it prescribed that the individual's salvation lay in his cutting himself off from this world.¹¹⁴ There was, however, a significant difference in Iqbal's and Maududi's views. Iqbal argued that Islam and Christianity were primordially different in their nature. In his writings, Christianity seems like a stage in the evolution of the ideal and most complete system: Islam.¹¹⁵ Maududi, on the other hand, argued that Christianity, like all *dins*, was revealed as a set of laws, and that these authentic principles of Christianity had been lost because of a corruption of its original teachings and theology.¹¹⁶ Muhammad Ali expressed a similar view when he argued that the true message of Christ had been changed beyond recognition by Paul's teachings and the Hellenistic influences that clouded the work of later writers on Christianity. The division between politics and religion was thus not intrinsic to Christianity, but rather the result of the corruption of its authentic message.¹¹⁷

For Iqbal, Islam organised society on the basis of *tauhid*, the oneness of God. The principle of *tauhid* not only signified the unity of God but provided a basis for the development of man and society. As a polity, Islam was a practical means of making the principle of *tauhid* a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind.¹¹⁸ The next chapter will

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 220–221.

¹¹³ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 166.

¹¹⁴ Maududi, *West versus Islam*, English version by S. Waqar Ahmad Gardezi and Abdul Waheed Khan, second edn. (Lahore, 1992), p. 82.

¹¹⁵ A similar observation has been made by Shepard on Qutb's views on Christianity: *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 47.

¹¹⁶ Maududi, *Islamic Law and Islamic Constitution* (Lahore, 1969), pp. 157–158 and 170–171.

¹¹⁷ Ali, *My Life: A Fragment – An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohammed Ali*, edited and annotated by Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 139–141.

¹¹⁸ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 147.

show how the Allama contrasted the displacement of universal ethics and the growth of a plurality of national systems of ethics, which accompanied the establishment of nation-states, with the humanistic and unifying socio-political ethic presented by Islam.¹¹⁹

Iqbal was not alone in stressing the humanistic and unifying role of Islam. This was a constant theme in the work of many Muslim intellectuals keen on demonstrating that Islam had played a beneficial role in the socio-political development of the world. Mohsin-ul-Mulk emphasised the unifying impact that the polity of Islam had on the warring Arab tribes and *qawms*,¹²⁰ and traced the prevalence of such an ideal in Islam to its birth in an environment characterised by warfare, disintegration and a lack of common ethics.¹²¹ Iqbal echoed these views when he wrote that Islam was born at period when the old principles of human unification such as blood relationships and 'throne-culture' were failing. Thus, the task it set for itself was to establish a new basis for human unification.¹²² However, Iqbal went further than many of his contemporaries in constructing Islam into a socio-political ethic on the basis of the principle of *tawhid* and the *nabuyiyat* of Muhammad.

Iqbal spoke in terms of three forces or socio-political ideals that could shape the development of mankind – 'western civilisation', communism and Islam.¹²³ Western civilisation was defined as a system founded upon a scientific methodology calling for the separation of the state and church, whereas communism was a system that based its philosophy on materialism and called for the negation of the church.¹²⁴ Unlike a number of his contemporaries, Iqbal did not perceive of communism as a weapon that could be used against the colonising powers. Marxism could not be heralded as a liberating ideology as it was itself an ideological construct of the West, and thus was seen within the context of colonialism as a totalising system of power.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the emergence of Marxism as

¹¹⁹ Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, pp. 5–6.

¹²⁰ Mohsin-ul-Mulk Mahdi Hassan, *Tehzib al Akhlaq* 3 [Collection of Mohsin-ul-Mulk's Writings] (undated), p. 81.

¹²¹ He argued that the differences between the political ideals enunciated by Moses and Muhammad stemmed largely from the different social and historical contexts in which they lived. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

¹²² Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 139.

¹²³ 'Allama Iqbal's Notes on Islam as I Understand it', *File on Iqbal*, IAP, vol. 25.

¹²⁴ Iqbal, *Letters and Writings*, pp. 80–82.

¹²⁵ Robert Young noted that Marxism provided third-world intellectuals with a liberating discourse. Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, 2001).

a rival ideology to 'western civilisation' had itself spurred Iqbal and his contemporaries to interpret Islam as an ideology that could contest western ideologies and provide solutions to contemporary problems. This was, for instance, the underlying impetus in Azad's article 'Jamuriyyat ke Bahd Socialism bhi Ek Galthi Hain' ('After Democracy, Socialism is also a Mistake'), in which he reframed Islam – in response to the emergence of both the 'man-made systems or ideologies' of democracy in America and France as well as an opposing system of socialism in Russia – as an ideology which provided the 'true' solutions to the political and economic problems of the day.¹²⁶

Iqbal's critique of the basis upon which 'western civilisation' and communism sought to organise society will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. However, it is pertinent to note here that he saw the two ideologies as fundamentally similar because they both sought to perpetuate the separation between the state and the church, and because they were born out of the materialistic approach.¹²⁷ Both had failed to realise that man was essentially a spiritual being. Communism had developed out of Hegel's ideas on the dialectic and history, and it rose 'in revolt against the very source which could have given it strength and purpose' when it displaced God as the generator of the historical and dialectical process.¹²⁸ The materialistic approach served to de-centre man as the shaper of history, reducing the development of the world and mankind to the dictates of economic determinism. Moreover, it had also given rise to many of the problems that plagued modern society. Economic exploitation, colonialism, warfare and the rise of dictatorships in the West were all seen to be direct results of the materialistic basis of the ideologies that organised society.

Although Nietzsche had successfully highlighted the failings of modern civilisation, Iqbal lamented that he had failed to prescribe the right solutions, as he too failed to provide a spiritual rule for society.¹²⁹ Even Nietzsche's methodology was based on materialism. Comparing Nietzsche's and Marx's views on history, Iqbal argued that both thinkers believed that the process of history was determined by economic forces and that the only important principle was that might is right. The

¹²⁶ Abul Kalam Azad, *Dawaat-i-Haq* (Delhi, undated), pp. 5–28.

¹²⁷ In his *Javid Nama*, he compares the materialistic basis of communism and imperialism. He writes that 'westerns have lost the realm of the soul', hence they seek to base their ideologies and systems on the basis of their 'stomachs'. Iqbal, *Javid Nama*, p. 53.

¹²⁸ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 188.

¹²⁹ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 195.

materialistic approach characteristic of the systems evolved in Europe culminated in the neglect of love, justice, duty, virtue and other principles. Humanity, argued Iqbal, was in need of three things – a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.¹³⁰ Iqbal's critical review of the basis of western and modern ideologies and his writings on the need for a spiritual interpretation of the universe and the spiritual emancipation of the individual had an important influence on later 'Islamists' within South Asia and beyond, including Maududi and Ali Shariati (1933–1977). Shariati, one of the leading ideologues of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, acknowledged that Iqbal's discourse on the nature of Islam and the need for a spiritual interpretation of the world influenced the development of his own views.¹³¹

One fundamental difference between Iqbal and Maududi was that, unlike the latter, Iqbal did not seek to present a fixed Islamic/Quranic constitution, sharia or political structure. Maududi spoke in terms of a fully worked-out Islamic legal and political structure that needed to be implemented and not evolved.¹³² Iqbal, on the other hand, stressed the flexibility of the Islamic *nizam*. To understand this apparently contradictory stance one needs to look at the 'Islamic' sources from which Iqbal drew as well as his methodology in interpreting these sources. There are two important points to note about Iqbal's interpretation of the Quran: He believed that it provided a timeless and eternal message and that it was not a fixed legal code.

Iqbal refuted the views of a number of his contemporaries who sought to contextualise the verses of the Quran within the socio-political and intellectual milieu in which they were revealed. By locating the verses within the context of the period, these individuals were able, first, to point to the specific conditions which led to the revelation of particular injunctions and, second, to argue that these injunctions were specific to the context and not necessarily universally applicable. On the other hand, Iqbal argued that the object of the Quran is to provide universal and timeless values and as such its methodology is seldom historical. He points to the method employed in the Quran in dealing with older legends that had been earlier narrated in the Bible and the Torah to demonstrate this. Scholars had, he argued,

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 179.

¹³¹ Ali Shariati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, translated by R. Campbell (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 94–95.

¹³² See discussion on Maududi's views on the state in the Conclusion.

neglected the Quranic method of complete or partial transformation of legends in order to invest them with new ideas, thus adapting them to the advancing spirit of the times.¹³³ He argued that in order to give the legends a universal moral and philosophical import, the Quran omits the names of people and localities which tend to limit the meaning of the legend by giving it the colour of a specific historical event.¹³⁴

The Quran was not, however, a legal code and did not provide the details of a legal or political structure. Instead, the Quran only laid the broad principles and foundations along which society – politics, economics, and legal and social life – was to be organised. It laid the basis for a polity in which there was ‘no distinction between the Church and the State’.¹³⁵ The principle of *tauhid*, which Iqbal believed was the foundational principle for the ideal socio-political structure, was laid out in the Quran. He looked to the *sunna* of the Prophet as well as to the work of Muslim jurists and intellectuals to see how the Islamic *nizam* developed. It should be noted that his views on the development of the Islamic political structure and the sharia need to be studied together. As a *nabi*, Muhammad had brought the broad principles along which a legal and socio-political structure was to be organised. Fulfilling his role as a *nabi*, he laid the basis for this structure in his lifetime. His political, social, legal and economic organisation and his conducting of war were all part of his mission of establishing the basis of the Islamic structure. It was then the role of the intellectuals to develop this Islamic system in view of the practise of the Prophet and within the principles laid down in the Quran.¹³⁶

AHMADIYYA AND ‘ORTHODOX ISLAM’

It has already been noted that Muhammad Iqbal’s views on the Ahmadiyya movement have been the source of considerable controversy. This is largely because both supporters and opponents of the movement have

¹³³ He stated that although this was an uncommon method of dealing with legends in religious texts, it was, however, commonly employed in non-religious texts. He pointed to *Faust*, in which Goethe had given an entirely new meaning to the legend of the Fall as an example. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 82.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 80–82.

¹³⁵ Iqbal, ‘Political Thought in Islam’ in *The Sociological Review*, 1, 3 (1908), p. 252.

¹³⁶ See, for instance, the primacy he gave to the role of Muslim legalists in the development of Muslim political thought in his article ‘Political Thought in Islam’. In this article, he highlighted the different strands of political thought that emerged from their work. See also his letters to Suleiman Nadwi, compiled in the *Iqbal Nama*, in which he discussed the role of interpretation and *naqsh* (sublimation) in the process of determining the Islamic view on politics.

tried to appropriate Iqbal.¹³⁷ However, Iqbal's contact with a number of individuals who were associated with the movement also stoked the controversy.¹³⁸ Sialkot and Lahore were both important centres of Ahmadiyya activity. Iqbal's own brother, Atta Muhammad, was himself believed to be a follower of the movement, and his teacher, Mir Hasan, was closely associated with a number of Ahmadiyya. Although Iqbal had initially expressed optimism about the aims of the movement, fears that it would split the unity of Islam and that it presented a theology which sought to reconcile the Muslims with disempowerment moved him to reject it vigorously.¹³⁹ Iqbal believed that the rise and spread of the movement had serious theological and socio-political implications for Islam as well as India. Iqbal's criticisms of the Ahmadiyya movement were targeted chiefly at the Qadiani branch of the movement, as he felt that they represented the original views of the Ahmadiyya.¹⁴⁰

By asserting the prophethood of its founder, the movement contravened one of the two central pillars of Islam – the finality of the Prophet. This, Iqbal argued, ruptured the unity of the Muslim community. It is interesting to note Iqbal's attempts to differentiate between the Ahmadiyya and the Ismaili community in this respect. Although he recognised that the Ismailis had their own leader in the form of the Aga Khan, and that they subscribed to a different set of theological views, Iqbal stressed that they had not elevated their leader to the position of a prophet. Consequently, they had remained within the fold of Islam and posed no threat to its unity.¹⁴¹ Comparing the Ahmadiyya movement with another revivalist movement which had emerged from within Islam, Baha'ism, Iqbal stated

¹³⁷ Even in his lifetime, Iqbal found himself appropriated by various people in support of their views on the movement. On 13 November 1910, Iqbal wrote to the editor of the journal *Paigham* to state that an article published on 9 October, which claimed to present Iqbal's views on the Ahmadiyya movement, had misrepresented his views. The article asserted that Iqbal acknowledged the *haq* or 'truth' presented by the movement. Iqbal claimed that he had given no such interview and that he had till then not commented on the movement. He acknowledged that he was associated with many people who were either adherents or supporters of the movement. As Sialkot was an important centre of the Ahmadiyya movement, he had the opportunity to interact with many people who were associated with it on his trips back to Sialkot, but he asserted that at this point he had made no statement of his views on the movement. See letter in Iqbal, *Kulliyat Makatib-i-Iqbal*, i, 429–431.

¹³⁸ The Ahmadiyya regularly highlighted his close relations with their leaders. See, for instance, 'Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's Bitter Attack on the Ahmadiyya Community' in *Review of Religions*, 34, 6 (June, 1935), pp. 201–202.

¹³⁹ See, for instance, Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁴¹ The cultural and national importance of *risalat* is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. See pp. 172–176.

that as Baha'ism openly departed from Islam it posed no threat to the internal structure or unity of Islam. The Ahmadiyya movement, on the other hand, 'retains some of the more important externals of Islam with an inwardness wholly inimical to the spirit and aspirations of Islam'.¹⁴² Baha'ism, he added, had been 'more honest' than the Ahmadiyya movement, as it had broken from Islam.¹⁴³

The Ahmadiyya movement was perceived as a threat to the 'very structure' of Islam.¹⁴⁴ The constant expectation of a messiah amongst the Magians in the pre-Islamic era had led to religious communities constantly disintegrating, with new communities emerging around new prophets. Islam brought an end to this constant fissuring through its message of unity.¹⁴⁵ The Magian concept of perpetual expectation of a prophet, out of which the Ahmadiyya movement had emerged, would only serve to encourage further religious adventurism, exaggerating disunity and splintering the Muslim community. In an open letter to Jawaharlal Nehru written in 1936, Iqbal wrote that the Ahmadiyya posed a grave threat to Islam, as the conceptual structure of Islam was extremely simple. Unlike other religions, Islam was not based on race but purely on the solidarity of religion founded upon the principles of *tauhid* and the *risalat* (prophethood) of Muhammad. A rejection of either one of these would tear the fabric of Islam. In fact, Iqbal argued that this simplicity in the conceptual structure of Islam had made the allegation of heresy within Islam very difficult and rare, because one would have to contravene two very broad principles that united an array of theological and philosophical views.¹⁴⁶

Apart from splitting the unity of Islam, Iqbal argued that the expectation of a messiah which characterised the Ahmadiyya movement served to perpetuate disempowerment. Nietzsche had argued that the doctrine of seeking redemption through Christ had been a masterstroke of the priests who sought to perpetuate a slave mentality.¹⁴⁷ Reflecting such views, Iqbal argued that the expectation of salvation through a messiah had only served to disempower and reconcile people to a position of decline. His stress on the empowering role of the Islamic conception of Finality

¹⁴² Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 95.

¹⁴³ Iqbal, *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, p. 162.

¹⁴⁴ Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁶ While acknowledging that mutual allegations of heresy have been made by theologians and sects, Iqbal drew from Hurgrounje's view that such debates actually provided an impetus to synthetic theological thought. Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 119.

¹⁴⁷ See, for instance, Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 92.

which 'cut the Muslim community from the coattails of prophethood' has already been discussed. The Ahmadiyya stress on a continued prophecy would only detract from the individual striving to achieve his own as well as society's development, as he would continue to look to the arrival of a messiah to salvage him. The Ahmadiyya were thus playing a role similar to Nietzsche's life-negating priests.

The promise of a messiah served to sap the *khudi's* will and destroy his desire for internal reform. Iqbal advocated Ibn Khaldun's and Bergson's views of the historical process as a free and creative movement, rather than a process which has been planned beforehand.¹⁴⁸ Struggle and *ijtihād* were important elements in the development of man and society. By predicating solutions to contemporary problems upon the arrival of a messiah, the belief in the perpetual expectation of a prophet weakened the *khudi*.¹⁴⁹ It forced the individual into a situation of slavish surrender and continued to tie him to the strings of expectancy, dampening his desire to effect a change himself. Comparing it with 'orthodox Islam', Iqbal stated that the Ahmadiyya movement retains the discipline of Islam but destroys the will which the discipline was intended to fortify.¹⁵⁰

For Iqbal, the Ahmadiyya movement was not an 'abrupt phenomenon in the history of Muslim religious thought in India',¹⁵¹ but the culmination of ideas that had arisen in the wake of the decline of Islam in 1799, the year that marked the fall of Tipu Sultan and the destruction of the Turkish fleet in the battle of Navarino. The ulama who approached the movement solely from the theological point of view had failed to comprehend the wider socio-political implications of the movement. It was important to engage the Ahmadiyya within the light of the history of Islamic thought in India.¹⁵² Following the decline of Islam in India, a number of Muslim leaders had sought to reconcile Muslims to the new socio-political environment, and had even succeeded in winning some members of the ulama to their cause.¹⁵³ Commenting on the religious and political stances which arose out of these efforts, Iqbal wrote that the life history

of nations shows that when the tide of life in a people begins to ebb, decadence itself becomes a source of inspiration, inspiring their poets, philosophers, saints, statesmen, and turning them into a class of apostles whose sole ministry is to

¹⁴⁸ Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 127-128.

¹⁵² Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, pp. 123-125.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 125-126.

glorify, by the force of a seductive art of logic, all that is ignorable and ugly in the life of their people. These apostles unconsciously clothe despair in the glittering garment of hope, undermine the traditional values of conduct and thus destroy the spiritual virility of those who happen to be their victims. One can only imagine the rotten state of a people's will who are, on the basis of divine authority, made to accept their political environment as final.¹⁵⁴

Iqbal rejected the Ahmadiyya as a movement which sought to provide a theological and revelational basis in support of those who were striving to reconcile Muslims to the new socio-political environment in the wake of colonialism.¹⁵⁵ The movement was described as an attempt to reconcile Muslims to political subjugation and decline, and was accused of inventing a theology and building a community whose creed was political servility.¹⁵⁶ Such criticisms must be situated within both the context of the movement's theological belief in the need for a messiah and its political stance. As noted earlier, Iqbal felt that the expectation of a *mahdi* who would bring salvation to the people disempowered the individual. The individual's development did not lie in internal reform or in his striving against external adversities; his salvation lay solely in the arrival of a messiah. The individual was thus reconciled to the position of social, economic and political decline.

Criticisms against the movement also stemmed from its open advocacy of loyalty to the British. The Ahmadiyya put such a high premium on proclaiming their loyalty that an oath of loyalty to the British government was even incorporated as one of the confessions of faith.¹⁵⁷ Their political stance is clear from an article published in their English-language journal, *The Review of Religions*, in the wake of the Mappila uprising of 1921, in which it was stated:

Night and day, early and late, in his speeches and in his writings, the Promised Messiah [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] exhorted his followers to remain loyal to the British government, to render it any possible help it stands in need of and even included loyalty to the government among the ten conditions of initiation into the Ahmadiyya movement.¹⁵⁸

The British government was credited with establishing a system of rule that allowed for all faiths to be propagated freely in India. Such a situation, they argued, had never existed in India before the arrival of the British.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁵⁷ *The Review of Religions*, 24, 2 (Dec., 1925), p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 20, 9 (Sep., 1921), p. 368.

A number of Ahmadiyya writings highlighted the British toleration of all religious activities – even to the extent of allowing for Christianity to be criticised openly – and stressed that this was a blessing for the movement.¹⁵⁹ In fact, Ghulam Ahmad often stated that the establishment of the colonial state had not only brought prosperity to his family, but also created the free and tolerant atmosphere that was necessary for the propagation of his message of renewal of Islam. Ghulam Ahmad had even attributed this tolerance to the indulgent nature of Queen Victoria herself.¹⁶⁰ It may well have been in response to this that Iqbal characterised the movement as an attempt to provide a revelational basis for India's subjugation.¹⁶¹

CONCLUSION

Iqbal's presentation of Islam as an empowering and complete ideology posed a challenge to dominant conceptions of both religion and ideology. His critique of the modern conception of religion is reflected in the work of a number of his contemporaries and later figures who claim his influence. Maududi, for instance, rejected the influence of the 'Christian concept of religion', which he felt fed the view that the best that could be hoped for was for 'some sort of adjustment between religion and science'.¹⁶² Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (1903–1986), the founder of the Tolu-e-Islam movement in Pakistan, was to argue that Islam challenged not only the truth and validity of particular religions, but the very conception of 'religion' itself.¹⁶³ Parwez distinguished between *din*, which he defined as a complete, divinely revealed code, and *mazhab*, which he equated with the popular modern conception of religion.¹⁶⁴ Common to such constructions of Islam was that they defied the demarcation between the public and the private. This set figures such as Iqbal, Maududi and Parwez apart from those intellectuals who argued that Islam did not present a socio-political system. Allama Iqbal's presentation of Islam as a complete ideology had important implications for the compatibility of Islam with modern or western political ideologies such as nationalism and socialism. The next chapter will study his assessment of the ideology of nationalism and the institution of the nation-state.

¹⁵⁹ See, for instance, *The Review of Religions*, 13, 5 (Feb., 1914), pp. 121–122.

¹⁶⁰ Noted in Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, p. 22.

¹⁶¹ Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements*, p. 127.

¹⁶² Maududi, *Islam vs. West*, p. 85.

¹⁶³ Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, *Islam: a Challenge to Religion* (Lahore, 1968).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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IQBAL SINGH SEVEA

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



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