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2017

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### Recommended Citation

Corbman, Marjorie Ph.D. and Hartung, Jan-Peter, "'I Pine for True Closeness": Muḥammad Iqbāl's Uneasy Relationship with Christianity, and the Islamic Social Ideal" (2017). *Faculty Works: Theology and Religious Studies*. 9.

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### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4363>  
DOI: 10.4000/samaj.4363  
ISSN: 1960-6060

### Publisher

Association pour la recherche sur l'Asie du Sud (ARAS)

### Electronic reference

Marjorie L. Corbman and Jan-Peter Hartung, « “I Pine for True Closeness”: Muḥammad Iqbāl’s Uneasy Relationship with Christianity, and the Islamic Social Ideal », *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Free-Standing Articles, Online since 31 July 2017, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4363> ; DOI : 10.4000/samaj.4363

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# "I Pine for True Closeness": Muḥammad Iqbāl's Uneasy Relationship with Christianity, and the Islamic Social Ideal

Marjorie L. Corbman and Jan-Peter Hartung

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- 1 "My life has been spent mostly in the study of Western philosophy,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Muḥammad Iqbāl, the revered Muslim poet-cum-philosophical thinker of British India, some thirteen years before his death in April 1938, "and this point of thought has become nearly a second nature to me. I cannot express well in Urdu what is in my heart" (Iqbal 1951:1/47, quoted in Schimmel [1963:316]).<sup>2</sup>
- 2 One may read this as a massive understatement, given that Iqbāl attained most of his fame for his more often than not philosophically charged Persian and Urdu poetry. However, there might nonetheless be a feasible explanation for the appropriateness of Iqbāl's remark: after all, his writings, whether in prose or poetry, as well as his speeches, often show a struggle to transcend the Western contexts in which Iqbāl first discovered many of the ideas that formed the backbone of his own philosophical and socio-religious thought. Such a conceivable over-reliance of an "Oriental" author on "non-Oriental" ideas might well be explicable in the light of the insights provided by Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies: having been fully embedded in the colonial setup, Iqbāl, same as any other colonial subject, was consequently denied discursive powers, or, in other words, the "permission to speak" in self-representation (prominently, see Said [1978:109–10] and Spivak [1988:284–5]). Moreover, as a colonial subject educated in the heart of the Empire and in "non-oriental" knowledge, he must, by definition, always be a "passive reactor" (Said 1978:109); such reaction includes prominently a defensive attitude born out of resentment against the imposition of an alien set of norms and "truths" as valid. Thus, it is understandable that, instead of directing his religious polemic against the religious traditions of the Hindus, the religion of the majority of his fellow countrymen, Iqbāl's conception of "Islam" is often specifically drawn in contrast to Christianity, "Islam" being

defined as exactly what "Christianity" is not. This criticism of Christianity, however, was formulated not only as a larger religious argument but to quite an extent as a social comparison, in which he argued for an egalitarian Muslim commonwealth in contrast to what he perceived as the inequities of "Christian culture."

- 3 Given the important role that Christian missionary work played for the justification and sustaining of the colonial project (see, for example, Corbman [2012]), Iqbāl's at times polemical criticism of Christianity was clearly rooted in anti-imperialist sentiments; therefore it could well function as anti-imperialist rhetoric. His relationship with Christianity, however, was never an unequivocal one. After all, self-empowerment by actively appropriating the stock of knowledge of both sides, however, a fact that prompted such notions as "hybridity" (Bhabha 1994:112-5) and "agents of change" (Reetz 1997:9-11), put colonial subjects such as Iqbāl in the position to weighting up the respective arguments before embarking on a possible refutation of one of the two sides. It is perhaps a signifier of his hybridity that Iqbāl's take on Christianity remained somewhat ambivalent throughout the various phases of his life, a fact that can well explain away the possible impression of anachronisms in the following exposition of his views. On the other hand, however, it seems safe to assume that his thinking on this matter took a decisive turn when it became increasingly dominated by the contingencies of an actual political and social reality—especially as the question of Muslim separatism from an envisioned democratic and secular postcolonial Indian polity became more urgent—, perhaps at the expense of philosophical consistency.
- 4 One may ask, however, why, compared to indigenous Indian religious traditions, Christianity was granted a comparatively prominent place in Iqbāl's writings. After all, from the *spiritus rector* of the "Two-Nation Theory" (Iqbal 1945:3-39, esp. 12 [*Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad on the 29th December, 1930*]) one could easily assume that the dominant counterpart at which Iqbāl would chafe him was rather the increasingly standardized and politicized Hinduism. While the latter was predominantly shaped by acculturative socio-religious (for this heuristic concept, see Jones [1994:1-4]) organizations like the *Ārya Samāj*, established in 1875, and various politically activist Hindu associations that would soon find an umbrella in the *Hindū Mahāsabhā*, formed in 1915, even personalities like Gāṇḍhī (1869-1948) appeared at times surprisingly close to their religiously charged rhetoric,<sup>3</sup> which correspondingly at times filled even close Muslim associates of his, like Abū'l-Kalām Āzād (1888-1958), with some consternation (see, for example, Azad [1988:76-8, 89, 96-9]). In fact, this increased polarization between what in the nineteenth century had become Hinduism, and Islam is the very backdrop against which Iqbāl's rather theological engagement with Christianity—as epitome of the Other that is yet somehow related to the Self—may best be viewed. Thus, Iqbāl's engagement with Christianity can be seen to shift, generally speaking, over time: from his early scholarly engagement with Christianity during what we wish to regard as formative period during which he acquired most of his education (ca. 1898-1908), via a middle period during which he taught at his alma mater, the Government College of Lahore, as well as practicing as a lawyer (ca. 1909-1926), to his politically most active third period between his election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in January 1927 and his death in April 1938.
- 5 In this article we aim to demonstrate the crucial role Iqbāl's polemic engagement with Christianity had for the development of his socio-political beliefs, particularly his advocacy for the creation of a separate, independent Muslim state in northwest India. In

doing so, we will build upon other scholarly investigations of Iqbāl's engagement with European ideas and concepts (such as, most notably, Annemarie Schimmel's grounding of Iqbāl's religious philosophy in mystical and philosophical traditions of both the "West" and the "East") through attention to the ways in which Iqbāl creatively re-appropriated his Christian sources (1) to form a sweeping critique of Christianity and its historical expression in socio-political inequality, and, (2) correspondingly, to describe an idealized vision of an egalitarian, separate Muslim society.

## Appraisal

- 6 Surprisingly, while Iqbāl's literary *œuvre* leaves little doubt that he perceived Christianity—and, by implication, Hinduism—as clearly inferior to Islam, especially his early writings reveal nonetheless quite an attraction or fascination with the aesthetics of his main religious opponent. In particular, drawing upon the New Testament and other Christian sources as well as the rich tradition of Muslim portrayals of Jesus (see, for example, Khalidi [2001]), he saw in the central figure of the Christian faith an imaginative spirit expressed through his parables, arguably a match for the likes of Rūmī and Shakespeare (Schimmel 1963:265), and often used the "cross" as a prototypical image of suffering, for instance in the *Jāvīdnāmah* from the middle period of his literary work:

Shortsighted men have stirred up commotions  
and hung [God's] true servant upon a cross.  
*kam nigāhān-i fitnah'hā anḡikhtand*  
*bandah-yi haqq rā ba-dār āvikhtand*  
(*Jāvīdnāmah* in Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:273–387, here 338, line 20)<sup>4</sup>

The influence of Christian language, as well, permeates his prose, often using phrases from Christian Scriptures: "like pearls do we live and move and have our being in the perpetual flow of Divine life," he wrote, using a language that clearly resembles that of Acts 17:28 (Iqbal 1930:99–100).<sup>5</sup> In one of his *Stray Thoughts*, dating from as early as 1917, he appears to re-appropriate creatively the phrasing of Matthew 5:48 and, more broadly speaking, the poetic language of the New Testament to argue for his conception of self-actualization: "God is power. Be ye, then, like your Father Who is in heaven" (Iqbal 1964:49).<sup>6</sup>

- 7 Iqbāl's attraction to a Christian aesthetic at this early stage, but also the nucleus of his later challenging of Christian theological premises, can already be seen in his engagement in his early writings with the thought of the late medieval Sufi 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 826/1424) of Baghdad, an important figure for the popularization of the thought of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) (see Ritter [1960]). In his doctoral dissertation, published in 1908 under the title *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* at a time when Iqbāl's attitude to Christianity was more appreciative, he described at length what he calls al-Jīlī's "Doctrine of the Trinity" (Iqbal 1908:170), in which "Oneness," "He-ness," and "I-ness" form the three movements of "Pure Being" (Iqbal 1908:153), the third movement being expressed in an "external manifestation, which is the self-diremption of the Essence of God and man. This separation makes a gap which is filled by the perfect man" (Iqbal 1908:171).<sup>7</sup> Iqbāl pointed out that al-Jīlī himself did not recognize Christianity as a source for his theories, but he himself acknowledged that "[al-Jīlī] reproduces the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, except that his god-man is Muḥammad instead of Christ" (Iqbal 1964:24). More surprisingly, given Iqbāl's later emphasis on the indivisibility of God, he asserts that "no Islamic thinker will object to the deep meaning of the Trinity as explained by this

author" (Iqbal 1964:25). This restatement of the doctrine of the Trinity is most certainly a critique of the Christian theological position, but it shows from early on a preoccupation with restructuring Christian religious doctrine in an Islamic framework.

- 8 Iqbāl's rather positive attitude towards Christianity in the formative period of his intellectual life, that is the years between 1898 and 1908, begs of course some explanation, especially given his later increasingly critical stance. A possible explanation may be his close acquaintance with Thomas Walker Arnold (1864–1930), during the years 1898 and 1904 Professor of Philosophy at the Government College Lahore.<sup>8</sup> In this capacity, Arnold acted also as an interlocutor for both the British colonial administration and especially the Muslim communities in Northern India;<sup>9</sup> his various preserved lecture notes indicate that "philosophy" was understood rather broadly, and would nowadays rather feature in the field of the Study of Religion (TWA Papers IV/16 and 17). A close associate of the aged Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817–1898), Arnold appears to have shared this Muslim educationist's desire for an increasingly egalitarian cultural translations of an "Islamic" and a "Christian civilization," as indicated by Sir Sayyid's commentary of the Bible as much as by numerous of Arnold's writings ([Khān] 1278–85/1862–8:1).<sup>10</sup> The latter's strong interest in Muslim philosophy and mysticism was rooted in his conviction that these two fields of enquiry provided the best possible basis of an approximation of Islam and Christianity. Especially in his unpublished articles "The Influence of Islam on European Thought" and "The Culture of Christendom and Islam," Arnold stressed the need for cross-cultural translation of what he, in line with the *zeitgeist*, perceived as "civilizations,"<sup>11</sup> in order to appreciate those commonalities, rather than stress the strong dogmatic and cultural differences. Despite lacking proper textual evidence, among others from Iqbāl's dedication of the *Bazm-i Iqbāl* edition of his doctoral dissertation to Arnold (1954; Iqbal 1954:v), we may infer that the egalitarian view of Christianity and Islam held by the latter has been of consequence to the young Iqbāl and could well have triggered his interest in Christian thought in the widest possible sense.

## Theological Critique

- 9 Given the Christian background of many of his influences, Iqbāl's engagement with Christian theological concepts was perhaps even more inevitable. Over time, however, he would begin to increasingly challenge several of Christianity's constituents in response to the socio-political developments in colonial India, in which he developed his own views. As a result of the former, he appeared to gravitate to critics of a monolithically envisioned "Christian culture" from within Christendom, such as Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), who, in his "ethical monotheism," represented for him Christian religiosity free of unacceptable innovations (*bid'āt*) (Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:188–272, here 261f, *Tālstā'e* [ *Payām-i Mashriq*]; Schimmel 1963:267). In his *Jāvidnāmah*, Iqbāl depicted a dream of Tolstoy in which Christian culture is accused of

[making] the body the spirit's tomb.  
 What we have done unto His [i.e. Jesus'] humanity  
 His community has done unto His divinity.  
*az tū jān rā dakhmah mīgirdad badan*  
*ānchih mā kardīm bā nā sūt-i ū*  
*millat-i ū kard bā lāhūt-i ū.*  
 (Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:300, lines 8–9 [*Jāvidnāmah*])

In this regard, Iqbāl also showed a close affinity with John Milton (1608–1674), whose appealing Satan is presented as a villain while still managing to challenge many orthodox Christian assumptions through his speeches in *Paradise Lost* (Rastogi 1987:172). The Invocation at the beginning of Iqbāl's *Zabūr-i 'Ajam*, published already five years earlier, in which he asked God to

illuminate my [lifeless] clay  
with the light of David's tune;  
*khākam bah nūr-i naghmah-yi Dāvūd bar furūz;*  
(*Zabūr-i 'Ajam* in Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh: 116–77, here 116, line 10)

echoes the invocation of Milton at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*:

What in me is dark  
Illumin [*sic*], what is low raise and support;  
(Milton 2007:12, lines 22–3)

Iqbāl appeared not only drawn to these writers' critiques because he could utilize them for his own, but to a large extent also because they put their own Christian spirituality forward for critical re-examination in the light of the Christian Scriptures.

- 10 Perhaps Iqbāl's closest Christian influence, however, was Henri Bergson (1859–1941), the popular French life-philosopher whose thoughts on space, time, creativity, and freedom influenced many of Iqbāl's own.<sup>12</sup> While Bergson was born into a Jewish family, he had himself developed a close affinity to Christian—particularly Catholic—mysticism, and cited it as an important source of his own philosophical ideas:

We may therefore conclude that neither in Greece nor in ancient India was there complete mysticism ... For complete mysticism is that of the great Christian mystics ... There is no doubt that most of them passed through states resembling the various culminating phases of the mysticism of the ancients. But they merely passed through them: bracing themselves up for an entirely new effort, they burst a dam; they were then swept back into a vast current of life; from their increased vitality there radiated an extraordinary energy, daring, power of conception and realization. (Bergson 1932:240)<sup>13</sup>

- 11 In Bergson's conception, his theories were best exemplified in the lives of Christian mystics, a reality which evidently provided a challenge for Iqbāl, who worked hard to find the spiritual ideals he found in these Western writings incarnated in the Muslim tradition.
- 12 The polemic against Christianity developed by Iqbāl, as Schimmel points out, is dissatisfying to a reader well-versed in Christian and Islamic history, for, she argues, his arguments are prophetic and not historical, born of a necessity to pit ideal Islam against historical Christianity and Islam (Schimmel 1963:382–3). This pairing of the disappointing historical expressions of Islam and Christianity can be seen clearly developing in the poetry of that middle period of Iqbāl's literary work between 1909 and 1926, a characteristic few verses in his *Zabūr-i 'Ajam* describing

Mosque and tavern, temple, church and synagogue—  
a hundred deceits on the heart were tried,  
and yet the heart was never satisfied.  
*masjid va maykhānah va dayr va kalīsā va kunisht*  
*ṣād fusūn az bahr-i dil bastand va dil khūshnūd nī.*  
(Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:149, line 23 [*Zabūr-i 'Ajam*])

This equivalency of Christian and Muslim religious ethos must also be understood in the context of Iqbāl's understanding of Christians as among the "People of the Book," between Muslims and whom there are "no social barriers" (Iqbal 1964:190). Herein we might find one reason for why Iqbāl devoted considerably more thought to Christianity:

its commonalities with Islam necessitated much greater effort to work out more sophisticated arguments for legitimizing the superiority of Islam. In comparison, the religion of the Hindus at Iqbāl's immediate doorsteps was treated rather disdainfully: in his writings it appears more as a metaphor itself for sectarianism and division than as a religion, forming a logical opposition to the social equality in the Abrahamic religions. In referring to Muslim sectarianism in India, Iqbāl stated that Muslims have "out-Hindued the Hindu himself" (Iqbal 1964:54), and, in the light of heightened communal tension in British India of the mid-1920s,<sup>14</sup> it is little surprising that in his Urdu poem *Nayā Shivālah* Iqbāl blames the "idols" in the temples of the Brahmin (*ṣanamkadoṅ ke but*) for the hatred on both sides of the Muslim-Hindu divide in India (*Nayā Shivālah* in Iqbāl ([1924] 1926:88f). Even as he devoted time and effort to the critique of Christianity and Christian thought, Iqbāl afforded a certain respect to the religious thought of Christianity in taking it seriously enough to do so, something he does not do with the religion of the Hindus.

## Social Critique

- 13 The character of Iqbāl's mounting criticism of Christianity in the light of the emerging movement for national independence from the early 1920s onwards, that somewhat overlapped with the eruption of communalist sentiments in India only a little later, fits into a larger theological and social scheme devised by Iqbāl in which the *tawḥīd*, or Oneness, of God serves as a starting point for not only religious belief but social organization and scientific inquiry. However, his criticism is not necessarily a quirky scholastic argument about theological subtleties, but embedded in a wider attempt to position himself towards the "West," conceptualized as a distinct epistemic community. As such, he had to acknowledge the Christian roots of even the most radical non-theological cosmologies and anthropologies which are somewhat epitomized by Kant's "Copernican turn" (Kant 1788:288). In the light of such new frameworks that are no more dependent on recourse to a numinous entity in order to sustain worldviews and moral imperatives, Iqbāl was left with little choice to critically engage with its foundations, as long as he wanted to sustain his conviction in the absolute inevitability of a religious grounding of all human pursuit. His resulting argument would then necessarily be based on not further justifiable beliefs, a fact that prompted the Franciscan priest Augustine Fernandez in the mid-1950s to critically remark that Iqbāl's thought as a whole lacks the rigor of any philosophical enquiry and is based more on arbitrary personal preferences than on a logically consistent framework (Fernandez 1956). The logically consistent systemacy that Fernandez called for would be even structurally prevented by Iqbāl's oftentimes deliberately chosen poetic form of expression, yet it seems wrong to urge this as a proof for his alleged philosophical insubstantiality. After all, in Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), he possessed of a role-model who had adopted distinct literary forms for the expression of his explicitly anti-systematic philosophical ideas (.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Iqbāl did not only share Nietzsche's appreciation of emotion-evoking literary forms, but increasingly also the related suspicion in Christian religious thought.
- 14 In advancing his criticism of Christianity as a potential foundation of ideas dangerously close to forsaking the necessity of God as *ultima ratio*, Iqbāl starts with a rejection of the Christian concept of Trinity in contrast with the Islamic conception of the Absolute Oneness (*tawḥīd*) of God. He did however not remain there, but tied the two distinct conceptions of the divine to distinct anthropologies. For Iqbāl namely, so at least



Schimmel argues, the *tawḥīd* of God is reflected in the *tawḥīd* of the human person, so that no division can be made between body and soul (Schimmel 1963:93). In his poetry from roughly the decade between 1925 and 1935, Iqbāl sometimes used more typically dualistic mystical imagery directly before clarifying and contradicting it. For instance, in his *Jāvidnāmah* from 1932 he proclaimed:

Man is but sight, what remains is mere skin;  
 true sight signifies seeing the Beloved.  
 Dissolve the whole body into sight—  
 go to gazing, go to gazing, go to gaze!  
*ādami didāst bāqī-yi pūst ast*  
*didan-i ān bāshid kih did-i dūst ast*  
*jumlah-yi tan rā dar gudāz-i andar baṣar*  
*dar naẓar-i rū va dar naẓar-i rū va dar naẓar!*  
 (Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:283, lines 15–6 [*Jāvidnāmah*])<sup>16</sup>

Yet immediately following these verses Iqbāl explained that the body, as a contingent in time and space, is “but a state of the soul” (*in dū yak ḥāl ast az aḥvāl-i jān*; *Jāvidnāmah* in Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh: 283, line 18). After all, as Iqbāl stated in many ways, religion is an expression of the whole human person (Iqbal 1930:3). This belief transcends the personal, however, and describes the cosmos itself, for life, as Iqbāl has put it, “is not a formless fluid, but an organizing principle of unity” (Iqbal 1930:82). God’s “free creative energy” is perceived by human beings as space, time, and matter, but there is only one reality, moving forward in a world of infinite possibilities (Iqbal 1930:91). Iqbāl does not present this interpretation as novel but as deeply embedded in Muslim tradition, and looks especially to the Ash‘arite current of the theology of causation (*kalām*) for examples of those who eschewed the Aristotelian notion of a fixed universe and attempted to develop a dynamic theory of creation which Iqbāl argues is rooted in the Qur’ānic revelation (Iqbal 1930:97–8).

- 15 In Iqbāl’s scheme, this radical Oneness is identical with the revelatory understanding of the prophet. While describing the sometimes divergent experiences of the mystic and the prophet, Iqbāl in fact united the two in arguing that a prophet is a mystic whose experience of the one God “tends to overflow its boundaries” (Iqbal 1930:174–5) and works towards the shaping of communal life as a result. It is the same experience which Iqbāl expected of a true poet, as Schimmel, herself rather poetically, posits (Schimmel 1963:62). What she does here has, in fact, its roots not in Iqbāl’s writings, but reflects rather Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749–1832) much earlier conception of the relationship of poet and prophet.<sup>17</sup> Schimmel’s tacit and somewhat anachronistic conflation of Iqbāl with Goethe is not entirely without justification, as the former was emphatically impressed and subsequently influenced by the latter, although Schimmel brushes aside the fundamental difference in the conclusion drawn by each of the two authors, a fact, however, that prompted Iqbāl to respond poetically to Goethe with his *Payām-i Mashriq* from 1924.<sup>18</sup> Other than Goethe namely, who raised the free-thinking poet above divinely determined prophecy, for Iqbāl the free thought would—by definition—detach man from God as substance and ultimate cause of all existent; prophecy and poetry would thus need to fall necessarily in one.
- 16 The prophet’s mission, grounded in mystic experience and expressed in poetry, can never remain individual but must necessarily draw others together in unity. “Nations are born in the hearts of Poets” (Iqbal 1964:77), because the poet, in Iqbāl’s scheme, is not an individual man but a communicator of the unity of God.

- 17 The natural outcome of Islam's commitment to ultimate unity, then, for Iqbāl, is egalitarianism and democracy. Iqbāl sees this as expressed in the most basic forms of Islam, such as in prayer, which he argues is more social in Islam than in other religions, in which people's inner selves are united and eventually make themselves manifest in human relations (Iqbal 1930:126-7). He describes the congregational prayer, as well as the direction of prayer, as an expression of the normatively established "social equality" of believers within their community, one which he points out makes possible the shared standing of the "aristocratic Brahmin of South India" (Iqbal 1930:128-9) and the untouchable. This sense of shared human unity is, in his view, justified as well by Islamic political history and the development of the Caliphate as a unifying principle of the Muslim socio-political body. Iqbāl described varied historical expressions of this political concept but emphasizes that in all cases, the most important aspect of a Muslim political system is "election," the equal right of all Muslims to share in determining their political and social reality (Iqbal 1964:74): "The Muslim Commonwealth," in short, "is based on the absolute equality of all Muslims in the eye of the law" (Iqbal 1964:59), the latter being the divinely decreed *sharī'a*.
- 18 Posed against this idealistic vision of a radically egalitarian Islam are the various corrupting influences it has encountered in its history, including but not limited to Christianity. Just as significant in the history of Muslim thought to the influence of Christianity is the influence of classical thought. Iqbāl, all in all seemingly comfortable within a mainstream Ash'arite tradition of *kalām* (extensively on this notion, see Eichner [2009:145-69 et passim]), is skeptical of Hellenist and later Christian Scholastic thought and insists on the divergences between classical philosophy and the revelation of the Qur'ān. He contrasts what he sees as the anthropocentric focus of Greek philosophy with the comprehensive vision of the Qur'ān. The philosophers of antiquity denigrated the importance of the senses, while the Qur'ān views them as gifts of God (Iqbal 1930:4-5). Consequently, Iqbāl was critical of Islamic peripatetic and Avicennan philosophy,<sup>19</sup> which, along with Aristotelian thought, he associated with outdated interpretations of time and space. He contrasted Bergson's views on time and its "creative freedom" with the static universe of the Christian Scholastics, and concluded that the Qur'ān would beyond doubt be reconcilable with the former views (Gutas 1988:39-83).<sup>20</sup> It is for this reason that Iqbāl stressed that even if the Hellenist and Islamic worlds share excellence in scientific inquiry, it must not be concluded that they also share one worldview: Islamic science, he argued, developed precisely in opposition to Greek science and expresses a wholly different approach (Iqbal 1930:182). Thus, the European heritage of Hellenic and Hellenist antiquity is presented as inherently opposed to the spirit of freedom embodied in Islam.
- 19 While Greek thought is grossly portrayed as focusing too particularly on the human world, Christianity on the whole is depicted as too dismissive of the created world and permeated with a divisive, world-denying dualism. Iqbāl does not see Christianity as the source of this dualism, but instead repeatedly refers to it as Manichean or exhibiting Zoroastrian influence. In one striking instance, he draws a historical thread between Manicheanism, Christianity and Cartesianism which he sees as explanatory of Western history's dualistic tendencies on the whole (Iqbal 1930:145). By describing Christianity as influenced by Zoroastrian and Manichean ideas, Iqbāl is placing Christianity in a historical tradition of Persian dualism which, he wrote in his doctoral thesis, was unable to incorporate "the principle of Unity as a philosophical ground of all that exists" (Iqbāl 1908:20) before the advent of Islam. Interestingly, Iqbāl's discussion of Islam's opposition

to Hellenism echoes liberal Christian criticism of the early "Hellenization" of Christianity, most notably articulated by the protestant theologian and church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) (for example, Harnack 1889–91:I/7–9 and 16–21), but Iqbāl chose to minimize Christianity's Hellenistic influence by emphasizing its connection to Persian dualism. As his main support in this argument, he cited Oswald Spengler's (1880–1936) then most popular *Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*), agreeing with him that early Christianity can be classed as a "Magian" religion, but denying that the Manichean aspects of Islam as practiced are fundamental to its structure (Iqbal 1930:198–201). In doing so, he was able to depict Islam as a happy medium between an allegedly anthropocentric Hellenism—something that Iqbāl himself embraced perhaps to a greater extent than he would readily admit (Iqbal 1930:ch.4)—and world-denying Manicheanism, united with Christianity.

- 20 He stated repeatedly that Christianity was originally formed as "a monastic order," and as such has manifested its theological tendencies towards the bifurcation of the spiritual and material, including the political, in many stages of its historical development. He at times selectively cites historical facts to serve his thesis, such as in arguing that Christianity's monastic tendency was not countered until Constantine I "The Great" (r. 306–37), who attempted to use Christianity as a force of centralization—a process which he proves was doomed to failure by noting that a later Byzantine Emperor, Julian II "The Apostate" (r. 360–3), reverted to what he saw as "paganism." He does not mention that the Byzantine Empire returned to Christianity following Julian's death (Iqbal 1930:205). Iqbāl is insistent on the relationship between asceticism and Christianity, something which Schimmel connects to a historical understanding of Jesus as a model for asceticism in Islam (Schimmel 1963:265). This connection with asceticism is the source of his main criticism of Christianity, as he is typically critical of religion which emphasizes self-denial and focus on "another world." In one of the *ghazals* in his Urdu anthology *Bang-i Darā* from 1924 Iqbāl wrote:

As you have abandoned the mundane world, renounce too the world beyond ...

Good if the heart goes guarded by reason,

But let it go by itself, once in a while.

*dunyā jo chḥoṛ dī he to 'uqbah bḥī chḥoṛ de ...*

*achchḥā he dil ke sātḥ rahe pāsḥān-i 'aql*

*lekin kabḥī kabḥī isse tanḥā bḥī chḥoṛ de.*

(*Majnūn ne Shahr Chḥoṛā to Ṣaḥrā bḥī Chḥoṛ De* in Iqbāl [1924] 1926:112, lines 2f and 9)

It is very important for him to assert the essential goodness of the universe and of humankind in Islam in order to fit into his understanding of man's free ethical development and the Oneness of God as the source of all things (Iqbal 1964:34–5). He frames Christianity as a foil to Islam: while Christianity contains a "sharp opposition between the subject and the object, the mathematical without and the biological within" (Iqbal 1930:11–2), Islam seeks to transform man's relationship between the world and the soul.

- 21 This otherworldly tendency in Christianity, however, is not just a result of Manichean influence in Iqbāl's scheme, but reflective of the division at the core of Christianity's theological worldview. Without the absolute monotheism of the Qur'ān which implies a complete unity of the universe, "Christian Rome did not rise to the full apprehension of the idea of humanity as a single organism" (Iqbal 1930:195). At this point in time, Islam had for Iqbāl become an expression of some kind of "biological unity" between the individual, the world, and God, an unparalleled vision of Oneness from which all the

ethical commandments and religious doctrine of Islam flow naturally (Iqbal 1930:i),<sup>21</sup> whereas in Christianity these glimpses of truth are instead arbitrarily imposed and do not fit into a comprehensive theological scheme.

- 22 An example of this difference often used by Iqbāl is the concept of resurrection in Islam and Christianity. For Christianity, resurrection is predicated upon the historical resurrection of a single person in the first century CE, but for Islam, resurrection is a universal and natural fact, not exclusive to humanity and integral to the makeup of creation (Iqbal 1930:161). Similarly, Iqbāl argues that Christianity can have no fundamental answer to the question of how there is evil in a world created by a good God, and instead must attribute it to divine mystery.<sup>22</sup> For Islam, however, the world is neither good nor evil, but is instead growing towards an “eventual victory over evil” by humankind (Iqbal 1930:112–3).<sup>23</sup> Iqbāl, in strategy remarkably similar to those of (colonial) Christian polemicists against Islam, represents Christianity as a happenstance historical accumulation of ideas and opinions, while interpreting Islam and its historical and cultural manifestations according to an idealized narrative.
- 23 In articulating this theological-historical contrast between Islam and Christianity, Iqbāl achieves two things: first, he is able to resist and creatively appropriate for his own scheme the externally-imposed terms of discourse about the necessary separation between religious and the secular spheres.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, he is able to construct a compelling metanarrative about the superiority of Islam, crafted in the image and likeness of the opposing missionary-colonial metanarrative of the superiority of Christianity and Western thought. Iqbāl’s polemic should be understood in the light of these priorities of his, particularly as one examines the weaknesses of his argument with respect to whether or not it is a faithful representation of historical facts, or of historical Christianity and Islam.
- 24 As a result of his attempts to fit Christianity into a pre-existing theory in which Christianity serves to illustrate the truth and beauty of Islam by contrast, Iqbāl often makes historical judgments that draw selectively from the full spectrum of Christian belief. He tends to describe Christianity in a monolithic manner, emphasizing the aspects of Christianity most seemingly at odds with modernity. For instance, Iqbāl refers to the “Church” doctrine of “depravity” without reference to the intra-Christian differences over human “depravity” (and the nature of human sinfulness) between Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed Christians, and liberal Protestants (Iqbal 1964:36). He describes Christianity as a religious system based on “suffering alone,” taking his characterization of the tradition as world-denying to its inevitable conclusion, without giving attention to historical or contemporary aspects of Christian faith expression that contradict this portrayal (Iqbal 1964:78). In this broad assertion, he is perhaps influenced by the popular Nietzschean criticisms of Christianity as weak and an expression of slave morality (Rastogi 1987:60–80).<sup>25</sup>
- 25 On the whole, Iqbāl does not cite from a variety of Christian sources or historical sources on Christianity, as he does with Islam, but usually makes his arguments without textual backing. In his *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, first published in 1930, Iqbāl’s claims about Christianity derive almost exclusively from one single and initially rather small book by Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919), *Briefe über Religion (Letters on Religion)*, first published in 1903, which, despite its huge popularity in late Wilhelmian Germany—the work saw seven constantly enlarged editions over a period of ten years—has apparently never been translated into English.<sup>26</sup> Iqbāl cited Naumann in order to

support his assertion that religious ideas and social praxis are completely separated in Christianity: "Primitive Christianity attached no value to the preservation of the state, law, organization, production. It simply does not reflect on the conditions of human society" (Iqbal 1930:231).<sup>27</sup> For Iqbāl, this was proof of the otherworldly orientation of Christianity as opposed to what he saw as the comprehensive worldview of Islam.

26 Iqbāl's view of (Protestant) Christianity as one of limited socio-political force corresponded well with the historical realities in post-"Kulturkampf" Germany, at least at the time of Iqbāl's own *sojourn* there around 1907: based on a rigid endorsement of the Lutheran doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms,"<sup>28</sup> the "Inner Mission" movement of the Protestant Church in the Wilhelminian State epitomized its suspicion in active political participation, while "liberal Protestantism," represented, among others, by Friedrich Naumann, withdrew religion, as an ancillary to culture, from the *res publica* and confined its scope to the *res priuata* alone, thus freeing politics from any possible moral intervention (Fischer 1951:515; Shanahan 1951:270-2; Kaiser 2000).

27 Iqbāl's use of Naumann's text compellingly illustrates the division between spiritual and material/political reality Iqbāl himself aimed to overcome. In doing so, however, he overstates the extent both of Naumann's and (even more so) the larger Christian tradition's relationship to social and political engagement in his eagerness to demonstrate the fundamental irreconcilability of Christianity and Islam on this point. Naumann, a Protestant minister and, next to sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), one of the foremost liberal politicians of the late Wilhelminian Empire, was not attempting to argue that Christianity has no ultimate social implications in its theology, but was attempting to formulate a Christian response to Marxism based on the importance of the individual (Leese 1959:259-60; Ruddies 2000:324-31; on the *Briefe*, see Shanahan [1951:286-9]). Naumann's argument in the 1916 substantially enlarged edition of *Briefe über Religion* was that the "Kingdom of God" cannot be found just in churches, but instead in the "free reign of God in man himself" (Naumann 1916:104).<sup>29</sup> Despite Iqbāl's conclusion that Christianity imagines the other world as the only one of real importance, Naumann was preoccupied with locating the Kingdom of God on earth in *interpersonal* relationships: "The kingdom of God is realized neither in the State nor in the Church", he wrote in his *Geist und Glaube* from 1911, "but it is a spiritual movement from man to man" (Naumann 1911:258). The "Kingdom of God" is never wholly realized, but does not merely exist in the future:

The Kingdom of God hovers over us all as an eternal hope. Our hands try in vain to grasp it. It calls to us enticingly, as does the horizon ... This, however, is God's art, that He gives to every place, every generation, every person a proper horizon whose outline can be discerned (Naumann [1902] 1904:559, also quoted in English translation in Leese [1959:269]).

In this notion Naumann appears to have been closer to Kant than one might think: his Christianity was one of choice, the "Kingdom of God" almost identical with Kant's "God" as a regulative idea of pure reason.<sup>30</sup> Citizenship, in turn, depended for Naumann on each individual's moral actions within the "community," to be considered distinct from the "state" as an entity that, in its pure condition, is exclusively utilitarian and, therefore, indifferent towards any kind of morals (Shanahan 1951:298-9).

28 Iqbāl obscures the nuances of Naumann's arguments in his concern with using him to present a simple dichotomy between Christianity as world-denying and Islam as world-engaging. His use of Naumann is further complicated by the fact that Naumann was writing not as a historian of religious history but, like Iqbāl, was attempting to construct

a social ideal based on a theologically grounded worldview. Iqbāl reworked aspects of this Idealist construction in order to make a historical argument against Christianity.

- 29 Iqbāl's theological and socio-political critique of Christianity provides an explanation for "unworldly" tendencies within Muslim history as well. Apart from his negative appraisal of (Protestant) Christianity's socio-political potential, within a universal "salvation history" (on the concept, see Calder [2000:73–4]), of which Islam would only be the final chapter, Christianity—here perhaps more its various monastic varieties—also served in Iqbāl's worldview as for the source of what he deemed widespread excessive beliefs and practices in Sufi mysticism. In a letter to Sayyid Sulaymān Nadvī (d. 1373/1953) from 1917, he interprets the traditional Muslim saying about the downfall of the Islamic civilization in three centuries as referring to Sufism coming into being as a result of "Christian monkery" (Schimmel 1963:364). "It was, however," wrote Iqbāl already in his doctoral thesis from 1908,

principally the actual life of the Christian hermit rather than his religious ideas, that exercised the greatest fascination over the minds of the early Islamic Saints whose complete unworldliness, though extremely charming in itself, is, I believe, quite contrary to the spirit of Islam. (Iqbal 1908:101)

Christianity, like Greek philosophy, serves as an explanation for apparent deviations throughout Muslim history from the socio-religious vision Iqbāl sees for Islam. In distinguishing Christian ideas from the "unworldliness" of Christian praxis, furthermore, Iqbāl makes it possible to imply the theological purity of Islam while recognizing that it has not always lived up to the lofty ideals he sees present in it. Iqbāl consistently interprets historical facts so that positive outcomes are always attributable to Islamic ideas, particularly the core-dogma of the "Oneness" of God, and negative outcomes to non-Islamic ones, particularly dualistic beliefs. Here, one could easily infer that Christianity did not only serve as a demarcation line from the colonial power holders, but also very much as a projection screen for the non-Muslim majority in India: after all, it was them with whom the Muslim elites in the subcontinent engaged in an increasingly fierce competition over the socio-political vision of an eventually independent India. This transferal of the "Other" from Christian to Hindu would become increasingly clear as his support for a separate Muslim state became more stringent, as will be discussed below.

- 30 For Iqbāl, the otherworldly orientation of Christianity (even as present in non-Christian traditions, including Islam) led inevitably to political and social inequality, whereas Islam's belief in absolute unity working through human history led to political and social equality. This movement can be seen clearly in his discussion of "original sin" and the different Islamic and Christian normative depictions of creation in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. He describes the biblical narrative as based in historical terms, an attempted origin myth couched in sexual language and imagery. Man's inferior position to God gives rise to a general sense of inequality, eventually expressed also in socially connoted stratification in estates. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, is less historically grounded, more generalized. While up to this point Iqbāl's argument seems historically self-evident—given that the biblical narrative was established in the context of the Near Eastern mythological world, and the Qur'ān's narrative was a later, generalizing reinterpretation of that myth—he drew larger theological conclusions from many of the differences between the two texts, the divine origin of which Iqbāl never put in question. He saw the a-historical setting of the Qur'ānic creation narrative as indicative of its relevance for all human beings, and the garden as a clear symbolic presentation of a "primitive state" of man before cultural development, as opposed to a

historical setting. He sees a pessimism in the text of Genesis not reflected in the Qur'ān—the God of Genesis “curses the ground” as a response to Adam’s transgression, whereas in the Qur'ān the earth remains essentially good (Iqbal 1930:114–7). Iqbāl acknowledged the traditional Christian reading of the book of Genesis, which depicts the passage as the cosmic advent of original sin, and in contrast cited the Qur'ānic verse 7 (al-A'rāf): 10: “And surely We have established you on earth and given you therein the ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful.”<sup>31</sup> Iqbāl accepted the orthodox Christian dogma of original sin at face value, polemically depicting it in its severest possible form, in which—in contrast to Islam—the world is “a torture-hall where an elementally wicked humanity is imprisoned for an original act of sin” (Iqbal 1930:117).

- 31 These assertions, for Iqbāl, were of extreme importance in articulating the historical differences between Christian and Islamic polities. In Christianity, the separation between Church and State is possible precisely because of this otherworldliness which Iqbāl labors to reproduce in Christian history:

If you begin with the conception of religion as complete other-worldliness, then what has happened to Christianity in Europe is perfectly natural. The universal ethics of Jesus is displaced by national systems of ethics and polity. (Iqbal 1964:163)

This has also allowed for religious fanaticism to develop in Christian countries in a way Iqbāl believes would be impossible or inconceivable within a normatively envisioned Islamic society. Arguing against Nehrū about the danger of “Inquisition” in a society based on religious beliefs—a clear indication that his work was indeed less abstract and deeply embedded in the very concrete realities of contemporary British India—, Iqbāl asserted that “there is a tremendous difference between the inner structure of Islam and Catholicism” (Iqbal 1964:262–3). Much of this difference has to do with the complexity and bureaucratic nature of the Christian Church, which is unthinkable in a Muslim state wherein the conceptual premises are simple and conducive to social order. Iqbāl places fault in Christian history on the excesses of the Church, such as in describing the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in sixteenth century France as an act of assassination on the part of the Pope of Rome, as opposed to a crackdown on Protestant leadership by a Catholic monarch, King Charles IX (r. 1560–74), acting somewhat independently from Church authority (Iqbal 1908:60). Acknowledging religious fanaticism as a product of a state as opposed to an otherworldly oriented church would both undermine his thesis and, more importantly, his argument that a separate Islamic society in India (and, as it would become, Pakistan) would not be vulnerable to the same kinds of fanaticism and violence, a view that the later realities in Pakistan would profoundly belie.

- 32 In imagining what such an Islamic society would look like, Iqbāl’s thought reveals some unresolved tensions. On the one hand, the ideal Islamic society is a perfect expression of the openness and egalitarianism contained in the dynamism and infinite possibilities of the *tawḥīd* of God. In this vein, Iqbāl imagines Islam as uniquely able to accept and acknowledge other’s differences: “All men and not Muslims alone are meant for the Kingdom of God on earth, provided they say good-bye to their idols of race and nationality, and treat one another as personalities” (Iqbal 1964:99). Some of Iqbāl’s poems long for this same discarding of religious difference in favor of a more fundamental unity:

Sickened, I finally renounce both, temple and shrine ...  
Let’s lift the curtain of estrangement, once again,  
Let’s unite once more the sundered, wipe clean division’s stain.

*tang ā ke meṇ ne ākhir dayr va ḥaram ko chḥoṛā ...*  
*ā, ghayriyyat ke parde ek bār pḥir uḥā deṇ*  
*bichḥoṇ ko pḥir milā deṇ naqsh-i dū'ī miṭā deṇ.*  
 (Iqbāl [1924] 1926:88, lines 6 and 9 [Nayā Shivālah])

The heart of Iqbāl's philosophy is a movement towards ultimate unity, which is necessarily hostile to unnecessary divisions.

- 33 On the other hand, however, in many of Iqbāl's writings, this commitment to *tawḥīd*—divine and social—is presented as paradoxically predicated upon distinction. The purity of the Muslim idea cannot be corrupted by outside influences, as it was—as argued above—by Christian influence, which caused earlier failures in Islamic political organization. From as early as the 1910s, Iqbāl conceived Muslims as forming a separate “nation” (*millat*) which keeps them distinctly apart from their religious opponents.<sup>32</sup> This “Nation of Muslims,” however, is specifically transnational:

In the heart of a nation that once shattered the world  
 I have seen a conflict between religion and fatherland.  
 The spirit is dead in the body through weakness of faith,  
 despairs of the strength of the manifest religion;  
 Turk, Persian, Arab intoxicated with Europe  
 and in the throat of each the fish-hook of Europe.  
*dar zamīr-i millat-i gītī-shikan*  
*dīdah'am āvīzash-i dīn va vaṭan*  
*rūḥ dar tan-i mardah az za'f-i yaqīn*  
*nā umīd az qūt-i dīn-i mubīn*  
*turk va īrān va 'arab mast-i farang*  
*har kasī rā dar gulū shast-i farang.*  
 (Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:304, lines 5–7 [Jāvidnamāh])

The bonds between Muslims worldwide are such that Iqbāl can remark that “although the song is one of Hind, the melody is of Hijazi cast” (*naghmah-i hindī he to kyā / lay to hijāzī he merī!*) (Iqbāl [1924] 1926:187, line 15 [Shikvah]). It is this triumphant imagined society of Muslims—not any particular society, but drawn from the entire Muslim world struggling under the weight of colonialism—to which “this world belongs” (*jahān terā he yā merā?*) (Iqbāl 1935:3, line 2).

- 34 The tension between the meaning of what Iqbāl views as the Islamic message and the distinctness of Muslims as a social unit pervades his writings, but becomes less clear as the political situation begins to shape the language of Iqbāl's rhetoric. “Let nationalism be on your lips, but fix your gaze always on your own community” (Iqbal 1945:69–73, here 73 [Speech on the Resolution Regarding Filling of Posts by Open Competitive Examination, delivered on the 19th July, 1927]), Iqbāl proclaimed in seeming contradiction to the “pin[ing] for true proximity” of his poetry (*lazzat-i qurb-i ḥaqīqī*) (Iqbāl [1924] 1926:29, line 10 [Ṣadā-yi Dard]). Iqbāl's anti-Christian rhetoric serves as a means of imagining exactly what an Islamic community is not: not separatist, not dogmatic, and not prejudicial. The shift of his own support to a separatist Muslim community, however, renders unstable his philosophy, so that his critique of Christian society becomes more and more applicable to his own religious-political beliefs.

## Conclusion

- 35 Iqbāl's reassertion of the unity and relevance of Islamic thought, in response to colonial and missionary critics who portrayed Islam in India as stagnant and inherently



detrimental to national progress and polity,<sup>33</sup> was an ideological element necessary for decolonization and the construction of a decolonized "voice." In this, Iqbāl joined hands with all those who strove for independence from any kind of foreign hegemony in the subcontinent and beyond. For him personally, as a Western-educated colonial subject, this project served to free him to draw at will from his Christian or Christian-influenced sources without capitulating to the demand of the colonizers for the recognition of Christian supremacy. At the same time, he could use the manifold Christian-Muslim relations as a projection screen for the much more pertinent question regarding the positioning towards the Hindu majority in India. In most instances, Iqbāl's references to Hindus remained within the confines of his more political ideas about nationhood in India; a however superficial theological and philosophical examination of Hindu religious thought, perhaps reciprocating Gāndhī's engagement with Islam,<sup>34</sup> is by and large absent. This very fact remains certainly in need of a somewhat sustained explanation by future research.

- 36 One may assume that a major reason for this is to be found in the complex communal relations in late colonial India which suggested that a simple answer to the communal question in the discussions over India's political future could not really be given. If that was indeed the case, then Iqbāl's focus on Christianity, against which he developed his own interpretation of Islam, allowed him to avoid the contagious engagement with the religion of the Hindus. In addition, however, one may assume that Islam's proximity to Christianity demanded that the latter is paid more attention in order to delineate Islam as the highest manifestation of the Abrahamic faiths. Gāndhī's own deliberations, which lump Christianity and Islam together and put them in contrast to the religion of the Hindus,<sup>35</sup> seem to indicate why Iqbāl devoted so much effort to a critical engagement with Christianity: after all, the demarcation lines between Abrahamic religions and that of the Hindus were much more obvious and required thus less argumentation.
- 37 All in all, however, Iqbāl's portrayal of Christianity remained instrumental for his project of rehabilitating Islam as a source for his own thought—and Christianity thus became as dismissible as any other religion that was not Islam. Iqbāl's use of Christianity as a polemic antagonist in order to assert the dignity of Islam against colonial critiques limited his frameworks of interpretation of peoples not "of the Book," such as Hindus, but also of his own religion. In simplifying and overemphasizing the contrast between Christian and Islamic theology and social vision, Iqbāl produces an inherently limited portrayal of Muslim culture and thought as well, greatly underestimating the potential of Muslim societies to reproduce the same inequities and dogmatism as European Christian nations. The ways in which he ultimately reproduces the exclusionary logics he learned from the "West" gives credence to Said's assertion that we should be as attentive to the ways in which imperialism has fundamentally "altered" how we view and understand the world as we are of the Holocaust's "epistemological mutation." Each reaction to colonization (and each reaction to a reaction) creates in turn "distorted knowledge of the other, each its own reductive images, its own disputatious polemics" (Said [1978] 2003:xxii [*Preface to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition*]). Iqbāl's framing of Christianity thus serves as an example both of the power of anti-colonial narrative and its limits in imagining a decolonized future.

TWA Papers = *Thomas Walker Arnold Papers*, SOAS, University of London, Special Collection, PP.MS 32, II/5.

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## NOTES

1. Romanization of the various relevant languages in non-Latin scripts follows largely the ALA-LC conventions for each respective language; an "h" struck out (ḥ) indicates aspiration of the preceding consonant in Indian languages.

We wish to thank the anonymous referees for their constructive feedback, as well as the editorial team of SAMAJ for their immense help to navigate a perhaps unwieldy piece towards its final publication.

2. Despite of at least two more recent monographs on Iqbāl by Mir (2006) and Majeed (2009), as well as various problems in how Iqbāl's life and thought is presented, Schimmel's work has still to be regarded the most comprehensive one to date.
3. See, for example some of Gāndhī's writings: *What is Hinduism?* (April 1924) and *Why I am a Hindu* (October 1927) (Gandhi [1958] 1969: XXIII/484–6 and XXXV/ 166–7).
4. The translation of "dār" as "cross" is of course already limiting the wider meaning of the term, which includes also "gibbet," "gallows," "beam" and "[hanging] tree." However, since this passage is included in a dialogue between Zindah'rūd, the protagonist of the poem, and Maṣūr al-Ḥallāj, the early Sufi ecstatic who, according to widespread belief, was crucified in Dhī'l-qā'da 309/March 922 for alleged blasphemy, the translation as "cross" appears perfectly justified.
5. Compare Acts 17:28 (NKJV): "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring.""
6. Compare Matthew 5:48 (KJV): "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
7. The notion of the "Perfect Man" (*insān kāmil*), which was central in the thought of al-Jīlī, was also to play a crucial role in Iqbāl's own reflections. See, for example, Zwanzig (2008:75–96).
8. See the "Certificate of Agreement between the Secretary of State for India and Dr. Thomas Walker Arnold Esq." over the professorship in Philosophy at the Government College Lahore for the duration of five years from 31 December 1897, in TWA Papers (II/5).
9. See the farewell addresses of his students from the Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, where Arnold taught for a decade from 1888, as well as of the *Anjumān-i Islāmiyyah* of the Punjab in 1904, in *ibid.* (I/1:nos. 7 and 119).
10. Compare TWA Papers (IV/4:nos. 15–16).
11. On the problematic notion of "civility," from which "civilization" is derived, in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and Asia, see the various contributions in Pernau and Jordheim (2015).
12. On the impact of Bergson on Iqbāl see, for example, Rastogi (1987:81–95); Bausani (1954:182–3). Also, see the explicit appraisal of Bergson by Iqbāl ([1342sh] 1370sh: 266 [*Payghām-i Bargsun*] and 268 [*Bargsun*]; Iqbal (1930:3, 49–50, 53, 62–4, 70–3, 87 and 197).
13. Translation follows Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, 1935.
14. In fact, the disintegration of the *Khilafat* and *Non-Cooperation Movements* in the early 1920s, and the subsequent mutual recrimination of their Muslim and Hindu leaders, drastically fuelled communalist sentiments that increasingly manifested themselves in the firm conviction that a Hindu-Muslim commonwealth was absolutely impossible. See, for example, Hasan (1979).
15. In particular, see *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in Nietzsche 1967–77:III/147–51 [§§110–2], 192 [§ 246], 275–7 [§355] and 307–8 [§372f]).
16. This is a combined quote of two separate passages from Rūmī's famous *Maṣnavī*. Compare Rūmī ([1375sh] 1376sh:I/66, line 17, II/968, line 14).
17. Compare Mahomet, in Goethe (1985–98:I-1/516–9); *West-Östlicher Diwan* in *ibid.* (XI-1.2/19, 23 and 117–24); *Besserem Verständniss* [*sic*] in *ibid.* (XI-1.2/147–51).
18. This is made explicit in the subtitle of this four-partite poetical anthology, "In Response to the [West-Eastern] Divan of the German Poet Goethe" (*dar javāb divān-i shā'ir-i ālmān Gu'itah*), in which Goethe, inspired by the example of Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz (d. 792/1390), advocated a henoteistic worldview as elaborated by Baruch de Spinoza (d. 1677); see *Etiches: De Deo* in Spinoza (1925:II/45–83), in which all the diverse manifestations of religion is only a culturally distinct expression of the universal "one and all" (Gr.: *hen kai pân*). Compare Goethe, "Parabase," in *Werke*, vol. 13/1, 150, lines 5f: "... das ewig Eine, das sich vielfach offenbart [*the One Eternal / Multiply self-manifest*]."
19. See Gutas (1988:359–86), who argues for a clear distinction between the philosophical traditions before Avicenna and those threats that developed from him.
20. Compare Bergson (1889:107–68); Bergson ([1907] 1908:1–8, 95–105, and 269–94).

21. In a later passage in this work, Iqbāl quoted a passage from Rūmī ([1375sh] 1376sh:III/179 line 26, and III/180 lines 1–5 and 11–3), in the rather generous translation of Nanikrām Vasanmal Thādānī (d. 1956) in idem (1932), declaring that “the formulation of the theory of evolution in the world of Islam brought into being Rumi’s tremendous enthusiasm for the biological future of man.” Iqbal (1934:176–7).
22. Interestingly, Iqbāl appears to have been fully, and perhaps deliberately, ignorant of the long-standing discussions of the Theodicy problem in Christian philosophical circles all the way into the Enlightenment period, culminating perhaps in the deliberations of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (d. 1716). This is even more surprising as one of Iqbāl’s chief epigones, Miyān Muḥammad Sharīf (d. 1965), used Leibniz explicitly and in abundance for his advancement of Iqbāl’s philosophy as “Dialectical Monadism.” See Sharif (1952); compare Leibniz (1996:II/343–88 and 592–621).
23. Parallels to core ideas in the philosophy of Nietzsche are hard to miss, despite serious reservations against the philosophical consequences of such a radical moral nihilism. See, for example, *Payām-i Mashriq* in Iqbāl ([1342sh] 1370sh:260–3, esp. 263, line 15), where, in his second aphorism on Nietzsche, Iqbāl wrote: “His heart is a true believer, but his brain an infidel” (*qalb-i ū mu’min dimāghash kāfir ast*).
24. According to Chakrabarty (2000:86–96), the colonial imposition of “secular” logic and “secular time” involved and continues to involve a violent expulsion of divine or superhuman presences from the reality and history of the colonized (or formerly colonized). Taking this critique into account, Iqbāl’s historical polemic about the sources of Christianity’s world-denial can be understood as resistance to the discourse of modernity imposed through colonial relationships.
25. Compare Nietzsche (1967–77: V/65–83 [*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*] and 339–412 [*Zur Genealogie der Moral*]).
26. There exists however a French translation by Roger Bornand, published in Lausanne with Georges Bridel & Cie, from as early as 1905. See also Ruddies (2000:317 n.1).
27. This quote does hardly correspond to the German original. While the general tenor might be correctly reflected in a fair number of Naumann’s published letters, the second sentence appears too harsh a judgement and too detached from the overall theological argument to have indeed originated in the Christian theologian Naumann. Compare Naumann ([1903] 1906:74–9).
28. This doctrine, although neither Luther nor his main compatriot Philipp Melancton (d. 1560) have ever used the phrase “two kingdoms” themselves, was mainly based on Luther’s elaborations on the relationship of church and state, or Gospel and positive (state) law, in his 1523 treatise *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei*, as well as on various other situation-related statements. See Luther (1982: IV/36–84, esp. 51). In his letters, Naumann emphatically endorsed this view when he wrote that “We return to the old great Doctor of the German faith [i.e. Luther] and regard the political affairs as being outside the sphere of influence of the promise of salvation [*Heilsverkündigung*].” Naumann ([1903] 1906:78) (trans. JPH).
29. Unless stated differently, all translations from Naumann’s works are by Anne Liard Jennings. Also quoted in Leese (1959:265).
30. Compare Kant (1787:670–97 and 832–47).
31. Qur’ān 7:10: *wa-laqad makkannākum fi’l-arḍi wa-ja’ alā lakum fihā ma’āyish<sup>a</sup> qaliman mā tashqurūn*. See quote in Iqbal (1930:116).
32. See two of Iqbāl’s works: *Rumūz Bī-Khūdī* (1918) and *Maṣnavī-yi Musāfir* (1934) (Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:55–104; Iqbāl [1342sh] 1370sh:417–31, esp. 418, 421, 427 and 431).
33. See, for example, the comment of the Christian convert Rev. ‘Imād al-Dīn Lāhiz (d. 1900), reflecting the standard European missionary discourse, that Islam was capable only of producing “decay upon decay”: [Lāhiz] (1910:10).

34. For an index of Gāndhī's writings on Islam and Islam-related matters from as early as March 1905, see Gandhi ([1958] 1969:XCVIII/174-5).

35. In Gāndhī's *Collected Works* ([1958] 1969), see, for example, pages 246-8 in volume XXXVIII, as well as *The Eternal Duel* (1928) (Gandhi [1958] 1969:LXIV/420-4) and *Discussion with a Roman Catholic Priest* (1937).

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## ABSTRACTS

In this article we examine the development of Muḥammad Iqbāl's engagement with Christian thought and theology over the course of his lifetime in the context of his position as a colonial subject and of the rise of communalism and Muslim separatism in India. The early philosophical, spiritual, and poetic influence of European Christian authors on the young Iqbāl inspired him to develop a critique of Christian thought and history that fundamentally differentiated Christianity from Islam and positioned Islamic revelation as the truest origin of many of the ideals to which he was drawn in the works of Christian thinkers. Iqbāl mobilized his interpretation of the history of Islam (in which devotion to the *tawḥīd* or Oneness of God led to egalitarianism, justice, and unity) against that of the history of Christianity (in which a stark division between heaven and earth resulted in inequality, violence, and sectarianism) to explain the failures of Christian nations and to develop a basis for his contrasting ideal of a Muslim state. In this article we demonstrate both the power of this historical-theological polemic in its role as anti-colonial narrative as well as the ways in which it limited Iqbāl's recognition of the potential of Muslim societies to foster similar violence and religiously-based discrimination to that perpetrated by Christian nations.

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