CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's
I will not reason and argue, my business is to create.
(Blake, Jerusalem)

Unless the book of God is revealed unto thy own soul
Exegetes like Razi and the author of Kashaf cannot
unite the knot. (Iqbal, Sal-i-Jibril)
Religion has generally evoked two kinds of responses from people. Some people unquestioningly accept it as an inviolable and sacrosanct system of values, hallowed by tradition and necessary for social harmony. They do not subject it to intellectual examination or empirical scrutiny. Although this kind of examination is not a sure test as far as religious truths are concerned, the attitude of unquestioning acceptance is not based on the perception of this fact but is rooted in blind faith and, at times, in a superstitious kind of awe felt for something regarded as divine in origin. Such an attitude suits a traditionalist temper which is concerned with man more as an organ of a social system than as an individual.

The other attitude is marked by the urge to question the traditionally accepted religion and either to reject it or else to rediscover it in one's own terms and for one's own self. In a significant passage on the nature and character of religious life, Iqbal writes:

Broadly speaking religious life may be divided into three periods. These may be described as the periods of 'Faith', 'Thought', and 'Discovery'. In the first period religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and
purpose of that command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned. 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 third 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. As in the words of a Muslim Sufi — 'no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer as it was revealed to the Prophet.'

For Iqbal, religion, in its highest form, is thus a matter of personal rediscovery, something whose truth, in Keats's

1 Reconstruction, p. 181.
memorable words has been proved "upon our pulses." This kind of attitude is ideally suited to an individualistic and inward-looking romantic temperament. The English Romantic poets, in spite of their divergent views with regard to religion, share in common this attitude of personal inquiry. A solitary search rather than the institutionalized religion was, from the Romantic point of view, the right way of establishing a relationship between the Infinity and the finite human being. This accounts for the hermit being a common symbolic figure in Romantic art.

What is more important, the inquiry is conducted not only through the agency of the intellect but also through what Coleridge in one of his letters calls 'the heart.' The Romantics distrusted reason and questioned its efficacy in assessing the validity or otherwise of religious truths. Blake eulogised inspiration and rejected what he termed as 'rational demonstration.' His Milton, in Milton Book II asserts that he comes in the 'grandeur of inspiration.'

To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the saviour
To cast off the rotten Rags of Memory by Inspiration
To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from Albion's covering
To take off filthy garments, and clothe him with Imagination
To cast aside from poetry all that is not Inspiration.

In *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge tells us that very early in his life he had realized the limitations of intellect and its untrustworthiness as a universal guide. His intellectual labours and metaphysical theories failed to satisfy his deeper urges. In a letter to Benjamin Fowler, written in 1796 he says:

> I found no comfort till it pleased the unimaginable high and lofty one to make my heart tender in regard to religious feelings. My metaphysical theories lay before me in the hour of anguish as toys by the bedside of a child deadly sick.

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3 Complete writings, p. 533.

4 Quoted by J. Shawcross in his Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, p. VII.
Wordsworth set a high store by the 'blessed mood' in which "we are laid asleep/in body and become a living soul /
while with an eye made quiet by the power/of harmony, and
the deep power of joy/we see into the life of things."
The intellect is criticised because it is meddlesome and
blurs our vision. In 'Tables Turned' Wordsworth says:

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things
We murder to dissect.  

One of the recurrent themes of Shelley's writings is the
significant distinction that he draws between reason and
imagination and between reasoners and poets or the men of
imagination. Imagination, in his view is the means of
human salvation and poets are the saviours of mankind.

Naturally, therefore the Romantics rejected the
mechanistic outlook on God and the universe which viewed
God as a mere mechanic or a skilful designer. This
outlook was based on Newtonian physics and Locke's
empiricism. Paley's Natural Theology based on this system

5  
Thomas Hutchinson, ed., Wordsworth: Poetical Works,
New ed. revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford
was one of the favourite readings of many religious-minded people of the eighteenth century but this rationalistic theology seemed dull and insipid to the Romantics. Blake presents Locke along with Newton and Bacon as a symbol of evil. Bacon "is only Epicurus over again" whose "philosophy has ruined England." Coleridge's rejection of the theory of the passiveness of mind is well known. "Newton," he wrote in a letter, "was a mere materialist. Mind, in his system is always passive, a lazy looker-on at an external world. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's image, and that too in the sublimest sense the image of the creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false as a system." 7

Even Wordsworth, who was an admirer of Newton, rejected the theory of the passiveness of mind. He believed that the mind of the perceiver and the external world were correlative. We both "perceive" and "half create," he wrote. In the preface to Excursion (11. 63-68) he says:


Shawcross, Introduction to Biographia Literaria, p. XXII.
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted; — and how exquisitely too —
Theme this but little heard of among men —
The External World is fitted to the Mind.

But this correlation is difficult to dawn on human
consciousness unless one learns to enter into communion
with the world-soul, "the motion and the spirit that impels
all things." In *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in
Islam* Iqbal tells us that only those men can evolve the
richness of their being who learn to establish a connection
with the infinite reality that confronts them. Wordsworth's
poetry shows that he had succeeded in establishing such a
connection with the spirit of the universe —

whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

In the 'Ode to Duty' the feeling of religious piety
is so impelling that the poet willingly and reverently
surrenders himself to the control of the lawgiver of the
universe;

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3 See *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*,
p. 12.
Stern Lawgiver! Yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance on thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee,
Are fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
O, let my weakness have an end!

In the Prelude we again and again come across such passages
of pietistic and mystical feeling describing how "the light of
sense goes out / and the invisible world is revealed to us
and our being's heart and home / is with infinitude."10

Myriad things lie around us but the variety seems to dissolve
itself into a unity as if all things:

were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.11

9  Ode to Duty, ll. 49-50.

10  The Prelude, Book VI, ll. 600-602.

11  Ibid., ll. 635-640.
Powerful passages like these have an epiphanic effect on the imagination and convince us by sheer force of poetry of the existence of God. We note in this connection Iqbal's significant remark about Wordsworth's poetry saving him from atheism at a critical period of his life. Acknowledging his debt to Wordsworth he writes in Stray Reflections:

I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the "inside" of things, the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals, and the last saved me from atheism in my student days.  

The Romantics took a vitalistic view of human personality in which there was no scope for a body-mind dualism. In different ways Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley rejected such a dualism. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake wrote that "man has no body distinct from his soul for that called body is a portion of soul discerned by the five senses." Coleridge insists,

12 Entry, 36.
13 Complete Writings, p. 149.
throughout his writings, on the authenticity of only that kind of experience which is representative of the total man, and the dominant theme of his later writings is a total rejection of a mechanical world-view in favour of a vitalistic view. Likewise Shelley did not contemplate any dualism between spirit and matter and moral regeneration for him was also physical regeneration.

If religion is a matter of personal rediscovery, involving the total personality of an individual, divergence of opinion is bound to be there and it is only natural that the Romantics should differ widely in their view of religion and the fundamental issues relating to it. In their attitude to religion, the Romantics present a colourful spectacle ranging from satanism and atheism to saintliness and rediscovery of the truth of religion by an individual for himself. Thus we find Blake evolving a religion of his own — a religion whose central creed is imagination; Wordsworth passing from pantheism to a rediscovery of the validity of the principles of Anglicanism; and Coleridge believing in his feeling and perception of "God the one before, all and of all, and through all," and finally justifying the Anglican Church. What is remarkable is that we find the Romantics fervently engaged in a quest for a

14 See Shawcross, Introduction to Biographia Literaria, I, p. LXXIV.
personal religion and none of them ignores the religious issue. Shelley, in spite of his fervour for atheism, had a passionately religious temperament and evolved what Harold Bloom terms as "protestant Orphism" based on an unflinching faith in the perfectibility of man through Love which emanates from celestial spheres. Shelley's writings reveal that he has essentially a religious temperament. The man who regarded imagination as the basis of all morality and love as the foundation of spiritual regeneration and who always thought in terms of a universal order of beauty and harmony subsisting in the universe and revealing itself partially in the works of creative artists—poets, painters, sculptors and great revolutionary teachers—cannot but have a deeply religious temperament. What he was opposed to was the institutionalized religion and the established church which enslaved human mind and hampered the free working of imagination. In the preface to *The Revolt of Islam* he writes:

> The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. 15


16 *Poetical Works*, p. 37.
One can also see the softening of his attitude towards Christianity as he matured. In *Queen Mab* (1813) which he wrote at the age of eighteen Christ is called "a malignant soul" and Christianity is denounced in uncompromising terms. Soon after this Shelley eloped with Mary Godwin to France and later to Switzerland. During his stay in Switzerland (1814) he wrote a prose romance called *The Assassins*. In it the beneficent influence of Christ's teachings is shown within a limited sect in Lebanon, the Assassins. The *Essay on Christianity* written in 1817 is still mature in its attitude to Jesus whose teachings, according to Shelley, were distorted by those who lacked his comprehensive morality. Jesus represents God as the fountain of all goodness, the eternal enemy of pain and evil. In *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) evil is defeated by love and Christ is seen as the type of all those who suffer for love although such heinous crimes have been committed in his name that "it hath become a curse."

In *Hellas* (1822), Shelley's last revolutionary drama, Christ is looked upon sympathetically as a man who suffered for truth.

Byron's diabolism cannot be gainsaid. Wordsworth described him as "a man of genius whose heart is perverted" and Coleridge characterised his later poetry as "satanic."\[17\]

Yet his inclination towards Christianity can be seen in his Calvinist leanings, his passion for Mary and his fascination with the Bible. He was shocked by his closest friend, Shelley’s polemic against Christianity and could never rid himself of his Calvinist temper in considering himself to have been eternally damned. In *Don Juan* (V, IV) he confessed that he had “a passion for the name of Mary” and his vision of womanhood — virginal yet maternal, protective yet remote — was determined by this underlying passion. The *Hebrew Melodies* that he composed in 1815 also exhibit his lasting interest in the Bible.

Watts, who in his poetry does not ostensibly seem to concern himself with the religious issue has essentially a deeply religious temperament. To him, the universe of creation is harmonious, beautiful and purposeful and the human world ‘a vale of soul-making’ and not ‘a vale of tears’ as the misguided call it. Even heart-break, pain and suffering are justified on the ground that such experience is necessary to convert an intelligence into a soul. In the harmonious scheme of the universe nothing is amiss. The poet of the *Fall of Hyperion* learns to look at life “as a god sees” it:

... there grew

A power within me of enormous ken
To see as God sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade.18

Thus Keats is justifying the mysterious ways of God to man
without ostensibly claiming to do so.

Iqbal was deeply inspired by the Romantic poets',
notion of as a personal rediscovery. This is evident in
his attitude to Islam, in which he searched for himself the
validity of its principles in modern times and showed his
independent attitude towards fundamental religious issues.
He interpreted the holy Quran in an unorthodox free spirit.
The bold scientific language in which he couched his
interpretations of the fundamental principles of Islam led
to serious misunderstandings and evoked a sharp reaction from
several circles including some of his admirers. His close
friend, the religious divine, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, wished in
anguish that he (Iqbal) never had written his Reconstruction
of My Religious Thought in Islam. His views about personal
immortality and the nature of Heaven and Hell like those of
the English Romantic poets, are also so idiosyncratic that
they are unacceptable to a very large majority of believing
Muslims. Iqbal was caught up in a strange dilemma because of
his advocacy of Islam and his being disowned by the followers

18 Keats, The Fall of Hyperion, 11. 299-303
of Islam, and complained:

The narrow-minded ascetic dub me a Kafir
And the Kafir regards me as a Muslim.

In his interpretation of the scripture he can be related to Blake with the difference that Blake makes the scripture a mere point of departure and uses its language to build a religion of his own which, to a large extent, runs counter to the scripture whereas Iqbal tries, as far as possible, to bring his philosophy in line with the principles of Islam.

Similarly, Iqbal's perception of religious truths is not merely rational but involves the intuitive aspect of his personality as well. More vehemently than the Romantics, he distrusted reason as he was acutely conscious of its limitations. He does not reject it outright but supplements it by the more powerful and more important force of Ishq or Love. He does not use this word in the Christian sense, although it includes that sense. "This word," he wrote to Nicholson, "is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and the endeavour to realize
them. In Payam-i-Maahrig (The Message from the East), through his poem Muhavara-i-Ilm-o-Ishq (A Dialogue between Knowledge and Love), he pleads for the combination of knowledge and love for a healthy development of an individual. Love tells knowledge that it had left his Divine bosom and fallen into the trap of the Devil; salvation lies in the combination of the two.

Come take from me a little of my passion and feeling,
And build a lasting paradise on the earth,
Since the beginning of creation we have been each other's companions;
we are the treble and bass of one great symphony.

He knew that mere intellectual reflection leads to delusion and a rational apprehension of religious truths is precarious and untenable;

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19 Introduction to Secrets of the Self, p. 21.

20 Kuliyaat, p. 221.
Do you wish to know the mystery of the world, then look at it through the eye of Ishq. It is delusion and empty pageant if seen through the eye of reason.

He would readily have agreed with Coleridge's remark that "all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death." 22

Iqbal believes that the combination of Head and Heart, of Reason and Intuition, of Love and Knowledge, is necessary to save the human personality from split. He attacks all those religious and philosophical systems which are based on body-mind dualism and one of the causes of his fascination with Islam is that it does not believe in this dualism. In his presidential address delivered at the Annual Session of the All India Muslim League on 29 December 1930, 23 Iqbal remarked that the Western

21 Payam-i-Nashriq in Kulliyat, p. 249.
civilization had proved to be fatal to humanity because of its belief in the duality of spirit and matter and religion and state and that Luther's movement had further accentuated this division. Islam, on the contrary, rejects this dualism. As Iqbal observed:

Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam, God and the Universe, spirit and matter, church and state, are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit realising itself in space and time.  

This point is further elaborated in the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam in the lecture entitled 'The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam' where 'body' is defined as 'spirit in space and time.'  

In Gulshan-i-Raz Jaddid (The New Garden of Mystery) Iqbal says:

Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal, p. 5.

p. 134.

Kuliyyat, p. 154.
It is objectionable to hold body and soul separate,  
and unlawful to see them as parallels.
The secret of life is contained in the 'soul',  
and 'body' is one of its many manifestations;
The bride of meaning adorns itself in various forms  
and assumes various shapes to manifest itself.
The church is engrossed in counting Peter's beads  
and shuns the business of controlling the society,  
while statecraft is reduced to cunning and claptrap.
The fatal sequel of the psycho-physical dualism.

In Iqbal's view, the greatest evil that springs from  
the separation of spirit and matter is manifest in the  
various anti-civilization and anti-life systems of thought  
and action. Those systems which emphasize matter are so  
much absorbed by it that they neglect the spiritual values.
One striking example of such a materialistic system is the  
modern Western civilization which is leading man to a  
spiritual paralysis. In the words of Iqbal, it has created
In him an "infinite gold-hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life-weariness." On the other hand those systems which emphasize the spiritual aspect of life like Buddhism, Pauline Christianity and some schools of Islamic mysticism preach renunciation. Since Islam rejects the body-soul dualism, it does not consider the world as profane and absorption in it as harmful to the interests of the soul since the world here is not the end of man's endeavour but a means to an end. According to the Quran, as Iqbal states again and again, the natural phenomena are Sunnat-ul-Lah (God's Behaviour) and their study and observation is therefore, the worship of God. Similarly the Prophet declares the service of people to be the worship of God and disowns a person who refuses to marry and accept the responsibilities of civilized life. Iqbal attaches great importance to a tradition in which the Prophet declares the whole world to be a mosque. In Mathnavi Pas Chi Bazad Kard Aqwa-i-Sharq (What should then be done to peoples of the East) Iqbal says:

27 Reconstruction, pp. 187-188.

28 Kulliyat, p. 397.
That religious Lord taught the believers
That the whole world is a mosque for us.
O thou who preach renunciation forbear
Controlling the world is freeing oneself from it
And rising above the station of water and clay
Renunciation of a Kafir is retirement into
Wilderness
But renunciation of a believer is turning the
world upside down.

Self-denial and self-destruction are, on this view, anti-life
and therefore sinful, and Iqbal rejects all those religious
systems which preach inaction, unworldliness and self-
abnegation as means of salvation. In his view, salvation
lies in the development of human personality, in the full
realization of the potentialities inherent in man. The
ultimate aim of all religion is the strengthening of the
human ego. Explaining his philosophy of Ego Iqbal wrote to
Nicholson that the universe is made up of Individuals. God
himself is an Individual. The ultimate goal of human
endeavour should, therefore, be the preservation and
development of this individuality. Iqbal rejects the
Hindu and Muslim pantheistic view that man should lose
himself in a universal life although he believes that
individuality can be strengthened only by going nearer and
closer to God;
The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. Not that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary he absorbs God in himself. 29

In Mathnavi Pas Chi Bayad Kard, the idea is thus expressed in poetic terms:

اهن نان کو چنین کسی کو نان نان چنین کسی کو
آهن نان کو چنین کسی کو نان نان چنین کسی کو

Separation from God keeps our breast illuminated with aspiration;
You may lose your identity if He is unmasked.
Even if separation is soul-consuming
Seek not union with Him but His pleasure.

God in Iqbal's theological scheme is the most positive force which directs and channelizes human potentialities towards the path of continuous evolution. In a universe made up of Egos, He is the most unique individual and wants that man too should try to be as unique as possible. He (man) should take on His colour.

29 Introduction to Secrets of the Self, p. 17.
30 Kulliyat, p. 402.
"God's own colour and which colour is better than His."

Iqbal ascribes to the prophet the saying, "create in yourself the attributes of God." (Takhallaq-u-bi 'khaq-il-lah) and there is no doubt it is in keeping with the spirit of Islam. In this way man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique individual. Man is thus a co-worker with God. The Quran, as rightly pointed out by Iqbal, calls God, again and again, Ahsan-ul-Khaliquin (the best of the creators), Aikam-ul-Hakimin (the most just of all the judges) and Arham-ul-Rahimin (the most merciful of all the merciful ones). Thus it accepts the possibility of the existence of other creators than God and man is explicitly called upon to co-operate with Him. Man is a co-worker with God and his vice-gerent on the earth. In his role as a co-worker with God, man not only individualizes himself but also becomes invincible. In a hadith (tradition) the prophet says when man goes nearer and nearer to God through voluntary deeds of virtue (nawaful), he becomes His hand with which, he seizes things, His eye with which he sees and His ear with which he hears. Iqbal renders it thus into poetry:

Kuliyaat, p. 389.
A believer's hand is the hand of Allah;
It is predominant, Creative and wonder-working.

Iqbal's God, unlike the God of Nietzsche, is not a negative force standing in the way of human development. He is not the tyrannical old god Zeus, the oppressor of mankind, of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, nor is he Blake's "Old Nobodaddy" who delights in murder and bloodshed, and about whom Blake writes in The French Revolution:

The old Nobodaddy aloft
Parded and belch'd and cough'd
And said, "I love hanging & drawing & quartering
Every bit as well as war & slaughtering..."

He, on the other hand, is Love and Mercy and Creativity, the final destiny of human evolution, the station of grandeur (megam-i-Kibriva). Emulating God, as far as possible, is, therefore, the only sure way of true self-affirmation according to Iqbal. In his lecture, 'The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam' in the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Iqbal writes:

And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature.
Inaction weakens the self and is, therefore, a great sin in Iqbal's view. In his Introduction to Asrar-i-Khudi written in 1916, he attacks the monistic philosophy of both the Hindu philosopher, Shankaracharya, and the Muslim mystic and thinker, Muhi-ud-Din Ibn Arabi, as it ultimately leads to self-denial and inaction. Sri Krishna and the Gagta are, on the other hand, praised for preaching the gospel of action. Goethe's Faust is also highly admired for substituting word 'action' for 'word' in translating the gospel of St. John.

In his insistence on self-fulfilment and action as the means of true salvation, Iqbal strikes a note similar to Blake, although it is to be remarked that Blake removes all restraints on self and considers God too as one of the restraints; Iqbal differs from him as regards his concept of God who, in his view, is not a restraint but the greatest incentive and guiding force. Blake's prophetic books, however, are replete with exhortations on self-fulfilment and praise of action. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell he writes that "he who desires but acts not breeds pestilence." Evil, according to him, is negative and consists either in self-restraint or the restraint of others. No action is evil. Evil is frustration of activity in one's own self or in others:

34 Complete Writings, p. 151.
But as I understand vice it is Negative....
Accident is the omission of act in Self & the
hindering of act in another; this is Vice, but
all act is Virtue. To hinder another is not
an Act, it is the contrary; it is a restraint
on action both in ourselves and the person
hindered for he who hinders another omits his
own duty at the same time. Murder is Hindering
Another. Theft is Hindering Another.
Backbiting, Undermining, Circumventing, &
whatever is Negative is vice. 35

Although Iqbal does not go to this extreme in his praise
of self-fulfilment and action, at times he seems to voice
similarly, positive and powerful feelings. In Razavi-
Mashrig, for instance, he says:

Carve out your own path with your own pick-axe
It is mortifying to tread on somebody else's path.
If you do something new and original
Though it be sinful, it is a virtue.

Blake's Milton is unsatisfied in Eden where he has nothing

35 Marginal Note to Lavater quoted by Northrop Frye in
Fearful Symmetry, p. 55.

36 Kuliyyat, p. 205.
else to do than to walk about "pondering the intricate mazes of providence" and chooses to go down from "Eternity into time"; in a similar spirit Iqbal's Hallaj in Invidnamah says:

\[

tabiat ma shiaw meedaram, \\
\text{tabiat azad'at na xeem darom.}
\]

The Mullah's paradise consists of the wine, the hourie and the slave.
But the paradise of free souls is ceaseless movement.

In denouncing all that militates against the development of self as negative including the Christian virtues of humility, and modesty and designating the four classical virtues as four pillars of Satan's throne, Blake is a fore-runner of certain predominant currents of the thought of Nietzsche and Iqbal.

The Problem of Good and Evil

When self-affirmation becomes the highest virtue and ultimate goal of religion, it is the criterion to judge between good and evil. Iqbal writes:

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37 Kulliyat, p. 337.

38 See The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.
The idea of personality gives us a standard of value; it settles the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. 39

In 'Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal' Iqbal criticizes Buddhism on the ground that it regards pain as "a dominating element in the constitution of the universe," 40 and personality as an evil to be got rid of and places before man the ideal of self-renunciation. Similarly Christianity is criticized for its belief in regarding man as essentially sinful, and human personality, without a redeemer, as incapable of getting rid of sin.

Iqbal believes that evil is not essential to the universe and that man is not inherently sinful. That we call evil is the other side of good. Nothing can be more humiliating to the worth and dignity of man than the belief that, without extraneous help, he is insufficient to face the seemingly destructive forces of life. According to him a healthy and powerful individual converts these forces into a source of life. Thus what we call evil is necessary because it offers the resistance which is essential for the

39 Introduction to Secrets of the Self, p. 19.
40 Speeches, Writings and Statements, p. 37.
unfolding of man's potential and development of his moral self. Iqbal writes:

The freedom to choose good involves also the freedom to choose what is the opposite of good. . . . Good and evil, therefore, though opposites, must fall within the same whole. 41

Further on, in the same lecture, he affirms:

The experience of a finite ego to whom several possibilities are open expands only by the method of trial and error. Therefore error which may be described as a kind of intellectual evil is an indispensable factor in the building up of experience. 42

Among the English Romantic poets, Blake approaches the problem of good and evil from a similar point of view. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he presents his dialectic according to which truth is reached through contraries which are not negations of each other but partial truths. Commenting on Swedenborg, a Swedish Theologian and mystic (1688-1772),

41 Reconstruction, p. 85.

42 Ibid., p. 87.
Blake wrote, "Good and evil are here both Good and the two contraries married." In another comment upon the same thinker, Blake says: "Heaven and Hell are born together." In his scheme of things the 'tiger' is as important as the 'lamb'. In the 'Proverbs of Hell' he writes:

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man... the tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Satan, on this view, is a Promethean figure, and has, in diverse ways though, fascinated the English Romantic poets. In Blake's works 'Devil' is not used as a term of reproof but of approval. The Devil is a revolutionary figure and one of those figures who, like Blake, call the whole structure of society in question. Byron's ethics, similarly, remained up to the end of his life Satanic-Promethean in character.

43 Romantic poetry and Prose, p. 43.
44 Ibid., p. 34.
45 Complete Writings, p. 151.
46 Ibid., p. 152.
Shelley's attitude towards the problem of good and evil is however, different. In spite of his presentation of Prometheus as an uncompromising champion of mankind, Shelley's outlook is, on the whole, Manichaean. The world contains evil as well as the remedy for evil. The saviour who, according to the Shelley of the Queen Mab, has got to be an atheist will cause the evil to sting itself to death leaving the good alone and paving the way for the golden age of human renovation. In her note to Prometheus Unbound, Mary Shelley writes:

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation but an accident that might be expelled. God made earth and man perfect, till he by his fall, "Brought death into the world and all our woe." Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil and there will be none.  

Now this view of evil as an 'accident' and something 'undesirable' and 'perishable' is different from the view of Blake or Iqbal for whom good and evil are so correlated

47 Poetical Works, p. 267.
that the one cannot exist without the other. As for Wordsworth and Coleridge, it is because of their deep seated Christian loyalties that they, unlike Blake or Iqbal, could not take a positive view of evil.

In Iqbal, Satan appears as a grand heroic figure, a spokesman of his cult of the Ego. His refusal of God's commandment to prostrate himself before Adam is motivated by his passion to preserve his ego. In Javid Nambah Iqbal writes:

My 'no' to God's command was a 'veil' for my 'yes' (to Life)

What I said is far pleasanter than what I refused to say.

And his 'plaint' fully reflects heroic attributes. Through his lips in Payam-i-Ishq, Iqbal preaches one of the fundamental tenets of his message:

48 Kuliya, p. 345.

49 Ibid., p. 216.
Thou art still unaware of the fact that love
dies by the union with the beloved;
Eternal life lies in endless smouldering.

*Satyan, u-Iblis*

Satan tells Gabriel in *(Gabriel and the Devil)* that his
existence lends hectic movement to the world and but for
him this pulsating world would have been a wilderness:

Ask God, if you can, in a moment of privacy
who has lent colour to the legend of man?

In 'Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal', Iqbal writes about
the Devil in the same vein:

I hope I shall not be offending the reader
when I say that I have a certain admiration
for the devil. By refusing to prostrate
himself before Adam, whom he honestly
believed to be his inferior, he revealed a
high sense of self-respect. 51

The Question of Immortality

Questions of immortality, rebirth and the nature of
heaven and hell are a subject to which the Romantic mind has

50 *Kuliyaat*, p. 346.

51 *Speeches, Writings and Statements*, p. 94.
always felt drawn. Indeed the subject has stimulated some
of the most exciting poetry in all ages. Right from the
days of Pyksos monarchy in Egypt and the Vedic times in
India through the classical Greece and Rome down to modern
times, this fascinating subject has served as a dominant
theme of a large part of poetry, both religious and secular.

What is the nature of Time and Eternity? Is there anything
which transcends the bounds of time and space? The
'Romantic' mind finds it hard to believe that such a
mysterious creation as man has been fashioned to perish. Keats wrote:

"It is highly improbable," says Iqbal, expressing the same
mystical faith that a being whose evolution has taken
millions of years should be thrown away as a thing of no
use." \(^{52}\)

The English Romantic poets believed in some kind of
immortality. It is true that Byron, the most sceptical of
them, in keeping with his general attitude towards religious
beliefs was doubtful about the possibility of another life.
As he writes in \textit{Childe Harold}:

\begin{quote}
Yet if, as holiest men have deem'd there be
A land of souls beyond the sable shore,
To shame the doctrine of Sadducees
And Sophists, madly vain of dubious lore. \(^{53}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{52}\) \textit{Reconstruction}, p. 119.

\(^{53}\) \textit{Poetical Works of Byron}, c. II, s. VIII, p. 191.
Similarly, his Manfred, though talking of the immortality of mind, says that he had been his own destroyer and will be his own hereafter. Yet it will also be admitted that even Byron, at times, has intimations of the immortal divine spark in man:

Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts.\textsuperscript{54}

Shelley believed in a kind of immortality which is not personal. According to him, our soul is ultimately merged, as Keats's soul in \textit{Adonais} is, with the universal soul, the immanent principle of life which directs the movement of the Universe and is immortal. It is eternal while everything else is ephemeral:

The One remains, the many change and pass
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly
Life, like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.\textsuperscript{55}

To Blake God does not exist apart from man and since the divine is included in man in the form of Imagination, man is

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Child Harold}, Canto III, St. XIV.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Adonais}, III. In the letters however Shelley resorts to a personal and individual immortality in a letter he wrote: "But as I conceive (and as is certainly capable of demonstration) that nothing can be annihilated, but that everything appertaining to nature, consisting of constituent parts infinitely divisible, is in a continual change..."
immortal. Wordsworth never lost his faith in immortality right from his pantheistic days when the human soul seemed to him a part of the universal spirit "whose dwelling is the light of setting suns / And the round ocean and the living air / And the blue sky and in the mind of man" —— up to the time when he became an orthodox Christian. In his 'Essay on Epitaphs' which he contributed to Coleridge's magazine, The Friend, he wrote that he would find no happiness in life if he were not convinced of the immortality of some part of his being. To Coleridge, each one of us has a divine spark in him —— the 'I' of every rational being. Man has been created in God's own image and his soul partakes of the divine attribute of immortality.

Iqbal's complex thinking on the subject is largely in tune with the above tradition of the Romantics throws light on the above tradition of the Romantics. Iqbal's own complex thinking on the subject. He looks at the question of immortality and the nature of heaven and hell too in the light of the importance he attaches to the human ego. He believed that man, in reality, is timeless but this timelessness is to be safeguarded. Ego-sustaining deeds make us immortal whereas those which weaken our ego lead to dissolution:

See 'Essays on Epitaphs' I, in Prose works, II, p. 52.
Personal immortality, then, is not ours as of right; it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only a candidate for it.\(^57\)

The ego is strengthened if it is constantly kept in a state of tension. As Iqbal explained to Nicholson:

> **Personal immortality is an aspiration.** You can have it if you make an effort to achieve it. It depends on our adopting in this life modes of thought and activity which tend to maintain the state of tension. ... If our activity is directed towards the maintenance of a state of tension, the shock of death is not likely to affect it. After death there may be an interval of relaxation, as the Koran speaks of a barzakh, or intermediate state, which lasts until the day of Resurrection. Only those egos will survive this state of relaxation who have taken good care during the present life.\(^58\)

Iqbal’s view of heaven and hell is closer to the iconoclastic view of Blake than to the orthodox views of Wordsworth and Coleridge or the general opinion of Muslim theologians. The definition of their nature is determined by his philosophy of ego:

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\(^57\) *Reconstruction*, p. 117.

\(^58\) *Introduction to Secrets of the Self*, p. 20.
Heaven and Hell are states and not localities. The descriptions in the Quran are visual representations of an inner fact, i.e., character. Hell, in the words of the Quran, is 'God's kindled fire which mounts above the hearts' — the painful realization of one's failure as a man. Heaven is the joy of triumph over the forces of disintegration. 59

To Blake, Heaven is the awakening of the God within us, the development of our Imagination. It is this world (and not any other) as it appears to the awakened imagination. In A Vision of Last Judgement Blake writes:

Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed and governed their Passions or have No passions, but because they have Cultivated their understandings. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion, but Realities of Intellect, from which all passions Emanate Uncurbed in their Eternal Glory. 60

59 Reconstruction, p. 123.

60 Complete Writings, p. 615.
Blake always uses 'Intellect' as synonymous with 'Imagination.'