

An Anthology
of Living
English
Poets

The Muslim Community

all believe in a certain view of the Universe, and participate in the same historical tradition that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam. Islam abhors all material limitations, and bases its nationality on a purely abstract idea objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities. It is not dependent for its life principle on the character and genius of a particular people. In its essence, it is non-temporal, non-spatial. In the case of no community the words of Auguste Comte are so completely true as in the case of our own. "Since religion," says he, "embraces all our existence, its history must be an epitome of the whole of our development." It may, however, be asked that if mere belief in certain propositions of a metaphysical import is the only thing that ultimately determines the structure of the Muslim Community. Is it not an extremely unsafe basis, especially before the advance of modern knowledge with its habits of Rationalism and Criticism? This is what the French Orientalist Renan thought; he entertained a veiled hope that Islam would one day "lose the high intellectual and moral direction of an important part of the Universe." Nations, the basic principle of whose collective life is territorial, need not be afraid of Rationalism; to us a dangerous foe, since it aims at the very principle which gives us a communal life, and alone makes collective existence intelligible. Rationalism is