
HASAN AL-BANNA

1906–1949

HASAN AL-BANNA is frequently characterized as the father of contemporary Islamism, and with good reason. In 1928 Banna founded al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, or the Egyptian Society of Muslim Brothers, an organization that has spawned branches throughout the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and beyond and has directly or indirectly inspired virtually every Sunni Islamist group now in existence. As Banna was assassinated in 1949, the tumultuous history of the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots extends far beyond the life of its founder by many decades. Yet, at the time of his death at forty-three, Banna had already built a formidable organization with deep roots in Egyptian society and a broad base of membership, ranging from civil servants to soldiers, urban laborers to rural peasants, village elders to university students. Although the appeal of the Brotherhood's message of Islamic "rearmament" had much to do with timing and specific political circumstances, it was also and crucially about Banna himself. A watchmaker by training and schoolteacher by profession, Banna exuded selfless religious devotion and unflagging energy and, by all accounts, was preternaturally gifted with remarkable personal charisma, rhetorical skill, and organizational acumen. More activist than theologian, Banna would largely leave the task of developing an Islamist theoretical framework to thinkers who came after him. Yet many of the positions and arguments associated with Islamists such as Qutb, Mawdudi, and Khomeini are a systematic articulation of a worldview already evident in the model of leadership and sociomoral reform Banna left behind.

Banna is so closely identified with the Brotherhood that its early history and his biography are almost indistinguishable. Banna was born in 1906 in Mahmudiyya, a village north of Cairo. His father was a shaykh, scholar, and imam for the local mosque as well as a watch repairer, and he conveyed his religious devotion, love of learning, and practical expertise to his son.¹ Throughout his life, Banna was drawn to a life of learning and study in addition to engagement and action—and precociously so. At thirteen, Banna was already deeply immersed in Hasafiyya, a Sufi mystical

¹Banna's life has been amply documented in several excellent studies of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Banna himself also provides extensive (if occasionally self-serving) information about his early life and the founding of the Brotherhood in his memoirs. See R. Mitchell (1993), Banna (1974), and Harris (1964).

order, and active in the strikes and demonstrations of the 1919 Egyptian rebellion against British rule. From a very early age, he was also a fervent participant in several Muslim student associations devoted to self-discipline and moral reform, an agenda that included strident opposition to Christian missionary activity and any behavior deemed "un-Islamic."

When he was seventeen, Banna opted to study at the Dar al-'Ulum, a well-established state teachers' college in Cairo, rather than pursue an advanced religious education. Yet the understanding of education (*tarbiyya*) that he held throughout his life more closely resembled what Aristotle had called moral instruction than mastery of a particular set of skills or academic discipline. In Banna's view, the ultimate aim of all knowledge is neither personal advancement nor material success but rather inculcation of the Good Life as dictated by the truths of Islam, and this is equally true whether the subject of study is the Qur'an or economics. He similarly saw teaching as a vocation—in the sense of a religious calling—rather than just a profession: embracing the role of *murshid* (religious guide, teacher), Banna cast himself as a leader who, like his own teachers, instructs by argument and example; figures to his pupils much as a father does to his children; and commands the same kind of fierce loyalty, emotional attachment, and strict obedience from his followers as does a Sufi shaykh from his disciples (Harris 1964, 157; Commins 1994, 150; R. Mitchell 1993, 300–301).²

Banna graduated from the Dar al-'Ulum in 1927, and his first posting was as an Arabic instructor in a school in Isma'iliyya, a city in the Suez Canal Zone. There he honed his skills as an orator in mosques, clubs, and coffeehouses, adapting his rhetoric to suit different audiences in an effort to draw into his orbit elites and peasants, shaykhs and laborers, family elders and students alike. His lectures on the necessity of reviving the true Islam found a particularly receptive audience in Isma'iliyya, headquarters of the British-owned Suez Canal Company, site of several British military camps, and home to a substantial and conspicuously wealthy foreign population. Here, as in Cairo, Banna was repulsed by what he saw as the domination of materialism and secularism, the abandonment of Muslim virtue, widespread imitation of Western moral decadence, and the galling sight of native Egyptians laboring in their own country for the profit of foreign powers. In his memoirs, Banna characterizes Isma'iliyya as the stark embodiment of the evils besetting Egypt and all Muslim societies dominated by foreign capital and cultural influence (Banna 1974, 73).

Such was the setting of the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. As Banna tells it, the Brotherhood was founded when several Egyptian laborers from the British camps beseeched him to deliver them from the

²Banna preferred to be called a *murshid* rather than *ra'is* (president) or *qa'id* (commander), although as the organization grew, he came to be known as *murshid al-'am*, literally "guide general" (R. Mitchell 1993, 299; Harris 1964, 154).

humiliation of foreign domination and guide them to the glory of Islam (Banna 1974, 74). From these modest beginnings, Banna worked relentlessly over the next two decades to build a broad base of membership for the Society of Muslim Brothers, along with a complex structure that facilitated tight discipline within the organization and mobilized members for continual outreach and indoctrination. This cadre would serve as the foot soldiers for a wide array of social welfare projects designed to improve the living conditions of ordinary Egyptians, such as establishing schools, providing sustenance for orphans as well as for the needy and sick, bringing electricity to villages, creating health clinics, and building mosques.³ For Banna, such efforts were not only essential to sociomoral reconstruction but also critical for generating grass-roots support and recruiting new Brotherhood members.

The crises plaguing Egyptian politics at the time provided fertile soil for such efforts and strategies. A British protectorate since World War I, Egypt had been declared independent in 1922. Britain retained control over several domains of national politics, however, including security and foreign policy. Despite Egyptian independence then, actual power was split three ways between the often-conflicting interests of the Egyptian monarchy, the nationalist Wafd Party, and the British. The shifting alliances and animosities among these three poles of power frequently paralyzed the government, transforming what might have been an era of constitutional rule into a cauldron of intra-elite conflict and corruption (al-Sayyid Marsot 1977; 1985). The facade of Egyptian independence came under increasing strain during World War II, as nationalist agitation mounted and the British maneuvered aggressively to maintain control and facilitate Egyptian support for, or at least acquiescence to, the Allied cause.

While much of the Brotherhood's activities before 1936 were aimed at recruitment and social welfare programs, the years leading up to and during the Second World War marked Banna's ascendance as a powerful figure in Egyptian politics, as well as the expansion of Brotherhood activities to British Mandate Palestine in support of the Arab Rebellion (1937–39).⁴ In 1941 Banna decided to run for elected office but agreed to withdraw when pressured by Wafdist officials. In exchange, Banna secured from the government a pledge to ease restrictions on the Brotherhood and curtail prostitution and alcohol consumption. In 1945 Banna again entered the field of electoral politics but was defeated along with

³The society also pursued several commercial and industrial projects (Harris 1964, 154–57).

⁴The Arab Rebellion was a coordinated effort among Palestinian Arabs to fight British colonial rule and prevent the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state. It was critical to articulating the Arab claim to Palestine as well as to the emergence of a Palestinian national identity that transcended clan, class, and sectarian divisions.

other society candidates in what one scholar characterized as the most “obviously dishonest” election held in Egypt to date (R. Mitchell 1993, 33).

As the reins of the Egyptian government changed hands over the years, the Brotherhood continued to agitate from outside the formal institutions of government, pressing demands to liberate Egypt from British control, reverse the tide of secularism, and restore Islamic sovereignty over both public and private domains. As relations between the state and the Brotherhood grew progressively hostile, the Society would add to its structure a “secret apparatus” designed to defend Brothers against government harassment and pursue extralegal and at times violent jihad operations (R. Mitchell 1993, 32). The Brotherhood now “operated on the edge of, or beneath the surface of, Egyptian political life” and increasingly took on the characteristics of a resistance movement (Harris 1964, 158, 180, 182). It was in this climate that the prime minister of Egypt, Nuqrashi Pasha, issued a 1948 proclamation dissolving the Muslim Brotherhood, only to be assassinated shortly thereafter by one of its members. The next prime minister arranged to have Banna shot to death on February 12, 1949, thereby assuring the transformation of the Brotherhood leader into “the martyr of the nation.”

Under Banna’s leadership, the Muslim Brothers disseminated an array of publications and propaganda and even established its own press. The centerpiece of these efforts was Banna’s “Epistles” (*al-rasa’il*). These tracts were largely written in response to specific events and ranged from letters to various Egyptian officials to pamphlets detailing the ideas, duties, and purposes of the Society for its expanding membership (R. Mitchell 1993, 13). Along with Banna’s memoirs, these epistles presage many of the features of later radical Muslim thought both rhetorically and substantively. Several of these features have become well-known components of an Islamist lexicon. There is, for example, an analysis of the conditions of the Muslim umma in terms of infection, disease, diagnosis, and cure. There is a narrative of history in which Western ascendancy is characterized as the triumph of and vehicle for materialism and moral bankruptcy. There is an insistence on Islam as a comprehensive way of life, a set of religio-political imperatives distorted by foreign domination and Western cultural corruption on the one hand, and Muslim impotence, sectarianism, and indifference on the other. There is a rejection of pacific forms of jihad in favor of the armed fight against unbelievers, preparations for which include physical training, moral self-discipline, and cultivating the “art of death” (R. Mitchell 1993, 207–8). And there is a sharp contrast between righteous Brothers and the array of hostile forces conspiring to persecute them and destroy the truths they aim to restore.

Banna’s work also presages many less obvious features of contemporary Islamist thought. For instance, as in much of later Islamist rhetoric, Banna’s writing tends to transform women’s bodies and sexual behavior

into symbols of moral purity or indices of cultural decay.⁵ Like Qutb, Faraj, Bin Laden, and other Islamists without advanced religious training, moreover, Banna harbors bitter disappointment with members of the religious establishment, particularly those he claims place their own ambitions and interests above their vocation as custodians of Islam. In addition, Sufism is central to Banna’s experience of Islam and his model of leadership, much as it would be to Qutb (although he would later disavow it) and Khomeini, whose own immersion in mysticism would undergird his claims for the special knowledge required for just Islamic rule (see chapter 1). Finally, by both argument and example, Banna insists that the multiple crises facing the Muslim umma require a commitment to action over words, deeds over slogans, practical over theoretical knowledge, unity over dissent. Untempered by Banna’s love of learning, this emphasis on the primacy of action would devolve into the anti-intellectualist tendencies of Islamists such as Qutb and Faraj, those for whom the “life of the mind” is but a cowardly substitute for the “sweat and blood” of great deeds.

At the same time, there is a strain of pragmatism, compromise, and conciliation in Banna’s thought and practice that differentiates him from many of the radical Islamists that followed, one that would serve as precedent and inspiration for such “moderate” Islamists as Nadia Yassine (see chapter 12). Here the contrast with Qutb in particular is instructive: in Qutb’s later work, there is a pervasive sense of despair about a world enveloped by a new jahiliyya and a concomitant hardening of his thought around a stark polarity between good and evil, the solution to which is as radical as it is unspecific. By contrast, Banna’s life and writing speak eloquently if didactically of his hope that individual and collective action in the service of concrete sociomoral programs might reform the world he was given. While profoundly critical of Egyptian politics, for example, Banna was not averse to playing by its rules, attempting to run for elected office not once, but twice. By the same token, much of the Brotherhood’s early activities were geared toward gradualist transformation from the ground up rather than direct seizure of state power.

A man with astute political instincts, Banna insisted that the Brothers always calibrate action to circumstance. For much of his life, Banna sought with great effort to coax action out of acquiescence without acceding to the demands of (in his own words) “the overzealous and hasty,” impatient to accomplish with force what could not be achieved through persuasion (Banna 1950, 22; Heyworth-Dunne 1950, 27–28). Hardly

⁵Consistent with this view, Banna established an “Institute for the Mothers of the Believers” in Isma’iliyya, a school meant to mobilize women in their role as mothers for the moral reform of the family. This eventually became the first chapter of the “Muslim Sisters.” Banna asked Zaynab al-Ghazali (see chapter 11) to merge her own “Muslim Women’s Association” into the organization and assume its leadership; she declined.

opposed to violent action on principle—although he took different positions depending upon his audience—Banna refused to be pushed into it precipitously. He was quite explicit about the succession of phases integral to social transformation, insisting that “execution” may commence only after the prior stages of “propaganda, education, and preaching” and “selection, formation, and mobilization” (Banna 1950, 20, 21). Thus, when confronted by the hadith, “He among you who sees an abomination must correct it with his hand; if he is unable, then with his tongue; if he is unable, then with his heart. The last of these is the weakest of faith,” Banna was known to respond with Qur’an 16:125: “Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way and He is best aware of those who go aright.”

These aspects of Banna’s life and work situate him politically, intellectually, and historically between the radicalism of much of contemporary Islamist thought and the reformism of such nineteenth-century Muslim thinkers as Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani [al-Asadabadi] (d.1897). Although quite critical of the reformists who preceded him, Banna’s agenda is in many ways continuous with their earlier efforts to excavate Islamic foundations to serve as a bulwark against the encroachments of foreign power and the weakening of the umma from within. Much as Afghani and ‘Abduh sought to meet this double challenge by recasting Islam and scientific truth as fundamentally harmonious, Banna insists that the neglect of science is a central cause of Muslim decline and repeatedly characterizes education in the natural and applied sciences as integral rather than antithetical to Islamic faith.

Indeed, despite the fact that the caliphate had been abolished in 1924,⁶ the geopolitical landscape in which Banna found himself posed a challenge that his predecessors would also have recognized, one in which allegiance to an Islamic umma defined not by territory but by faith required increasing justification in the face of crosscutting national and ethnic loyalties. So understood, Banna’s endeavors may be seen as confronting the

⁶The Caliphate is an institution of rule whose origins are located in questions about who would lead the Muslim community in the wake of the Prophet Muhammad’s death and about the appropriate criterion for succession. Here, too, are the origins of what would become the sectarian division between Shi’a and Sunnis. Those who believed that the Prophet’s son-in-law and cousin, ‘Ali, had already been designated as successor became known as the Shi’a (literally: “partisans” of ‘Ali). Those who believed that the question of succession was to be determined by the community were called Sunnis, or those who followed the sunna (the normative example of the Prophet). The evolution of the Caliphate both as an institution and a theory of political power over the centuries reflects various historical, political, economic, cultural, and regional transformations in different Muslim societies too complex to encapsulate. By the eighteenth century, however, the multiethnic Ottoman Empire had claimed the mantle of the Caliphate, but that was to be undone in the early decades of the twentieth century: the Ottoman Empire was dismembered at the end of World War I and the Caliphate abolished in 1924 by the architect of the Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal.

very question that had so preoccupied earlier Muslim reformists: to what extent and in what form can the Islamic tradition and the umma built upon it survive and flourish in a modern landscape increasingly defined by the authority of scientific rationality, the sovereignty of the nation-state, and the dominance of the West? It is in part because of Banna’s efforts and example that, for generations of Islamists to come, the answer would be clear and the question itself unnecessary.

TOWARD THE LIGHT

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

PREFACE

In Rajab 1366 [May–June 1947], the imam and martyr Hasan al-Banna, Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, sent this message to His Majesty Faruq I, King of Egypt and the Sudan, His Excellency Mustafa al-Nahhas Pasha, his then prime minister, and to the kings, princes, and rulers of the various countries of the Islamic world, as well as to a great number of civic and religious leaders in those countries. We are now publishing and distributing it once more. Many of the viewpoints and directives it contains still represent the dearest hope of every Arab and every Muslim. Let us pray God that it be fulfilled!

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Praise be unto God, and may God bless and save Our Master Muhammad, his House, and his Companions. “Our Lord, grant us Your mercy, and find us a good way out of our ordeal” [Q 18:10].

Cairo, Egypt, Rajab 1366

Your Excellency,

Peace be with you, and God’s mercy and blessings! To proceed: all that impels us to submit this message to Your Excellency is a keen desire to guide the nation, whose leadership God has placed in your care and whose affairs He has delegated to you during its modern era, in a benevolent manner which will set it on the most excellent of paths, trace out for it the best of programs, protect it from shocks and disturbances, and spare it protracted and painful experiences.

Beyond this, we desire no more than to have done our duty and submitted our advice . . . for God’s reward is better and more lasting.

THE SHEPHERD’S RESPONSIBILITY

Your Excellency,

God has delegated rulership over this nation to you and has made its interests, its affairs, its present and its future your trust and your charge:

you are responsible for all of these before God (Blessed and Almighty is He!). If the present generation is your instrument, the coming generation is your product. How mighty is this trust, and how great this responsibility, that a man should be held answerable for a nation: [A hadith reads] “Each of you is a shepherd, and each is responsible for his flock.” In ancient times, the Just Imam [the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, 634–44] said: “If a mule were to stumble in Iraq, I would hold myself responsible for her before God (Blessed and Almighty is He!), as to why I had not leveled the road for her.” The imam ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab depicted the immensity of his responsibility in a saying of his: “How I would like to come out of it evenly—owning nothing and owing nothing!”

INTRODUCTION

A. A Period of Transition

The most dangerous period in the life of nations, and the most deserving of critical study, is the period of transition from one state of affairs to another. It is then that plans for the new period are laid and its guiding principles and policies drawn up, according to which, it is expected, the nation will be formed and to which it will adhere. If these plans, principles, and policies are clear-cut, sound, and solid, the nation will rejoice in this triumph, and its guides, because of this well-being, will have a great reward, eternal fame, the just verdict of history, and fair renown.

B. At the Crossroads

This important task poses two conditions: the first is the liberation of the nation from its political bonds so that it may obtain its freedom and regain its lost independence and sovereignty.

The second is its reconstruction, so that it may take its own way among the nations and compete with these others in its progress toward social perfection.

For the time being, the political struggle has come to a halt, and you have begun, along with the nation, to face a new period. Now you will see two ways before you, each one urging you to orient the nation in its direction and to proceed with it along its path. Each one has its particular characteristics, its advantages, its effects, its results, its propagandists, and its promoters. The first is the way of Islam, its fundamental assumptions, its principles, its culture, and its civilization; the second is the way of the West, the external features of its life, its organization, and its procedures. It is our belief that the first way, the way of Islam, its principles and its fundamental assumptions, is the only way that ought to be followed, and toward which the present and future nation should be oriented.

C. Advantages of the Islamic Orientation

If we take the nation along this path, we shall be able to obtain many benefits—among them the fact that the Islamic way has been tried before and that history has testified as to its soundness. It has produced for the benefit of mankind an umma that is one of the strongest, most excellent, most merciful, most godly, and most blessed for all of humanity. It possesses a sanctity and stability in the minds of men that makes it easy for all to adopt it, to understand it, and to respond to it, as well as to adhere to it once they are properly oriented to it, to say nothing of pride in nationalism and the extolment of sincere patriotism. For then we will construct our lives on our own principles and fundamental assumptions, taking nothing from others. Herein lie the highest ideals of social and existential independence, after political independence.

To take this course means to strengthen Arab unity, in the first place; and in the second, to strengthen Islamic unity. The Islamic world in its entirety will support us through its spirit, its sensibility, its sympathy, and its endorsement and will see in us brethren whom it will stand behind as they stand behind it, and whom it will support as they support it. And herein lies a great moral advantage that no intelligent person will spurn.

This course is complete and all-encompassing, guaranteeing the establishment of the most excellent institutions for public life in the nation, both practically and spiritually. This is the advantage that distinguishes Islam, for it places the institutions of the life of nations on two important bases: adherence to the good, and avoidance of the harmful.

If we pursue this path, we shall be able to avoid the vital problems that beset the other nations, which have neither known of this way nor followed it. Indeed, we shall be able to solve many complicated problems that present institutions are unable to, and here we cite the words of Bernard Shaw: “How much the world in the modern age needs a man like Muhammad to solve its stubborn, complicated problems over a cup of coffee.”

After all this, if we follow this path, God’s support will stand behind us, fortifying us at moments of weakness, sustaining us in difficulties, easing our toil for us, and urging us forward: “Do not falter in pursuing the people; if you suffer, they suffer as do you, and you hope from God that which they do not. God is Knowing, Wise” (Q 4:104).

D. Western Civilization Today

In concluding this discussion, we assert that the civilization of the West, which was brilliant by virtue of its scientific perfection for a long time, and which subjugated the whole world with the products of this science to its states and nations, is now bankrupt and in decline. Its foundations are crumbling, and its institutions and guiding principles are falling apart. Its political foundations are being destroyed by dictatorships, and

its economic foundations are being swept away by crises. The millions of its wretched unemployed and hungry offer their testimony against it, while its social foundations are being undermined by deviant ideologies and revolutions that are breaking out everywhere. Its people are at a loss as to the proper measures to be taken and are wandering far astray. Their congresses are failures, their treaties are broken, and their covenants torn to pieces: their League of Nations is a phantasm, possessing neither spirit nor influence, while their strong men, along with other things, are overthrowing its covenant of peace and security.

This is one side of the matter. Meanwhile, on the other side too, they are being dealt violent blows, so that the world, thanks to these tyrannical and self-seeking policies, has become like a ship in the midst of the sea, with its captain distraught while blustering gales assault it on all sides. All of humanity is tormented, wretched, worried, and confused, having been scorched by the fires of greed and materialism. They are in dire need of some sweet portion of the waters of True Islam to wash from them the filth of misery and lead them to happiness.

The leadership of the world was at one time in the hands of the East entirely; then it fell to the West after the rise of the Greeks and Romans. After that, the Mosaic, Christian, and Muhammadan dispensations brought it back to the East for a second time, but then the East fell into its long sleep, and the West enjoyed a new rebirth. It was God’s *sunna* (the normative example of the Prophet) that may not be gainsaid, and the West inherited world leadership. But lo and behold! It was tyrannical and unjust, insolent, misguided, and stumbling blindly, and it only remained for a strong Eastern power to exert itself under the shadow of God’s banner, with the standard of the Qur’an fluttering at its head, and backed up by the powerful, unyielding soldiery of the faith. And there was the world turned Muslim and at peace, and the universe singing out: “Praise be unto God who guided us to this, for truly we had not been guided if God had not guided us” (Q 7:43).

This is not in the least a product of the imagination: this is no other than the true verdict of history. And if it is not fulfilled through us, “Then God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble toward believers and powerful against unbelievers, striving in the way of God, and fearing not the reproach of any reproacher. That is the bounty of God, which He brings to whom He will” (Q 5:54).

ISLAM IS GUARANTEED TO SUPPLY THE RENASCENT NATION WITH ITS NEEDS

No regime in this world will supply the renascent nation with what it requires in the way of institutions, principles, objectives, and sensibilities to the same extent that Islam supplies every one of its renascent

nations. The Noble Qur'an is full of passages descriptive of this particular aspect, and contains numerous exemplary parables concerning it—in general or in detail—while it deals with these aspects clearly and precisely. No nation adheres to it without succeeding in its aspirations.

A. Islam and Hope

A renascent nation needs a broad, all-encompassing hope, and the Qur'an has supplied its nations with this consciousness in a manner that creates out of a dead nation one that is all life, ambition, hope, and determination. It is enough that it labels despair the road to unbelief, and hopelessness a manifestation of error.

In fact, if only the weakest nation heard these words of the Almighty: "And We desired to show favor to those who had been rendered weak on the earth, and to make them leaders, and to make them inheritors, and to make them strong on the earth" (Q 28:5-6).

And in the words of the Almighty: "Falter not, nor grieve, for you will be paramount if you are believers. If a wound touches you, a wound like it has already touched the people. These are the days which We apportion to mankind in turn" (Q 3:139-40).

And in the words of the Almighty: "He it is who expelled those of the People of the Book [Christians and Jews] who disbelieved from their abodes at the first gathering. You did not think that they would go forth, and you thought that their fortresses would render them impregnable to God. But God came to them from whence they had not reckoned, and He cast terror into their hearts, while they made ruins of their homes by their own hands and the hands of the believers. Consider then, O you who have eyes!" (Q 59:2).

And in the words of the Almighty: "Do you suppose that you will enter the Garden without first having suffered like those before you? They were afflicted by misfortune and hardship, and they were so shaken that even [their] messenger and the believers with him cried, 'When will God's help arrive?' Truly, God's help is near" (Q 2:214).

Truly the weakest of nations, if it heard these good tidings and read the real stories pertinent to them, would absolutely emerge thereafter as the strongest of nations in faith and spirit. It would unquestionably see in this hope encouragement to plunge into difficulties, however severe they might be, and to confront events, however overwhelming, until it won the perfection to which it aspired.

B. Islam and National Greatness

The renascent nations need to glory in their nationalism as a superior and splendid nation with its own merits and its own history, so that its image will be imprinted on the minds of its sons, and they will offer up their blood and their lives on behalf of this splendor and nobility, and

work for the welfare of this fatherland and for its aggrandizement and prosperity. We will not see this ideal clearly in any regime to be as just, excellent, and merciful as it is in True Islam. For if the nation knows that its nobility and honor have been sanctified by God in His foreknowledge, and that He has registered it in His unswerving Book—for as He, the Blessed and Almighty, says: "You are the best nation which has been brought forth for mankind" (Q 3:110); and in the words of the Almighty: "We have made you [believers] into a just community, so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before others and so that the Messenger may bear witness [to it] before you" (Q 2:143); "Greatness belongs to God, and to His Apostle, and to the believers" (Q 63:8)—then it is the nation most worthy of sacrificing the world and all it contains for its God-given greatness.

The modern nations have labored to foster this ideal firmly in the minds of their youth, men, and boys alike; thus we hear: "Germany above all!" and "Italy above all!" and "Rule, Britannia!" But the difference between the sentiments that the Islamic ideology fosters and the sentiments fostered by these slogans and ideologies is that the sentiments of the Muslim seek to rise to communion with God, whereas the sentiments of the non-Muslim do not go beyond the literal import of the words. Furthermore, in creating these sentiments, Islam defined its goal, made it a stringent duty to keep to it, and proclaimed that it was not a matter of chauvinism or false pride, but of leading the world to its welfare. Concerning this, He, the Blessed and Almighty, says: "You command the good and forbid the evil, and believe in God" (Q 3:110).

This implies the support of virtue and the combating of vice, and reverence for the ideal as well as bearing it in mind while performing any act. Therefore, these sentiments, by virtue of their hold upon the early Muslims, produced the maximal justice and mercy reported historically of any of the nations. On the other hand, the ideology of domination in the minds of the Western nations did not define its goal without involving a fallacious chauvinism, and therefore it brought about internecine warfare and aggression against weak nations. In this respect, the Islamic ideology adopted the best course and sought to instill it in its sons and to turn them away from anything characterized by wickedness and oppression. Islam has extended the domain of the Islamic fatherland and has ordained toil for its welfare and self-sacrifice for the sake of its freedom and greatness. According to the Islamic understanding, the fatherland comprises: (1) the particular country first of all; (2) then it extends to the other Islamic countries, for all of them are a fatherland and an abode for the Muslim; (3) then it proceeds to the first Islamic Empire which the Pious Ancestors erected with their dear and precious blood, and over which they raised God's banner. Their monuments within it still extol their superiority and grandeur; and for all these regions, the Muslim will be asked before God (Blessed

and Almighty is He!) why he did not labor to restore it. (4) Then the fatherland of the Muslim expands to encompass the entire world. Do you not hear the words of God (Blessed and Almighty is He!): "Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted to God" (Q 2:193)?

Thus did Islam reconcile the sentiments of local nationalism with that of a common nationalism, with all the benefits thereof for all of humanity: "O mankind, We created you male and female, and We created you peoples and tribes, that you might know one another" (Q 49:13).

C. Islam and the Armed Forces

Similarly, renascent nations require strength, and need to implant the military spirit in their sons, especially in these times when peace can be guaranteed only by preparedness for war, and when the slogan of all their sons is: "Strength is the surest way to guarantee the enforcement of justice."

Islam did not overlook this factor but, as a matter of fact, made it a stringent duty and did not differentiate in any way between it and prayer or fasting. In the entire world, no regime has concerned itself with this factor, neither in antiquity nor in modern times, to the extent that Islam has in the Qur'an, and in the Traditions and life of the Apostle of God (may God bless and save him!). You can see this presented in clear and exemplary fashion in the words of the Almighty: "And prepare against them such force and troops of horses as you can, by which to frighten the enemies of God and your enemies" (Q 8:60). And in the words of the Almighty: "Fighting is prescribed for you, though it be detestable to you. But it may be that you detest something which is good for you, and it may be that you love something which is bad for you" (Q 2:216).

And have you ever seen a military proclamation in a sacred book read aloud in prayer, *dhikr* (invocation, remembrance of Allah), public worship and private communion with God, like the proclamation that begins with an abrupt command in the words of the Almighty: "Let those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come, fight in God's way" (Q 4:74). Then He specifies the reward immediately afterward: "To anyone who fights in God's way, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward" (Q 4:74).

Then follows an exhortation to arouse the noblest sentiments in men's hearts, namely, the deliverance of the people and the fatherland, as He says: "What ails you that you do not fight in the way of God and for those rendered weak—men, women, and children—who say: 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people are unjust, and appoint for us from Thyself a guardian, and appoint for us from Thyself a Protector!'" (Q 4:75).

Then He shows them the nobility of their goal and the baseness of their enemies' goal, demonstrating clearly that they are sacrificing something of great value—their lives—for a precious commodity that deserves it and exceeds it in value—God's approval—while non-Muslims are fighting with no goal before them. Therefore, they are weaker in spirit and more confused in their hearts. He, the Almighty, says: "Those who believe fight in the way of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of idolatry, so fight the auxiliaries of Satan! Truly the wiles of Satan are weak" (Q 4:76).

Then He upbraids those who shirked doing their duty, taking the easy way out and abandoning the difficult demands of heroism, and shows them their mistake in adopting this attitude. He shows them that boldness would not harm them one bit and that they would reap the great reward, whereas abstention profits them nothing, because death lies before them in any event. Directly following the preceding verses, He says: "[Prophet], do you not see those who were told, 'Restrain yourselves from fighting, perform the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms?' When fighting was ordained for them, some of them feared men as much as, or even more than, they feared God, saying 'Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? If only You would give us just a little more time.' Say to them, 'Little is the enjoyment in this world, the Hereafter is far better for those who are mindful of God; you will not be wronged by as much as the fiber in a date stone. Death will overtake you no matter where you may be, even inside high towers'" (Q 4:77–78).

By your Lord, what military proclamation is there possessing such force and clarity as this, which will awaken within the soldier's breast all the zeal, pride, and faith the commander desires?

And if the mainstay of military life according to their practice consisted of two things—discipline and obedience—God has conjoined them in two verses from His Book, when He, the Blessed and Almighty, says: "Truly God loves those who fight in His way, in ranks, as if they were a solidly constructed building" (Q 61:4). And as He, the Almighty, says: "And more fitting for them are obedience and civil speech" (Q 47:20–21).

And if you read what Islam prescribes concerning the preparation of equipment, the provisioning of the armed forces, the teaching of archery, the sheltering of horses, the virtue of the *shahada* (martyrdom), the wage of jihad, the reward for expenditures made on its behalf, the consideration due those who campaign in it, the comprehension of its varieties—you will see all these treated exhaustively, whether in noble Qur'anic verses, the honored Traditions, the pure prophetic biography, or the true Islamic jurisprudence: "Our Lord encompasses all things in knowledge" (Q 7:89).

The modern nations have paid close attention to this and have been founded on these principles: we see that Mussolini's Fascism, Hitler's Nazism, and Stalin's Communism are based on pure militarism. But

there is a vast difference between all of these and the militarism of Islam, for the Islam that has sanctified force to such an extent has also preferred peace. Directly after the verses extolling force, the Blessed and Almighty says: "And if they incline to peace, then incline thou to it, and trust in God" (Q 8:61).

And it is He who defined the price of victory and its manifestations when He said: "God will surely aid one who aids Him. God is Mighty, Glorious! Those, who if We make them powerful on the earth, perform the prayer and pay the alms, and command the good and forbid the evil. For unto God belongs the consequence of affairs" (Q 22:40-41).

And it is He who set down the basis of international military law, when He, the Almighty, said: "And if thou fearest treachery from any people, repudiate them likewise. Truly God does not love the treacherous" (Q 8:58).

For one particular ordinance, the counsel of the Apostle (may God bless and save him!) and his successors to the commanders of their armies stands out as the most remarkable manifestation of mercy and kindness: "Commit no treachery, do not exceed the bounds, do not mutilate, do not kill women, children, and the aged, do not cut down fruit-bearing trees, and do not finish off the wounded. You will come across people who lead lives of devotion in hermitages: leave them and that to which they devote themselves, in peace."

This was the military force of Islam—comprising the police of justice and the security forces of law and order. As for the present military force of Europe, everyone knows that it comprises the army of injustice and the soldiery of greed. Which of the two sides is of loftier stature and greater magnanimity?

D. Islam and Public Health

Because renascent nations need a superior military force, and the mainstay of such a force is physical health and strength, the Qur'an has made allusion to this concept while narrating the story of a struggling nation that took on the task of bearing the burden of fighting for the sake of its freedom, independence, and self-formation. For God chose for it a leader who was equally strong in mind and body and made physical strength one of his chief supports in bearing his burden. This is what the Noble Qur'an relates concerning the Children of Israel and the confirmation of their leader, Saul: "Indeed God has chosen him above you and has increased him signally in knowledge and robustness" (Q 2:247).

The Apostle (may God bless and save him!) has commented on this idea in many of his Traditions and urged the believers to preserve their bodily strength, just as he urged them regarding their spiritual strength. The veracious Traditions say: "The strong believer is better than the

weak believer." And: "Truly your body has a right over you." The Apostle of God (may God bless and save him!) often expounded the principles of public health to the umma, especially concerning preventive medicine, the more excellent of the two aspects of medicine. He (may God bless and save him!) said: "We are a people who do not eat unless we are hungry, and when we eat, it is not to satiety." And as to his seeking (may God bless and save him!) for water to drink, the Traditions say: "He (may God bless and save him!) used to look for sweet water." And he forbade urinating and defecating in stagnant water and declared a quarantine against plague-ridden countries and their populations so that they should not leave them nor any outsider enter them. And finally, he (may God bless and save him!) paid much attention to physical culture, such as archery, swimming, horsemanship, and running, and urged his umma to practice them and show interest in them. There is even a Tradition that states: "He who once knew archery and then forgot it, is not one of mine." And he (may God bless and save him!) stringently forbade celibacy, monasticism, and the tormenting and weakening of the body in order to draw near to God (blessed and almighty is He!). In all these matters he guided the umma in the direction of moderation. All of this testifies to Islam's deep concern for the health of the umma at large, to the strenuous efforts it made in order to safeguard it, and to its receptivity to anything that might conduce to its welfare and happiness in this important respect.

E. Islam and Science

Just as nations need power, so do they need the science that will buttress this power and direct it in the best possible manner, providing them with all their requirements in the way of inventions and discoveries. Islam does not reject science; indeed, it makes it as obligatory as the acquisition of power and gives it its support. It suffices to say that the very first verse of the Book of God to be revealed says: "Recite, in the Name of thy Lord who created; created man from a clot of blood. Recite, for thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught man with the pen; taught man what he did not know" (Q 96:1-5).

The Apostle of God (May God bless and save him!) stipulated as part of the ransom for the polytheist captured at Badr⁷ that one of these prisoners teach ten Muslim children reading and writing, in the endeavor to wipe out illiteracy from the umma. God did not make the learned and the ignorant equal. He, the Blessed, the Almighty, says: "Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Only those who possess understanding are mindful" (Q 39:11). Islam has given the

⁷The Battle of Badr (624) was the first major military encounter between the Muslims, who had emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622, and the polytheists of Muhammad's hometown, Mecca.

same weight to the ink of scholars as to the blood of martyrs. The Qur'an links science and power together in two noble verses: "For why should not a few from every group of them march out as a party, so that they may gain knowledge of religion and warn their people when they return to them? Perhaps they will beware. O ye who believe, fight those unbelievers who are close to you, and let them encounter harshness in you, and know ye that God is with the godfearing" (Q 9:122-23).

The Qur'an does not distinguish between secular and religious science but advocates both, summing up the natural sciences in one verse, expostulating on their behalf and making knowledge of them a means of reverencing Him and a path toward knowing Him. This is what the Almighty says: "Have you [Prophet] not considered how God sends water down from the sky?" (Q 35:27). Here there is an allusion to astronomy and the celestial sphere and to the connection between heaven and earth. Then the Almighty says: "We produce with it fruits of varied colors" (Q 35:27). Here there is an allusion to the science of botany and its marvels and wonders and to its chemistry.

"[T]here are in the mountains layers of white and red of various hues, and jet black" (Q 35:27). Here there is an allusion to the science of geology, the strata of the Earth and their modes and types. "[T]here are various colors among human beings, wild animals, and livestock too" (Q 35:28). Here there is an allusion to the science of biology and animals in their divisions of mankind and smaller and larger beasts. Do you think that this verse has left out any of the natural sciences? To all of this the Almighty appends: "The learned among His worshipers alone fear God" (Q 35:28).

Have you not seen in this remarkable concatenation of verses that God commands mankind to study nature and that He prompts them to it, rendering the learned among them, by virtue of His arcana and His secrets, the people who truly revere and know Him? O God, enlighten the Muslims in their religion!

E. Islam and Morality

The nascent nation, above all else, needs a code of morality . . . a strong, unbending, and superior morality, together with a magnanimous spirit fired by lofty aspirations. For it will have to face some demands of the new age that cannot be answered except through the possession of a strong and sincere morality founded on deep faith, unwavering constancy, great self-sacrifice, and considerable tolerance. Islam alone can create such a perfect soul, for it has made rectitude of the soul and its purification the foundation of success. The Almighty says: "He who has purified it will succeed: he who has corrupted it will fail" (Q 91: 9-10).

And it has made change in the affairs of nations contingent on change within their moral character and the rectitude of their souls. He, the

Almighty, says: "Surely God will not change the circumstances of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Q 13:11).

You will hear penetrating verses dealing with individual aspects of higher morality, and you will see that they represent an insuperable force for correcting the soul, fortifying it, purifying it, and cleansing it, as He, the Almighty, says: "Of the believers are men who were sincere in their covenant with God, and of them are those who fulfilled their vow, and of them are those who are waiting, not having changed at all, for God to reward the sincere for their sincerity" (Q 33:23-24).

And concerning generosity, self-sacrifice, patience, tolerance, and surmounting obstacles: "And that is because neither thirst nor hardship nor hunger assails them in God's way, nor do they take a step that angers the unbelievers, nor do they gain anything from the enemy, but that a good deed is recorded on their behalf. Truly God does not lose the wage of the doers of good, nor do they spend little or much, nor do they cross a valley, but it is recorded for them, so that God may reward them for the best of what they were doing" (Q 9:120-21).

There is no agent like Islam to awaken the conscience, vivify the finer sentiments, and station a warder over the soul—the best of all warders—for apart from it, there is no organized body of law that will penetrate the depths of the heart or affairs kept hidden.

G. Islam and Economics

The nascent nation needs above all to regulate its economic affairs, the most important question during these recent eras. Islam has not neglected this aspect, but rather has set down all its fundamental principles without exception. You may hear God (blessed and almighty is He!) speaking of the safeguarding of property, explaining its value and the necessity to be concerned with it: "Do not give the foolish your property of which God has appointed you the manager" (Q 4:5).

And He says, concerning the balancing out of expenditures and income: "Do not let thy hand be manacled to thy neck, or open it to its fullest extent" (Q 17:29).

And the Apostle of God (may God bless and save him!) says: "He who economizes will not be in need." What is true for the individual is just as true for the nation, as he (may God bless and save him!) says: "How excellent is righteous wealth for a righteous man!" Any good economic system is welcomed by Islam, which urges the nation to promote it and puts no obstacles in its path. Islamic jurisprudence is filled with rules for financial transactions, and it has given them in such minute detail as to obviate further elaboration.

Finally, when the nation possesses all these reinforcements—hope, patriotism, science, power, health, and a sound economy—it will, without a doubt, be the strongest of all nations, and the future will

belong to it. This is especially true if to all these is added the fact that it has been purified of selfishness, aggressiveness, egotism, and arrogance and has come to desire the welfare of the whole world. Indeed, Islam has guaranteed this. . .

H. The Public Institutions of Islam

This is one aspect of the perfection to be found in certain Islamic institutions, namely those concerned with the resurgence of nations, always remembering that we are facing a period of resurgence. As for reviewing all aspects of the perfection of all Islamic institutions, it would require bulky volumes and vast and far-flung investigations. Suffice it to discuss this perfection in a few concise words: the institutions of Islam with respect to the individual, the nation, and the family, in terms of both government and people, or the relations between nations—in all these respects, the institutions of Islam have combined both great breadth and precision and have chosen the common good as well as given it clear exposition. They are the most perfect and most beneficial institutions known to mankind and confirmed by painstaking research in every aspect of national life.

This judgment, which was once limited to particular persons, has now become general, and is attested to by every fair-minded individual. Whenever investigators delve into their researches, they uncover aspects of the perfection of these eternal institutions not previously discerned by their predecessors. God said in truth: “We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in their souls until it is apparent to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient that thy Lord is a witness over all things?” (Q 41:53).

ISLAM PROTECTS MINORITIES AND SAFEGUARDS THE RIGHTS OF FOREIGNERS

Excellency,

People imagine that adherence to Islam and making it the basis for regulating life are incompatible with the existence of non-Muslim minorities within the Islamic umma and with the unity of the various elements comprising the umma, which is one of the strongest supports of national revival during the present era. But the truth is precisely the contrary. Islam, which was originated by the Wise and Knowing One who knows the past, present, and future of the nations, took full cognizance of this problem, and solved it before it ever came up. Its holy and wise institutions had hardly been revealed when it already contained a clear and unambiguous text concerning the protection of minorities. Does mankind require anything more self-evident than this

text: “God does not forbid you to deal with those who have not fought against you in religion and have not driven you from your homes with benevolence, or to show them justice. Surely God loves those who are just” (Q 60:8).

This text does not merely include protection, but it also counsels benevolence and the doing of good on their behalf. Islam sanctified the unity of humanity as a whole, in the Almighty’s saying: “O mankind, We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another” (Q 49:13).

In the same way, it sanctified universal religious unity, put an end to fanaticism, and ordained that its sons have faith in all the revealed religions. As the Almighty says: “Say [Prophet], ‘No, [ours is] the religion of Abraham, the upright, who did not worship any god besides God.’ So [you believers], say, ‘We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him. So if they believe like you do, they will be rightly guided. But if they turn their backs, then they will be entrenched in opposition. God will protect you from them: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. And say [believers], ‘[Our life] takes its color from God, and who gives a better color than God?’” (Q 2:136–38).

Then it sanctified denominational religious unity without arrogance or aggressiveness. The Blessed and Almighty said: “The believers are no other than brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers and fear God; perhaps you will find mercy” (Q 49:10).

This Islam, which was founded according to such a pattern of moderation and deep-rooted equity, could not possibly be the cause of its followers’ disrupting a long continuing unity. On the contrary, it has endowed this unity with a character of religious holiness, though formerly it drew its strength solely from civil authority.

And Islam has defined very precisely those whom we ought to oppose and boycott, and with whom we should cut off all relations. Following the verse cited earlier (Q 60:8), the Almighty says: “God forbids you to befriend only those who fought you in religion, and drove you from your homes, or aided in driving you forth. Whosoever befriends them—they are wrongdoers” (Q 60:9).

No fair-minded person in the world would compel any nation to rest content with an internal enemy of this type, or any great discord among its sons, or any impairment of its internal organization.

This is Islam’s position with respect to the non-Muslim minorities—clear, unambiguous, and free from injustice. Its position with respect to foreigners is one of peacefulness and sympathy, so long as they behave with rectitude and sincerity. But if their consciences grow corrupt and their crimes increase, the Qur’an has already defined the position we

should take regarding them: "O you who believe! Do not take for confidants those who are not of you; they will not fail to hinder you; they are pleased by what troubles you. Hatred has been revealed out of their mouths; what their hearts conceal is yet greater. We have made the signs clear to you, if you would but understand. Behold, you love them, but they do not love you!" (Q 3:118-19).

And with this, Islam has dealt with all of these aspects as precisely, benevolently, and sincerely as possible.

ISLAM IS NOT A DISTURBING INFLUENCE ON RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

Similarly, people may imagine that Islamic institutions in our modern life create estrangement between us and the Western nations and that they will muddy the clarity of our political relations with them just when these were on the point of being settled. This too is a notion rooted in pure fantasy. For those nations which are suspicious of us will like us no better whether we follow Islam or anything else. If they are truly our friends, and mutual trust exists between us, their own spokesmen and leaders have already declared that every nation is free to adopt whatever organization it wishes within its own borders, provided it does not infringe on the rights of others. It is up to all the leaders of these nations to understand that the honor of international Islam is the most sacred honor known to history and that the principles set down by international Islam to guard this honor and to preserve it are the most firmly fixed and solidly confirmed of principles.

It is Islam that spoke out for the safeguarding of treaties and fulfillment of obligations: "And keep the covenant, for of the covenant question will be made" (Q 17:34); "Except for those of the polytheists with whom you have a treaty, and who since then have not diminished you in any way and have not helped anyone against you—fulfill your covenant with them up to its stated term. Truly God loves the godfearing" (Q 9:4). And He said: "So long as they behave with rectitude toward you, behave with rectitude toward them" (Q 9:7). And He said, regarding the generous reception of refugees and the good neighborliness of those who receive them: "And if any one of the polytheists seeks refuge with thee, give him refuge so that he may hear God's discourses, then take him to a place of security" (Q 9:6).

If this is the treatment accorded polytheists, how do you suppose the People of the Book would be treated?

The Islam that prescribes these principles and takes its adherents along this path must surely be regarded by Westerners as guaranteeing still another type of security, namely, for themselves. We maintain that it would be to Europe's benefit if these sound concepts governed its own internal relations—this would be better for them and more enduring!

THE FUNDAMENTAL SOURCES OF THE RENAISSANCE IN THE EAST ARE NOT THOSE OF THE WEST

Excellency,

Among the causes which have impelled some of the Eastern nations to deviate from Islam, and to choose to imitate the West, was the study of the Western Renaissance made by their leaders, and their conviction that it was accomplished only by overthrowing religion, destroying churches, freeing themselves from papal authority, controlling the clergy and prelates, putting an end to all manifestations of religious authority in the nation, and definitively separating religion from the general policy of the state. If this is true in the case of the Western nations, it is absolutely untrue for the Islamic nations, because the nature of Islamic doctrines is quite unlike that of any other religion. The jurisdiction of the religious authorities in Islam is circumscribed and limited, powerless to alter its statutes or subvert its institutions, with the result that the fundamental principles of Islam, across the centuries, have kept pace with the changing eras and have advocated progress, supported learning, and defended scholars. What happened there is inappropriate for conditions here. There are extensive studies concerning this that take up many volumes: our purpose in this essay is to survey the subject briefly in order to bear it in mind and dispel all ambiguities. We are sure that every fair-minded person will agree with us on this basic principle; accordingly, it is simply not possible that this sentiment should be our guiding precept in our modern renaissance, which must first of all be sustained by the strong pillars of a high morality, a flourishing science, and far-reaching power, which is what Islam enjoins.

THE CLERICS ARE NOT RELIGION ITSELF

One of the excuses adopted by some of those who followed the path of the Westerners was that they had begun to be aware of the course taken by the Muslim religious authorities, in view of their hostile attitude toward nationalist revival, their base activities against the nationalists and their alliance with the exploiters, and their choice of selfish interests and worldly ambitions over the welfare of the country and the nation. If true, this was a flaw within the religious establishment itself, not in the faith as such. Does the faith command such things? Or are they enjoined by the lives of the most virtuous and illustrious 'ulama of the Islamic umma, who used to burst in upon kings and princes, past their gates and walls, censuring them, forbidding them, rejecting their gifts, declaring what the truth was before them, and bringing them the demands of the nation? Nay, they even took up arms in the face of

tyranny and injustice! History has not yet forgotten the phalanx of legists in the ranks of Ibn al-Ash'ath⁸ in the eastern region of the Islamic Empire, or the rebellion of the *qadi* (Muslim judge) Yahya b. Yahya al-Laythi al-Maliki⁹ in its western region.

Such are the teachings of the faith, and such is the past history of the legists of Islam. Is there any trace in these of what they assert? Or is there any justice in compelling the faith to tolerate the followers of those who have deviated from it?

Nevertheless, even if these allegations hold true for some people, they do not hold for the totality. And if they can be substantiated for some particular circumstance, they are not so for all circumstances. This is the history of the modern renaissance in the East, so redolent of the attitudes of the Muslim religious authorities in every single nation. The position taken by al-Azhar [the preeminent Muslim mosque and university] in Egypt; by the [Arab] Higher Committee¹⁰ in South Syria or Palestine, and North Syria or Lebanon; by Mawlana Abu'l-Kalam [Azad]¹¹ and his brethren among the most illustrious of the Indian 'ulama; and by the Muslim leaders in Indonesia, is not forgotten nor is it alien. Therefore, these assertions must not be used as a pretext for diverting any nation from its religion simply in the name of nationalism; for is it not the most productive solution for a nation to reform its religious authorities and to be reconciled with them, rather than to adopt an annihilatory attitude toward them? Even if these expressions that have crept into our language by way of imitation, like "religious

⁸Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. al-Ash'ath (d. 704) was the commander of a military campaign sent by the Umayyad viceroy of Iraq, Hajjaj b. al-Yusuf, against a local ruler based in what is now Afghanistan. On the way, Ibn al-Ash'ath and his troops rebelled against Hajjaj, marching back to Iraq and posing a grave threat to the viceroy's authority. The revolt is remembered in Islamic history for, inter alia, the participation of a large number of religious scholars in it.

⁹Yahya b. Yahya al-Laythi (d. 848) was a Berber religious scholar credited with having played a key role in establishing the Maliki school of law in Muslim Spain. He is known to have participated in a revolt against al-Hakam I, the Umayyad ruler of Spain, which is the incident to which Banna refers here. He later emerged as the most influential religious scholar at the court of the Umayyad ruler 'Abd al-Rahman II.

¹⁰[Editors' note: endnotes 10–12 are reproduced from the Wendell translation, with some changes]. The Arab Higher Committee was formed in 1936 in Palestine under the presidency of the grand mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni. It succeeded a number of Arab nationalist committees and associations that had come into existence from 1920 on, to protest and counter Zionist aspirations in the mandated territory. It was recognized as the official representative for the Arab point of view by the British administration, but it was subsequently outlawed in 1937 because of excesses committed during the Arab Rebellion of 1936–39, and because of the collaboration of the Mufti and other Arab leaders with the governments of the Fascist states of Italy and Germany.

¹¹Abu'l-Kalam Azad (1888–1958), a noted Indian theologian, editor of the influential Muslim newspaper *Al-Hilal* in Calcutta from 1912 to 1914. He was a prolific writer in Urdu and one of the outstanding Muslim political and intellectual leaders of the twentieth century. During his last years, he was minister of education in the government of India.

authorities," do not accord with our own usage—because this one is peculiar to the West, in the sense of "clergy"—it includes every Muslim, according to the Islamic usage, for all Muslims from the least to the most outstanding of them, are "religious authorities."

A BOLD STEP BUT A SUCCESSFUL ONE

Excellency,

After all the foregoing, it would be inexcusable for us to turn aside from the path of truth—the path of Islam—and to follow the path of fleshly desires and vanities—the path of Europe. Along the path of Europe are to be found outer show and cheap tinsel, pleasures and luxuries, laxity and license, and comforts that captivate the soul, for all of these things are loved by the soul, as the Almighty says: "Made beautiful for mankind is the love of fleshly desires for women, and children, and heaped-up mounds of gold and silver, and branded horses, and cattle, and tilled land. That is the comfort of this world" (Q 3:14).

But the path of Islam is glory, impregnability, truth, strength, blessedness, rectitude, stability, virtue, and nobility. Follow it along with the umma, may God grant you success! "[Prophet] say, 'Would you like me to tell you of things that are better than all of these? Their Lord will give those who are mindful of God gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will stay with pure spouses and God's good pleasure—God is fully aware of His servants'" (Q 3:15).

Luxuries only annihilate nations, and its comforts and coveted possessions have only convulsed Europe: "When We wish to destroy a town, We command those corrupted by wealth [to reform], but they [persist in their] disobedience; Our sentence is passed, and We destroy them utterly" (Q 17:16).

God (blessed and almighty is He!) sent His Apostle as a mercy to the world until the Day of Resurrection, and sent His Book with him as a light and guidance until the Day of Resurrection. The leadership of the Apostle (May God bless and save him!) survives in his sunna, and the authority of the Qur'an is secure through his proof. Humanity is marching inevitably toward them both, with the might of the mighty and the humility of the humble, from near and from afar, so that God's Word should be realized—"to show that it is above all [other] religions" (Q 9:33).

Be the first to come forward in the name of God's Apostle (may God bless and save him!) bearing the vial of Qur'anic healing, to save the tormented, sick world! It is a bold step, but one crowned with success, God willing (Blessed and Almighty is He!), for God is victorious in His affairs: "Then the believers will rejoice in God's succor. He succors whom He will, for He is the Mighty, the Merciful" (Q 30:4–5).

SOME STEPS TOWARD PRACTICAL REFORM

Excellency,

Having given a clear presentation of the spiritual mood that should prevail within the nation in its modern renaissance, we would like to point out, by way of conclusion, some of the practical manifestations and results which this mood should dictate. We are going to mention here only the broadest topics, because we are well aware that each one of these questions demands extensive and intensive study, taxing the energies and capacities of specialists. We know too that we have not yet plumbed all the puzzling problems and demands of the nation or all the manifestations of the renaissance. We do not believe that the fulfillment of these demands is a mere trifle that can be accomplished overnight, and we know that before many of them there are manifold obstacles that will require vast patience, great wisdom, and keen determination. We know all this and can take it in our stride. And besides this, we know that, where there is genuine resolve, the way will be made plain, and that if a strong-willed nation chooses the path of goodness, it shall, by God Almighty's will, attain what it desires. Stride forward, and God will be with you! Following are the principal goals of reform grounded on the spirit of genuine Islam:

First: Political, judicial, and administrative:

1. An end to party rivalry, and a channeling of the political forces of the nation into a common front and a single phalanx
2. A reform of the law, so that it will conform to Islamic legislation in every branch
3. A strengthening of the armed forces, and an increase in the number of youth groups—the inspiration of the latter with zeal on the bases of Islamic jihad
4. A strengthening of the bonds between all Islamic countries, especially the Arab countries, to pave the way for practical and serious consideration of the matter of the departed caliphate
5. The diffusion of the Islamic spirit throughout all departments of the government, so that all its employees will feel responsible for adhering to Islamic teachings
6. The surveillance of the personal conduct of all its employees and an end to the dichotomy between the private and professional spheres
7. Setting the hours of work in summer and winter ahead, so that it will be easy to fulfill religious duties, and so that keeping late hours will come to an end

8. An end to bribery and favoritism, with consideration given only to capability and legitimate reasons [for advancement]
9. Weighing all acts of the government in the scales of Islamic wisdom and doctrine; the organization of all celebrations, receptions, official conferences, prisons, and hospitals so as not to be incompatible with Islamic teaching; the arranging of work schedules so that they will not conflict with hours of prayer
10. The employment of graduates of al-Azhar in military and administrative positions, and their training

Second: Social and educational:

1. Conditioning the people to respect public morality and the issuance of directives fortified by the aegis of the law on this subject; the imposition of severe penalties for moral offenses
2. Treatment of the problem of women in a way that combines the progressive and the protective, in accordance with Islamic teaching, so that this problem—one of the most important social problems—will not be abandoned to the biased pens and deviant notions of those who err in the directions of deficiency or excess
3. An end to prostitution, both clandestine and overt: the recognition of fornication, whatever the circumstances, as a detestable crime whose perpetrator must be flogged
4. An end to gambling in all its forms—games, lotteries, racing, and gambling-clubs
5. A campaign against drinking, as there is one against drugs: its prohibition, and the salvation of the nation from its effects
6. A campaign against ostentation in dress and loose behavior; the instruction of women in what is proper, with particular strictness as regards female instructors, pupils, physicians, and students, and all those in similar categories
7. A review of the curricula offered to girls and the necessity of making them distinct from the boys' curricula in many of the stages of education
8. Segregation of male and female students; private meetings between men and women, unless within the permitted degrees [of relationship],¹² to be counted as a crime for which both will be censured

¹²The "permitted degrees" are defined in Q 24:31: "And say to the believing women that they lower their eyes and guard their private parts, and display not their adornments except for that which is external; and let them throw their veils over their bosoms, and let them not display their adornments except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their fathers-in-law, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their

9. The encouragement of marriage and procreation, by all possible means; promulgation of legislation to protect and give moral support to the family, and to solve the problems of marriage
10. The closure of morally undesirable ballrooms and dance halls, and the prohibition of dancing and other such pastimes
11. The surveillance of theaters and cinemas and a rigorous selection of plays and films
12. The expurgation of songs and a rigorous selection and censorship of them
13. The careful selection of lectures, songs, and subjects to be broadcast to the nation; the use of radio broadcasting for the education of the nation in a virtuous and moral way
14. The confiscation of provocative stories and books that implant the seeds of skepticism in an insidious manner and of newspapers that strive to disseminate immorality and capitalize indecently on lustful desires
15. The supervision of summer vacation areas so as to do away with the wholesale confusion and license that nullify the basic aims of vacationing
16. The regulation of business hours for cafés; surveillance of the activities of their regular clients; instructing these as to what is in their best interest; withdrawal of permission from cafés to keep such long hours
17. The utilization of these cafés for teaching illiterates reading and writing; toward this end, the assistance of the rising generation of elementary schoolteachers and students
18. A campaign against harmful customs, whether economic, moral, or anything else; turning the masses away from these and orienting them in the direction of ways beneficial to them, or educating them in a way consonant with their best interests. These involve such customs as those having to do with weddings, funerals, births, the zar,¹³ civil and religious holidays, etc. Let the government set a good example in this respect.

sisters, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands possess, or such men as attend them having no desire, or small children having no knowledge of women's private parts; and let them not stamp their feet so that what they conceal of their adornments becomes known. And turn to God, all of you, O believers, and perhaps you will prosper." The phrase "what their right hands possess" refers to slaves, but whether only to female slaves, or also male slaves and eunuchs is disputed by the jurists. The phrase "such men as attend them having no desire" is generally taken to mean eunuchs, very aged men of good character, or even simpletons without sexual appetites or experience.

¹³Zar is a non-Arabic word denoting a spirit, a master who communes with them, or a ritual exorcism of spirits; it is considered by Banna a heterodox practice of non-Islamic origins.

19. Due consideration for the claims of moral censorship, and punishment of all who are proved to have infringed upon any Islamic doctrine or attacked it, such as breaking the fast of Ramadan, willful neglect of prayers, insulting the faith, or any such act
20. The annexation of the elementary village schools to the mosques, and a thoroughgoing reform of both, as regards employees, cleanliness, and overall custodial care, so that the young may be trained in prayer and the older students in learning
21. The designation of religious instruction as a subject in all schools, in each according to its type, as in the universities
22. Active instigation to memorize the Qur'an in all the free elementary schools; making this memorization mandatory for obtaining diplomas in the areas of religion and [Arabic] language; the stipulation that a portion of it be memorized in every school
23. The promulgation of a firm educational policy which will advance and raise the level of education, and will supply it, in all its varieties, with common goals and purposes, which will bring the different cultures represented in the nation closer together and will make the first stage of its process one dedicated to inculcating a virtuous, patriotic spirit and an unwavering moral code
24. The cultivation of Arabic language instruction; the use of Arabic alone, as opposed foreign language, in the primary stages
25. The cultivation of Islamic history, and of the national history and national culture, and the history of Islamic civilization
26. Consideration of ways to arrive gradually at a uniform mode of dress for the nation
27. An end to the foreign spirit in our homes with regard to language, manners, dress, governesses, nurses, etc., with all these to be Egyptianized, especially in upper-class homes
28. To give journalism a proper orientation and to encourage authors and writers to undertake Islamic, Eastern subjects
29. Attention to be given to matters of public health by disseminating health information through all media; increasing the number of hospitals, physicians, and mobile clinics; facilitating the means of obtaining medical treatment
30. Attention to be given to village problems as regards their organization, their cleanliness, the purification of their water supply, and the means to provide them with culture, recreation, and training

Third: The economic:

1. The organization of *zakat* (Islamic alms tax) in terms of income and expenditure, according to the teachings of the magnanimous Sacred Law; invoking its assistance in carrying out necessary benevolent projects, such as homes for the aged, the poor, and orphans, and strengthening the armed forces
2. The prohibition of usury, and the organization of banks with this end in view. Let the government provide a good example in this domain by relinquishing all interest due on its own particular undertakings, for instance in the loan-granting banks, industrial loans, etc.
3. The encouragement of economic projects and an increase in their number; giving work to unemployed citizens in them; the transfer of such of these as are in the hands of foreigners to the purely national sector
4. The protection of the masses from the oppression of monopolistic companies; keeping these within strict limits, and obtaining every possible benefit for the masses
5. An improvement of the lot of junior civil servants by raising their salaries, granting them steady increases and compensations, and lowering the salaries of senior civil servants
6. A reduction in the number of government posts, retaining only the indispensable ones; an equitable and scrupulous distribution of the work among civil servants
7. The encouragement of agricultural and industrial counseling; attention to be paid to raising the production level of the peasant and industrial worker
8. A concern for the technical and social problems of the worker; raising his standard of living in numerous respects
9. The exploitation of natural resources, such as uncultivated land, neglected mines, etc.
10. Priority over luxury items to be given to necessary projects in terms of organization and execution

This is the message of the Muslim Brotherhood. We submit it, and place ourselves, our talents, and all we possess in the hands of any committee or government desirous of taking a step forward, hand in hand with an Islamic nation, toward progress and advancement. We will answer the call, and we are prepared to sacrifice ourselves. We hope that by so doing we will have fulfilled our trust and said our piece, for religion means sincerity toward God, His Apostle, His Book, the imams of the Muslims, and their community at large. God is our sufficiency; He is enough; and peace to His chosen worshipers!

Chapter 3

SAYYID ABU'L-A'LA MAWDUDI

1903–1979

ISLAMISM IS often associated in the public imagination with the Arab Middle East and, since the revolution of 1979, with Iran. It is in the Indian subcontinent, however, that Sunni Islamist thought found one of its earliest and most sustained articulations. The person responsible for this was Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, one of the most prolific Islamist writers of the twentieth century. Over a career extending from the 1920s to the late 1970s, Mawdudi both formulated and popularized key themes in Islamist discourse. Although it is only in translation that his writings in Urdu reached an international Muslim readership, no figure has influenced the political vocabulary of Sunni Islamism more than Mawdudi. Yet, like Islamists everywhere, Mawdudi's thought was shaped not only by his understanding of the Islamic foundational texts but also by his particular intellectual and political context. This perspective has sometimes made for important differences of emphasis between him and those appropriating facets of his thought in other contexts.

Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi was born in Awrangabad, in southern India, in 1903. His birthplace was a city in Hyderabad, one of the many "princely states" whose formal autonomy the British had recognized when they had brought much of the rest of the Indian subcontinent under direct colonial rule. Although Mawdudi's formative years were spent in Hyderabad, it was the north Indian Muslim culture with which his family identified most closely. His father, Ahmad Hasan, had briefly studied at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (later Aligarh University), the premier institution of Western education that Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) had established in 1875 in order to help Muslims cope better with the challenges of British colonial rule. Ahmad Hasan subsequently trained as a lawyer, though he was far more committed to Sufi piety than he was to his legal practice (Nasr 1996, 10–11). It was under his guidance that Mawdudi completed the earliest stages of his education.

Mawdudi received a largely traditional education, of the sort common for young men training to become 'ulama.¹ Unlike many of his contemporaries among the Indian 'ulama, however, this education did not take place at a single institution, with which he could have identified but

¹For a discussion of Mawdudi's education, on which we draw here, see Nasr 1996, 11–19.