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Ḥasan Al-Bannā

Five Tracts of Ḥasan Al-Bannā (1906-1949)

A Selection from the
Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā

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4978

BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TODAY

[Editor's Preface]¹

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!
Praise be to God and blessing and salvation to His
Apostle and to those who follow him.

The Muslim Brotherhood have published tracts which explain their mission, expound their ideology, and outline their program. These tracts have brought together the basic principles underlying their mission and its various phases, and have expounded its truths and goals. Now the reader is offered the first tract, "Between Yesterday and Today," concerned with the evolution of the Islamic ideology and its goals. It was written at the very dawn of this ideology shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, and has frequently been the subject of discussion among the Brotherhood since that time. It provides an excellent exposition of the principles of Islam as well as of the means of introducing reforms, means which it outlines and advocates. It also deals briefly with the Islamic state at the beginning of its rise, when it took the Qur'ān for its constitution and the Apostle (May God bless and save him!) for its model and leader. It also contains an accurate analysis of the factors which undermined this upward movement of the Muslims and altered their condition; and the reader, at the conclusion of the tract, will find some instructive and pertinent remarks. For at its end, this umma² will prosper only through the means by which it prospered in its beginnings.

We ask God to render this work pure in His sight, and to open the hearts and minds of the Muslims for this task through the guidance of the True Religion.

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!
Praise be to God, and may He bless Our Lord Muḥammad,
the Conqueror, the Seal, as also his House and his
Companions, and may He save them.

I. The Message of the Faithful Prophet: the Way of the Noble Qur'ān

Thirteen hundred and seventy years ago, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, the Illiterate Prophet,³ proclaimed in the heart of Mecca from the hillock of Al-Ṣafā:⁴ "O mankind, I am the apostle of God sent to you all, by Him to whom belongs the rulership of the heavens and the earth! There is no god but He: He makes to live and He makes to die. Therefore believe in God and His Apostle, the Illiterate Prophet, who believes in God and His Words, and follow him. Perhaps you will be rightly guided" [Q.7:158]. This universal mission was a decisive landmark for all of creation - between a murky past, a brilliant and shining future, and a prosperous and exuberant present - as well as a clear and unambiguous announcement of a new order decreed by God, the Knowing, the Wise. Its herald was Muḥammad, the Harbinger, the Warner, its Book was the Perspicuous and Enlightening Qur'ān, and its soldiery were the First Precursors consisting of the Emigrants⁵ and the Auxiliaries⁶ and those who followed them in doing good. It was not the artifact of man: it was rather the very baptism of God, for who is better than God in baptism?⁷ "Thou didst not know what the Book was, nor the Faith, but We have made it a light through which We guide those whom We will of our worshippers. And truly dost thou guide to a straight path, the path of God to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Do not all things proceed to God?" [Q.42:52-53].

II. The Basic Principles for Complete Social Reformation Provided by the Noble Qur'ān

The Qur'ān is the comprehensive work which contains the fundamentals of this all-embracing social reformation, and it came gradually to be revealed to the Prophet (May God bless and save him!), through whom it announced its message to the believers from time to time, according to the fall of events,

circumstances, and occasions: "In this manner, so that We may reinforce thy heart with it, and We have set it out in order. And they do not bring thee any similitude, but that We bring thee the truth, and a better one as exposition" [Q.25:32-33]. This went on until revelation ceased through his mediation, and it was preserved in men's breasts and their written notes for some twenty-two years. Now God had gathered therein the explanation of all things for this umma, and the bases for the thoroughgoing social reformation which He revealed may be summarized under these headings:

- (a) Matters of Divinity.
- (b) The elevation of the human spirit.
- (c) The stipulation of the doctrine of reward and punishment.
- (d) The proclamation of the brotherhood of man.
- (e) Advancement for men and women together; the proclamation of their joint responsibility and their equality; the precise definition of their respective duties.
- (f) The safeguarding of society by stipulating the right to life, property, work, health, freedom, education, and security for every member, and defining the legitimate sources of gain.
- (g) The control of the two instincts: the instinct of self-preservation and the instinct of the preservation of the species; the regulation of the alimentary and sexual demands.
- (h) Severity in punishing cardinal crimes.
- (i) The confirmation of the unity of the umma and condemnation of all the causes and symptoms of disunity.
- (j) The obligation of the umma to wage jihād for the sake of the principles of justice provided by this order.
- (k) Consideration of the state as the embodiment of the ideology, as concerned to defend it, and as responsible for realizing its aim within its own particular society as well as for conveying it to mankind as a whole.

III. The Practical Observances Promulgated by This Regime

This Qur'ānic order stood in opposition to all other positivist systems and theoretical philosophies. It did not allow its principles and teachings to remain simply theories

held by minds, or ideas relegated to books, or words to be bandied about. On the contrary, it instituted practical ways of applying them in order to implant them, strengthen them, and draw profit from their effects and results. It compelled the umma which believed in it and owed allegiance to it to be zealous in performing these works, making them obligatory duties for the omission of which no indulgence was granted. Indeed, it rewards the worker, and punishes the slacker in such fashion as to expel him from the bounds of this Islamic society and cast him to an abyss. The most important duties which this order has imposed as a protective fence for the inculcation of its principles are the following:⁸

- (a) Prayer, dhikr, repentance, asking for pardon, etc.
- (b) Fasting, chastity, warning against luxury.
- (c) Zakāt, alms-giving, expenditure for benevolent purposes.
- (d) Pilgrimage, travel, journeying, discovery, and investigation of God's Kingdom.
- (e) Acquisition, work, and the interdiction of begging.
- (f) Jihād, fighting, outfitting fighters, and caring for their families and interests after their departure.
- (g) Commanding the good and giving sound advice.
- (h) Forbidding evil, and intervention when it takes place and between its perpetrators.
- (i) The obtaining of education and knowledge by every male and female Muslim in the various disciplines of life, each one in what suits him best.
- (j) Good deportment and assiduous cultivation of high moral values.
- (k) Striving for physical health and control of the senses.
- (l) Social solidarity between ruler and ruled, in both custodianship and obedience.

It is demanded of the Muslim that he fulfill these obligations and put them into practice as the Qur'ānic order has set them out. He must not slacken in performing any of them, for they have all been specified in the Noble Qur'ān, and have been illustrated unequivocally in the deeds of the Prophet (May God bless and save him!) and his Companions⁹ and those who followed them in doing good, with simplicity and clarity. Every

deed, or a number of them, strengthens and inculcates a principle, or a number of them, from among the previously cited theoretical headings which this order came to bring to realization and to benefit mankind by virtue of their results and effects.

IV. The First Islamic State

On the foundation of this excellent Qur'ānic social organization the first Islamic state arose, believing in it deeply, applying it meticulously, and disseminating it throughout the world, so that the first Caliph¹⁰ (May God be pleased with him!) used to say: "If I should lose a camel's halter, I would find it in God's Book." He fought those who refused to pay zakāt, regarding them as apostates because they had overthrown this pillar of the order, and said: "By God, if they refused me a halter which they used to pay over to the Apostle of God (May God bless and save him!), I would fight them as soon as I had grasped a sword in my hand!" For unity, in all its meanings and manifestations, pervaded this new-risen umma. Social unity included the general dissemination of the Qur'ānic order and the language of the Qur'ān, while political unity was all-encompassing in the shadow of the Prince of Believers¹¹ and beneath the standard of the Caliphate in the capital. The fact that the Islamic ideology was one of decentralization of the armed forces, the state treasuries, and the provincial administrations proved to be no obstacle to this, since all acted according to a single creed and a unified and comprehensive control. These Qur'ānic principles warred against superstitious idolatry in the Arabian Peninsula and Persia, and did away with it. They warred against guileful Judaism and confined it to a narrow province, putting an end to its religious and political authority. They struggled with Christianity until its influence was greatly diminished in the continents of Asia and Africa and it became confined to Europe under the aegis of the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople. Thus did spiritual and political dominance come to be centered in the Islamic state within the two largest continents. This state persisted in its attacks against the third continent, assaulting Constantinople from the east and besieging it until the siege grew wearisome. Then it

came at it from the west, plunging into Spain, with its victorious soldiers reaching the heart of France and penetrating as far as northern and southern Italy. It established an imposing state in western Europe, refulgent with science and knowledge. Afterwards, it succeeded in effecting the conquest of Constantinople itself and the containment of Christianity within the restricted area of Central Europe. Islamic fleets plowed the deeps of the Mediterranean and Red Seas, and both became Islamic lakes. And so the armed forces of the Islamic state assumed the primacy of the seas both in the East and West, and enjoyed absolute mastery over land and sea. These Islamic nations had already had contacts with others, and had taken over much of their culture, but they triumphed through the strength of their faith and the solid fabric of the institutions they imposed upon all of them. They Arabized them, or succeeded in doing so to a degree, and were able to sway them and convert them over to their language and religion because of their splendor, beauty and vitality. There was nothing at all to prevent them from adopting any useful feature of these cultures, insofar as it did not have an adverse effect on their social and political unity.

V. Factors Conducive to the Dissolution of the Islamic State and the Islamic People

For all this imposing strength and extensive dominion, the factors of disintegration came to insinuate themselves into the fiber of this Qur'ānic umma and gradually to become grave, widespread and powerful, until they rent this fabric apart and brought the centralized Islamic state to an end in the sixth century A.H. [the thirteenth century A.D.] at the hands of the Tatars. In the fourteenth century A.H. [the twentieth century A.D.] they did this a second time, leaving in their wake on both occasions disunited nations and small states aspiring toward unity and striving for resurgence. The most significant of these factors were the following:

(a) Political differences, partisanship, and struggle for supremacy and prestige, despite the forceful warning which Islam had brought to bear in this regard, encouraging indifference to positions of power and drawing attention to this aspect, which

is the canker of nations and the destruction of peoples and states: "And contend not with one another, so that you become weak and your strength depart, and persevere, for God is with those who persevere" [Q.8:46]; and despite the profound exhortations to remain faithful to God alone in speech and act, and to flee love of fame and praise.

(b) Religious differences, sectarianism, and turning away from religion, as constituting both doctrines and works, to dead works and technical expressions endowed with neither spirit nor life, accompanied by indifference to God's Book and the Sunna of the Apostle (May God bless and save him!), stagnation, fanaticism in thought and word, and a passion for disputation, controversy, and wrangling. All these were among the things Islam had warned of and forbidden most rigorously, so that the Apostle (May God bless and save him!) said "No people has ever fallen into error after receiving guidance except by being brought to controversy."

(c) Self-indulgence in luxuries and comforts, and craving for pleasure and sensual joys to the point that what has been recorded of Muslim rulers in many periods goes beyond anything recorded of others, and this despite their reading of the Words of God (Blessed and Almighty is He!): "And when We wish to destroy a city, We issue a command to its men of wealth, and they transgress therein, and so the Word against them is justified, and We destroy it utterly" [Q.17:16].

(d) The transfer of authority to non-Arabs - i.e., Persians at one time, Daylamites¹² at another, Mamlūks,¹³ Turks, and others - who had never absorbed genuine Islam, and whose hearts had never been illuminated with the light of the Qur'ān because of the difficulty they encountered in trying to grasp its concepts, for all that they [i.e., the Arabs] read the Words of God (Blessed and Almighty is He!): "O ye who believe! Do not take as confidants those who are not of you; they will not fail to cast disorder among 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" [Q.3:118].

(e) Indifference to the applied sciences and natural science, and waste of time and loss of energy on abstruse,

speculative philosophies and unhealthy, phantasmagorical pseudo-sciences, despite Islam's urging them to consider the universe, to explore the secrets of creation, and to travel about in the earth, for it commands them to contemplate the Kingdom of God: "Say: 'Behold what is in the heavens and the earth'" [Q.10:102].

(f) Infatuation with their authority, self-deception as to their power, and failure to look into the social evolution of the nations outside their fold, until these latter got ahead of them in preparedness and equipment and took them by surprise. But the Qur'ān had commanded them to be alert, and had warned them of the consequences of heedlessness, regarding the heedless as cattle, nay, as even more deluded: "For We have surely created for Jahannam¹⁴ many jinn and men, having hearts with which they discern not, having eyes with which they see not, having ears with which they hear not -- these are like cattle, nay, even more deluded; these are the heedless" [Q.7:179].

(g) Self-deception through the intrigues of hostile flatterers, admiration for their works and the outward forms of their way of life, and unthinking imitation of them in ways that were harmful rather than beneficial, despite the stringent prohibition against modeling themselves on them, the clear command to remain different from them and to preserve the basic elements of the Islamic umma, and the warning of the consequences of this mimicking, to which effect the Noble Qur'ān says: "O ye who believe! If you obey those who disbelieve, they will throw you back upon your heels, and you will be turned into losers" [Q.3:149].

VI. Political Struggle

(a) These factors began to operate within the life of the Islamic state and the Islamic umma, and the suppressed nations thought that the time was ripe to take their revenge and to do away with this Islamic state which had earlier conquered their lands and altered the character of their mores in all departments of life. The Tatars swept down like a devastating flood upon the Islamic state and began tearing it apart piecemeal, until they came to Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, and trampled it underfoot in the person of the Caliph

Al-Musta 'sim.¹⁵ So was the unity of the state rent asunder, and the knot of the Caliphate undone for the first time. The nations fell apart into small states, and every tribe had a pulpit and a Prince of Believers. Christianity revived in Europe, gathered its forces, and hurled back the Muslim East in Asia and Africa with its legions throughout nine crusading assaults, in which the best of their chivalry, royalty, and armaments were deployed. These invading forces were able to establish a Crusader state in Jerusalem, to threaten the nations of Islam in the East and West, and to attack Egypt, at that time the most powerful of these states.

(b) Revival: But God (Blessed and Almighty is He!) did not yet allow vanity to overcome truth, and Egypt was able to gather about herself the scattered forces of some of these minor states, and she hurled them at the throat of the Crusaders, under the leadership of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn [Saladin]. She recovered Jerusalem from them, and showed them the meaning of defeat at Hattīn.¹⁶ Then she stood up to face the Tatars under the leadership of Al-Zāhir Baybars,¹⁷ threw them back upon their heels, broken, at 'Ayn Jālūt, and restored the form of the Caliphate once again.¹⁸ Then God willed that a state extensive in domain, bold in courage, and formidable in power rise on the side of Islam, welding its people into complete unanimity and uniting under its banner most of the Islamic nations and peoples. Its lofty ambitions made it imperative that it attack Christianity in its very lair. It conquered Constantinople, and its authority extended to the heart of Europe until it reached as far as Vienna. This was the state of the Ottoman Turks.

(c) Fruits of the Renaissance in Europe: The Islamic state was tranquil under the banner of the Ottomans and their authority, it accepted it passively and took no notice of what was happening around it. But Europe, which had come into contact with the superior culture of Islam in the West through Spain, and in the East through the Crusades, lost no opportunity and did not fail to profit by these lessons. She began to build up her forces, and to unite under the banner of the Franks in the land of Gaul, and thereafter she was able to stem the tide of the Islamic assault in the West and to sow dissension within the ranks of the Spanish Muslims, employing some to

assail others, until she finally drove them overseas to the African coast. The young Spanish state took their place, and Europe continued to build up her forces, to unite, to plan, to acquire knowledge, to traverse foreign lands, and to discover new countries, until the discovery of America was made by Spain and the discovery of the route to India by Portugal. Then cries for reform followed swiftly on one another throughout Europe, numerous reformers arose, and she eagerly embraced natural science and fruitful, productive knowledge. These revolutions of the Reformation resulted in the creation of a number of nationalities and the rise of a strong state aiming with single purpose at the dismemberment of the Islamic state, which Europe parcelled out and whose place she usurped in Asia and Africa. These young states formed alliances for this purpose, which at times rose to the level of sacred pacts.

(d) A new attack: European power expanded, thanks to discoveries, expeditions throughout the world, and travels to the most distant horizons -- as far as many of the more remote Islamic countries like India, as well as to some of the neighboring Islamic provinces. Europe began to work earnestly at dismembering the powerful, far-flung Islamic state and to lay numerous plans toward this end, referring to them at times as "the Eastern question" and at others as "dividing up the inheritance of the Sick Man of Europe." Every state proceeded to seize opportunity as it arose, to adopt the flimsiest excuses, to attack the peaceful, negligent Islamic state, and to reduce its periphery or break off portions of its integral fabric. This onslaught continued over a long period of time, during which the Ottoman Empire was stripped of many an Islamic territory which then fell under European domination, e.g., Morocco and North Africa. Many non-Islamic areas previously under Ottoman rule became independent during this time, e.g., Greece and the Balkan states. The final round in this struggle was the First World War, from 1914 to 1918, which ended in the defeat of Turkey and her allies, and which provided the strongest nations of Europe, England and France, and under their patronage, Italy, with a perfect opportunity. They reached out to grasp this grandiose heritage consisting of the Islamic nations and peoples and imposed their rule over them

under various titles - occupation, colony, trusteeship or mandate - and divided them up in the following manner:

(1) North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis) became French colonies interpenetrated by a zone of international influence in Tangier and a Spanish colony in the Rif.¹⁹

(2) Tripoli and Barca became an Italian colony in which Italy did not wish any trace of Islam to remain. She forced Italian citizenship upon it and gave it the name of "South Italy." Then she filled it with thousands of hungry families and wild beasts in human form.

(3) Egypt and the Sudan fell under English protection, neither one possessing a shred of independent authority.

(4) Palestine became an English colony, which England took the liberty of selling to the Jews so that they might establish therein a national Zionist homeland.

(5) Syria became a French colony.

(6) Iraq became an English colony.

(7) The Hijāz possessed a weak, unstable government dependent on charity and clinging to false treaties and worthless covenants.

(8) Yemen possessed an outmoded government and a poverty-stricken populace exposed to attack anywhere and at any time.

(9) The remaining nations of the Arabian peninsula consisted of small emirates whose rulers lived under the wing of the British consuls and who fought one another for the crumbs falling from their tables, their breasts burning with mutual resentment and hatred. This was the case despite the reassuring promises and binding treaties drawn up by the Allies with the mightiest potentate of the Peninsula, King Ḥusayn, stating that they would help him achieve the independence of the Arabs and support the authority of the Arab Caliphate.²⁰

(10) Iran and the Afghans possessed shaky governments beset by the greed of the strong on every side, and they were under the wing of one nation at one time and under that of another at other times.

(11) India was an English colony.

(12) Turkestan and the adjoining regions were Russian

colonies, subjected to the bitter harshness of the Bolshevik authorities. Apart from these, there were Islamic minorities scattered through many countries, knowing no state to whose protection they might have recourse, nor any well-armed government to defend their nationality, as, e.g., the Muslims in Ethiopia, China, the Balkans, and the lands of Central, South, East and West Africa. Under such conditions, Europe won in the political struggle, and finally accomplished her will in dismembering the Islamic empire, annihilating the Islamic state and erasing it, politically speaking, from the roster of powerful, living nations.

(e) Back to Power Again: But this flagrant hostility and contempt for treaties and covenants tormented men's hearts and aroused their spirits, and these nations began to demand their independence and to struggle to regain their freedom and glory. Toward this end, revolts flared up within their borders: Turkey revolted, Egypt revolted, Iraq and Syria revolted, and repeated revolts took place in Palestine and the Rīf in Morocco. Everywhere people began to stir, and as a result the Islamic peoples obtained some of their rights. Turkey became independent within her new frontiers, Egypt and Iraq were recognized as sovereign states, the state of the Su'ūdīs rose in the Hijāz and Najd, while Yemen, Iran, and Afghanistan preserved their already existing independence, and Syria came close to winning recognition of her independence.²¹ Palestine drew the attention of the world to herself through her struggle, and the Muslims, without any doubt, took significant steps, even if they were few and slow, toward the noble aims they sought to achieve, the restoration of their freedom and glory and the rebuilding of their state. Although these steps led to the concept of local nationalism, with each nation demanding its right to freedom as an independent entity, and while many of those who worked for this revival purposely ignored the idea of unity, nevertheless the outcome of these steps will be, without a doubt, consolidation and a resurrection of the Islamic empire as a unified state embracing the scattered peoples of the Islamic world, raising the banner of Islam and bearing its message. There is no nation in the world held together by the kind of linguistic unity, joint participation in material and spiritual interests,

and similarity of suffering and hope that hold the Muslims together.

(f) A New War: The European nations emerged from the First World War with the seeds of rancor and hatred deeply implanted within many of them. The peace conference took place and the ensuing treaties were sharp slaps in the face to some and a painful disillusionment to many others; furthermore, many new concepts and ideologies, strongly chauvinistic, made their appearance. Such a situation among these nations must lead inevitably to new antagonisms and a terrible, devastating war which will tear them asunder and rend apart their unity, bringing them back to their senses and deterring them from injustice. And it will give the Islamic nations another opportunity to close their ranks, to unite, to finally achieve their freedom and independence and to regain their state and their unity under the banner of the Prince of Believers: "And We desired to show favor to those who had been rendered weak in the earth, and to make them leaders and make them inheritors" [Q.28:5].

VII. Social Struggle

A new civilization: The European nations which came into contact with Islam and its peoples in the East through the wars of the Crusades, and in the West through the proximity of the Arabs of Spain and their intercourse with them, did not profit from this contact solely in terms of heightened sensibility, cohesion, or political unification: they also profited through a great intellectual awakening. acquiring numerous sciences and branches of knowledge. A scientific and cultural Renaissance, vast in scope, made its appearance among them, and the Church rose to combat this strange phenomenon with all the strength at its command. It subjected their scholars and humanists to the bitterest punishments: the courts of the Inquisition waged war upon them and aroused the wrath of states and peoples against them. But all this served it nothing, and its teachings could not stand up before the truths and discoveries of science. The scientific Renaissance emerged entirely victorious, and the state thereby awoke and it too fought the Church until it overcame it and European society was delivered

completely from its authority. Its men were driven into the shrine and the cloister, the Pope was confined to the Vatican, and the work of the clergy was limited to a restricted area in the affairs of life beyond which they could not go and to which their efforts were confined. Europe retained its Christianity only as a historical heirloom, as one factor among others for educating the simple-minded and naive among the masses, and as a means for conquest, colonization, and the suppression of political aspirations. The domain of science stretched out before Europe, and the scope of invention and discovery broadened. The machine doubled production and gave an industrial cast to all of life. All this proceeded hand in hand with the rise of the strong state whose authority reached out to many lands and regions. The world eagerly welcomed these European nations, arousing their cupidity for the profits to be gained everywhere. It poured out its wealth to them from all sides, and it was only natural thereafter that European life and culture should rest upon the principle of the elimination of religion from all aspects of social life, especially as regards the state, the law-court, and the school; the domination of the materialistic outlook, and its enthronement as the criterion for everything. As a result, the character of this culture became purely materialistic, demolishing what the revealed religions had promulgated and contradicting utterly those principles which True Islam had established and made the foundations of its culture which united the spiritual and the material. Among the most important traits of European civilization are the following:

(1) Apostasy, doubt in God, denial of the soul, obliviousness to reward or punishment in the world to come, and fixation within the limits of material, tangible existence: "They know something external of the life of this world, but of the world to come they are heedless" [Q.30:7].

(2) Licentiousness, unseemly dedication to pleasures, versatility in self-indulgence, unconditioned freedom for the lower instincts, gratification of the lusts of the belly and the genitals, the equipment of women with every technique of seduction and incitement, and excess in pernicious practices until they shatter both body and mind, destroying the integrity

of the family and threatening the happiness of the home: "Those who disbelieve take their enjoyment and eat as cattle eat, and the Fire is their dwelling-place" [Q.47:12].

(3) Individual selfishness, for every man wants the good only for himself; and class selfishness, for each class vaunts itself over the others and seeks to appropriate all profits to itself; and national selfishness, for each nation is bigoted on behalf of its members, disparages all others, and tries to engulf those which are weaker.

(4) Usury, granting it legal recognition, regarding it as a principle of business dealings and expertise under its various forms and varieties, and making it a general practice among nations and individuals. These purely materialistic traits have produced within European society corruption of the spirit, the weakening of morality, and flaccidity in the war against crime, while problems have multiplied, destructive ideologies have made their appearance, devastating and ruinous revolutions have burst forth, and economic, social, and political institutions have been shaken and no longer stand upon stable foundations. Nations have been torn apart by sects and parties, and peoples have fought one another savagely because of their greeds and hatreds. This modern civilization has confirmed its absolute impotence to guarantee the security of human society and to establish peace and tranquility within it, just as it has confirmed its failure to grant men happiness, despite all the truths of science and knowledge that it has disclosed to them, as well as all the means to wealth and opulence it has made available to them, and despite the power and authority it has brought to the states which embody it throughout the earth, even though it has not yet been in existence for so much as a century.

VIII. The Tyranny of Materialism Over the Lands of Islam

The Europeans worked assiduously to enable the tide of this materialistic life, with its corrupting traits and its murderous germs, to overwhelm all the Islamic lands toward which their hands were outstretched. An ill destiny overtook these under their domination, for they were avid to appropriate for themselves the elements of power and prosperity through

science, knowledge, industry, and good organization, while barring these very nations from them. They laid their plans for this social aggression in masterly fashion, invoking the aid of their political acumen and their military predominance until they had accomplished their desire. They deluded the Muslim leaders by granting them loans and entering into financial dealings with them, making all of this easy and effortless for them, and thus they were able to obtain the right to infiltrate the economy and to flood the countries with their capital, their banks, and their companies; to take over the workings of the economic machinery as they wished; and to monopolize, to the exclusion of the inhabitants, enormous profits and immense wealth. After that, they were able to alter the basic principles of government, justice, and education, and to imbue political, juridical, and cultural systems with their own peculiar character in even the most powerful Islamic countries. They imported their half-naked women into these regions, together with their liquors, their theatres, their dance halls, their amusements, their stories, their newspapers, their novels, their whims, their silly games, and their vices. Here they countenanced crimes they did not tolerate in their own countries, and decked out this frivolous, strident world, reeking with sin and redolent with vice, to the eyes of deluded, unsophisticated Muslims of wealth and prestige, and to those of rank and authority. This being insufficient for them, they founded schools and scientific and cultural institutes in the very heart of the Islamic domain, which cast doubt and heresy into the souls of its sons and taught them how to demean themselves, disparage their religion and their fatherland, divest themselves of their traditions and beliefs, and to regard as sacred anything Western, in the belief that only that which had a European source could serve as a model to be emulated in this life. These schools took in the sons of the upper class alone, and became a preserve restricted to them. The sons of this class consisted of the mighty and the ruling group, and those who would shortly hold within their grasp the keys to all important matters that concerned these nations and peoples. Those who did not complete their finishing in these local institutes found all that would guarantee them this finishing in the continuing series of

student missions.²² This drastic, well-organized social campaign had a tremendous success, since it was rendered most attractive to the mind, and would continue to exert a strong intellectual influence on individuals over a long period of time. For this reason, it was more dangerous than the political and military campaigns by far, and some Islamic countries went overboard in their admiration for this European civilization and in their dissatisfaction with their own Islamic character, to the point that Turkey declared itself a non-Islamic state and imitated the Europeans with the utmost rigor in everything they did. Amān Allāh Khān,²³ King of Afghanistan, tried this, but the attempt swept away his throne, and in Egypt the manifestations of this mimicry increased and became so serious that one of her intellectual leaders could say openly that the only path to progress was to adopt this civilization with all it contained of good and evil, sweet and bitter, the appealing and the hateful, the praiseworthy and the reprehensible. From Egypt it began to spread rapidly and vigorously into neighboring countries, until it reached Morocco and circumambulated the very shrines in the purlieus of the Hijāz. We may subdivide the Islamic countries, according to the degrees to which they were affected by this materialistic civilization and the domination of its materialism over them, into three groups:

(1) Countries in which this influence has reached serious proportions, penetrating even the mind and the feelings, apart from outward forms and conventions. Among these countries are Turkey and Egypt, where even the slightest trace of Islamic ideology has disappeared from all social situations, and has been driven off to take up quarters inside the mosques and Sūfī establishments and retreats.

(2) Countries which have been influenced by this civilization in their official observances and conventions, but in which it has not triumphed over their inward sensibilities. Such are Iran and the countries of North Africa.

(3) Countries which have not been influenced by this civilization, except for a particular class consisting of the well-educated and the ruling group, to the exclusion of the common people and the masses. Such are Syria, Iraq, the Hijāz, many sections of the Arabian Peninsula, and the remainder of the

Islamic countries.

Nevertheless, this wave is spreading out with the speed of lightning to reach into minds, social classes, and mores that it has not yet penetrated. Enemies of Islam can deceive Muslim intellectuals and draw a thick veil over the eyes of the zealous by depicting Islam itself as being defective in various aspects of doctrine, ritual observance, and morality, besides accommodating a host of rites, superstitions, and inane formalities. What helps them to carry out this deception is the Muslims' ignorance of the true meaning of their religion, so that many of them are satisfied with this presentation, rest content with it, and accept it. For so long a time has this been true of them that it is difficult for us to make any of them understand that Islam is a perfect system of social organization which encompasses all the affairs of life. As a result, it is possible for us to say that Western civilization, with its materialistic ideology, has triumphed in this social struggle over Islamic civilization, with its sound ideology comprising both spirit and matter, in the very territories of Islam, and in a ruthless war whose battlefield has been the spirits and souls of Muslims as well as their beliefs and intellects, exactly as it has triumphed on the political and military battlefields. It is no wonder, for the phenomena of life are not fragmented: what is strong is wholly strong, and what is weak is wholly weak: "These are the days which We apportion to mankind in turn" [Q.3:140]. And even if the ideology and teachings of Islam have gone astray, it is powerful in its essential nature, abundantly fertile and vital, attractive and enchanting in its splendor and beauty, and it will remain so because it is the truth, and human existence will never achieve perfection and virtue through any other means. And because it is of God's creation and under His care: "Lo, We have sent down the Reminder, and lo, We are its Protector" [Q.15:9]; "God refuses aught but that He should perfect His light, though the unbelievers feel aversion" [Q.9:32].

Awakening: Just as political aggression had its effect in arousing nationalist feelings, so has social aggression had its effect in reviving the Islamic ideology. Voices have been raised on every hand, demanding a return to Islam, an

understanding of its precepts, and an application of its rules. The day must soon come when the castles of this materialistic civilization will be laid low upon the heads of their inhabitants. Then they will feel the burning of a spiritual hunger in which their hearts and souls will go up in flames, and they will find no sustenance, no healing, no remedy, save in the teachings of this Noble Book: "O man, an admonition from your Lord has come to you, and a healing for what is in your hearts, a guidance and a mercy for the believers. Say: 'In God's bounty, and in His mercy: let them rejoice in that.' It is better than what they hoard" [Q.10:58-59].

IX. Our Mission is One of Reawakening and Deliverance

(a) A Weighty Heritage: So, Brethren, did God will that we inherit this heritage weighty with consequence, that the light of your mission glow amidst this darkness, and that God prepare you to exalt His Word and reveal His Sacred Law and reestablish His state: "God will surely aid one who helps Him. God is Mighty, Glorious!" [Q.22:40].

(b) Our General Aims: What do we want, Brethren? Do we want to hoard up wealth, which is an evanescent shadow? Or do we want abundance of fame, which is a transient accident? Or do we want dominion over the earth? - "The earth is God's: He gives to inherit it those whom He will of His servants" [Q.7:128] - even as we read the Speech of God (Blessed and Almighty is He!): "That is the Abode of the Hereafter which We assign to those who do not want exaltation in the earth, nor any corruption. The final consequence is to the pious" [Q.28:83]. May God witness that we do not want any of these, that our work is not toward these ends, and that our mission is not on their behalf. Rather always bear in mind that you have two fundamental goals:

(1) That the Islamic fatherland be freed from all foreign domination, for this is a natural right belonging to every human being which only the unjust oppressor or the conquering exploiter will deny.

(2) That a free Islamic state may arise in this free fatherland, acting according to the precepts of Islam, applying its social regulations, proclaiming its sound principles, and

broadcasting its sage mission to all mankind. For as long as this state does not emerge, the Muslims in their totality are committing sin, and are responsible before God the Lofty, the Great, for their failure to establish it and for their slackness in creating it. In these bewildering circumstances, it is counter to humanity that a state should arise, extolling an ideology of injustice and proclaiming a propaganda of oppression, while there should be no one among all mankind working for the advent of a state founded on truth, justice, and peace. We want to realize these two goals in the Nile Valley and the Arab domain, and in every land which God has made fortunate through the Islamic creed: a religion, a nationality, and a creed uniting all Muslims.

(c) Our Special Aims: Following these two aims, we have some special aims without the realization of which our society cannot become completely Islamic. Brethren, recall that more than 60 percent of the Egyptians live at a subhuman level, that they get enough to eat only through the most arduous toil, and that Egypt is threatened by murderous famines and exposed to many economic problems of which only God can know the outcome. Recall too that there are more than 320 foreign companies in Egypt, monopolizing all public utilities and all important facilities in every part of the country; that the wheels of commerce, industry, and all economic institutions are in the hands of profiteering foreigners; and that our wealth in land is being transferred with lightning speed from the possession of our compatriots to that of these others. Recall also that Egypt, out of the entire civilized world, is the most subject to diseases, plagues, and illnesses; that over 90 percent of the Egyptian people are threatened by physical infirmity, the loss of some sensory perception, and a variety of sicknesses and ailments; and that Egypt is still backward, with no more than one-fifth of the population possessing any education, and of these more than 100,000 have never gone farther than the elementary school level. Recall that crime has doubled in Egypt, and that it is increasing at an alarming rate to the point that the prisons are putting out more graduates than the schools; that up to the present time Egypt has been unable to outfit a single army division with its full complement of

matériel; and that these symptoms and phenomena may be observed in any Islamic country. Among your aims are to work for the reform of education; to war against poverty, ignorance, disease, and crime; and to create an exemplary society which will deserve to be associated with the Islamic Sacred Law.

(d) Our General Means of Procedure: How will we arrive at these goals? Speeches, pronouncements, letters, lessons, lectures, diagnosis of the ailment and prescription of the medicine - all these by themselves are useless and will never realize a single aim, nor will they advance a single agent of our mission to any one of his goals. Nevertheless, missions do have certain means of procedure which they must adopt and according to which they must operate. The general procedural means used by all missions are invariable and unchanging, and they are limited to the three following matters:

- (1) Deep faith.
- (2) Precise organization.
- (3) Uninterrupted work. These are your general procedural measures, Brethren, so believe in your ideology, form your ranks about it, work on its behalf and stand unwaveringly by it.

(e) Additional Procedures: Besides these general procedures, there may be additional ones which must be adopted and strictly adhered to. There are negative and positive ones, some of which accord with people's customary behavior and others which go against such behavior, differ from it, and contradict it; there are mild ones and rigorous ones, and we must train ourselves to put up with all of these and to be prepared to resort to any of them in order to guarantee success. We may be asked to go against entrenched habits and usages, and to rebel against regulations and situations which people take for granted and are familiar with. But then in its deeper essence, our mission is actually a rebellion against accepted usage and a change in habits and situations. Are you then prepared for this, Brethren?

(f) Some Discouragement: Many people will say: What do these tracts mean? Of what use can they be for building an umma and rebuilding a society burdened with these chronic problems and sunk in such a welter of corruptions? How will you manage

the economy on a nonprofit basis? How will you act on the woman question? How will you obtain your rights without the use of force? Know, Brethren, that Satan slips his whispered suggestions into the aspirations of every reformer, but that God cancels out what Satan whispers; then God decrees His miracles, for God is Knowing, Wise. Remind all of these people that history, in telling us of past and contemporary nations, also gives us admonitions and lessons. And a nation that is determined to live cannot die.

(g) Obstacles in Our Path I would like to avow to you frankly that your mission is still unknown to many people, and that on the day they find out about it and grasp its import and its aims, you will encounter violent antagonisms and sharp hostility. You will find many hardships ahead of you, and many obstacles will rise up before you. Only at that time will you have begun to tread the path of those who come with a mission. At the present time you are still unknown, and you are still smoothing the way for your mission and getting yourselves ready for the necessary struggle and campaign - the ignorance of the people as to what constitutes true Islam will stand as an obstacle in your way, and you will find among the clerical classes and the religious establishment those who will regard your understanding of Islam as outlandish, and censure your campaign on that account. Chiefs, leaders, and men of rank and authority will hate you, all governments will rise as one against you, and every government will try to set limits to your activities and to put impediments in your way. The spoliators will use every pretext to oppose you, and to extinguish the light of your mission. For that end they will invoke the aid of weak governments and a weak morality, and of the hands stretched out to them in beggary and toward you in malignity and hostility. (They will all stir up around your mission the dust of suspicion and unjust accusations, and they will try to endow it with every possible defect and to display it before the people in the most repugnant possible guise, relying on their power and authority and fortified by their wealth and influence. "They desire to extinguish God's light with their mouths, but God will perfect His light though the unbelievers be averse to it" [Q.61:68].) Without a doubt, you

will then experience trials and tribulations, you will be imprisoned, arrested, transported, and persecuted, and your goods will be confiscated, your employments suspended, and your homes searched. This period of trial may last a long time: "Do men imagine that they will be left to say: 'We believe,' and that they will not be put to the test?" [Q.29:2] But God has promised you afterwards the triumph of those who have striven and the reward of those who work for the good: "O ye who believe, shall I show you a commerce that will save you from a painful chastisement? . . . Then We sustained those who believed against their enemy, and they became victorious" [Q.61:10 and 14]. Are you resolved to be God's helpers?

(h) The Factors for Success: It is proper that we remember, Brethren, as we face all these obstacles, that we are proclaiming God's missions, which is the loftiest of all missions; that we are promulgating the Islamic ideology, which is the most powerful system of ideas; and that we are offering to mankind the Sacred Law of the Qur'an, which is the most just of all revealed law-codes: "The baptism of God - and who is better than God in baptism?" [Q.2:138]. Let us remember that the entire world is in need of this message, and that all that exists in it is preparing and smoothing out its path before it, and that we, God be praised, are free from personal ambition and far from seeking personal advantage. We seek nothing but God's Face and the welfare of mankind, and we labor desirous only of His approval. We look forward to God's support and His aid, for he whom God aids cannot be overcome: "That is because God is the defender of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no defender" [Q.47:11]. The strength of our mission, the world's need for it, the nobility of our goals and God's support for us are the factors for success before which no obstacle can stand nor any hindrance impede: "And God has the upper hand in His affairs, but most of mankind do not know" [Q.12:21].

X. An Exhortation

Muslim Brethren, listen!

Through these words, I wished to present your ideology to your close scrutiny, for it is possible that

critical times await us, and that communication between me and you will be cut off for a while so that I may not be able to speak or write to you. Therefore I advise you to ponder these words carefully, to learn them by heart if you can, and to give them your wholehearted acceptance. For behind every word lie manifold meanings.

Brethren, you are not a benevolent organization, nor a political party, nor a local association with strictly limited aims. Rather you are a new spirit making its way into the heart of this nation and revivifying it through the Qur'ān; a new light dawning and scattering the darkness of materialism through the knowledge of God; a resounding voice rising and echoing the message of the Apostle (May God bless and save him!). It is simply the truth, and no exaggeration, that you know that you are bearing the burden after the rest of mankind have shunted it off. If someone should ask you: To what end is your appeal made?, say: We are calling you to Islam, which was brought by Muhammad (May God bless and save him!): government is part of it, and freedom is one of its religious duties. If someone should say to you: This is politics!, say: This is Islam, and we do not recognize such divisions. If someone should say to you: You are agents of revolution!, say: We are agents of the truth and of peace in which we believe and which we exalt. If you rise up against us and offer hindrance to our message, God has given us permission to defend ourselves, and you will be unjust rebels. If someone should say to you: You are asking the help of individuals and associations!, say: "We believe in God alone, and reject that which you were associating with Him."²⁴ And if they persist in their hostility, say: "Peace be unto you! We have no desire for the ignorant" [Q.28:55].

XI. Duties

Brethren,

We believe in God, exult in the knowledge of Him, rely upon Him and lean upon Him. Fear no one but Him, stand in awe of no other than Him. Perform His commandments and shun what He has forbidden.

Model yourselves on the virtues and cleave to the perfections. Be strong in your morality and mighty through the

might which God has given to the believers, and through the nobility of the sincerely pious.

Apply yourselves to the Qur'ān, and study it together assiduously, and devote yourselves to the Pure Life of the Prophet, taking counsel from it. Be active workers rather than wranglers, for when God bestows His guidance on a people He inspires them to work. And people do not go astray after receiving guidance, except when disputation becomes the vogue among them.

Love one another, and hold fast zealously to your union, for this is the secret of your strength and the buttress of your success. Stand fast until God judges justly between you and your people, for He is the best of Judges.

Listen, and obey your leaders both in duress and comfort, in good times and bad, for this is the token of your conviction and the bond of solidarity among you.

Finally, look forward to God's aid and His support. The occasion will come, without a doubt: "And then the believers will rejoice in God's aid. He aids whom He will, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful" [Q.30:4].

May God grant us and you success in what He loves and approves, and conduct us and you along the paths of the good who are rightly guided; may He give us to live the life of the glorious and the fortunate, and give us to die the death of the martyrs who have striven in jihād. For He is the best of Masters, and the best of Defenders.

Notes

1. The name of the editor of this collection of Hasan al-Banna's tracts is nowhere mentioned.

2. See the Glossary of Arabic Terms. There is no doubt that the editor is referring here to the Umma Muḥammadiyya, but Ḥasan al-Banna's usage fluctuates unpredictably between this and the modern meaning of "nation." Where it is obvious that he has this latter meaning in mind, I have given the term in translation. Where I feel more or less certain he means the Umma Muḥammadiyya, I have kept the Arabic umma.

3. According to Muslim tradition, Muḥammad could not read or write when the Qur'ān was revealed to him by the archangel Gabriel. The fact that the language of the Book is the High Arabic of the literature is therefore