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VOICES OF RESURGENT ISLAM

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Ali Shariati, like Iqbal, first received a traditional Islamic education before earning his doctorate in Europe. Strongly influenced by Iqbal's writings, he too sought a synthesis, a return to a revolutionary Islam which he distinguished from the previously clerical dominated, established Islam. Rejecting both secular elites with their uncritical apeing of the West (Westoxification) and the traditional religious leadership, Shariati's sociology of Islam proved an attractive alternative for an alienated, searching generation of growth. If the Ayatullah Khomeini was the symbol of opposition and resistance, Shariati was the revolutionary ideologue. Although he and Khomeini were the revolution's early heroes—their pictures often placed side by side on wall posters and in parades—as time and a close study of each reveals, their visions of the nature and character of Islam and Islamic government are poles apart.

Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival

YVONNE Y. HADDAD

The twentieth century has seen several spokesmen for Islam whose ideas have had a wide impact on their contemporaries as well as on the succeeding generations. Their writings have assumed a primary position in providing a comprehensive Islamic vision, a synthesis necessitated by the rapid change accompanying the impact of modernization and Westernization with their direct challenge to prevalent institutions. In the early part of the century, it was the work of Muhammad Abduh which provided the foundation for a liberal, rational, and humanistic Islam which became the intellectual justification of the "secular" national experiments in the Arab world.

Few Muslim thinkers have had as significant an impact on the reformulation of contemporary Islamic thought as has Sayyid Qutb. Since his execution in Cairo in 1966, his writings have inspired numerous revivalist movements throughout the Muslim world. They have captured the imagination and the commitment of young Muslims and transformed them into working for the cause of Islam in the world. His life experiences as well as his death became a perfect illustration of one of the processes through which a revolutionary passes from enchantment with the West to the helplessness and marginality that it may inspire in those who find its values and norms not only foreign but inadequate, and finally the return to the roots where reintegration, conversion, and a new vibrant identity cohere and the human being becomes part of the revolutionary movement aimed at changing the world and bringing in a new ethical moral order based on freedom, brotherhood, and justice for all.

Qutb's works carefully analyzed what he believed to be the disease of Muslims who struggle to fit alien models, attempting to replicate them in their own countries. He captured the hopes and dreams of those who sought to bring about change, to elevate the social order, and to provide equitable distribution of wealth and power in society. He moved from a stance of an observer and interpreter of society, reflecting on its currents of thoughts and goals, to a revolutionary who charted the vision of a new order to which he wanted to lead

all people. Having been disillusioned by all other solutions he formulated his own, grounded in the Quranic vision yet relevant for the everyday life of Muslims in the Arab world.

Those influenced by his writings include the revolutionary Iranian students who helped topple the Shah's regime, also their most popular ideologue, Ali Shariati. A number of Qutb's books have been translated into foreign languages.¹ The office of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations in Kuwait has made several of his books available in English translation. They are highly recommended to members of the Muslim Student Association in the United States, who avidly read them to help raise consciousness for an Islamic order they hope to bring about when, upon their return to their respective countries, they will assume roles of leadership. His writings are also popular among members of the American Muslim Mission (popularly known as Black Muslims) who find his "evangelical" rhetoric and Quranic centeredness strongly supportive of their worldview as they seek to transform American society and convert others to the faith of Islam.

Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the Quran has become very popular because of its clear literary style and its appealing didactic and homiletic approach. Thousands of copies of the thirty-volume interpretation have been purchased by people in all walks of life. It has become the standard by which the Quran's message is interpreted in many mosques and homes throughout the Muslim world. It has been extensively used by the author of *Tafsir al Muminin*, a popular exegesis of the Quran which has had wide distribution in Syria and is credited by a Syrian official as being the "secret weapon" of the Muslim Brotherhood revolution in that country.

Qutb's writings have also had a special impact on Islamic groups in Egypt, especially after 1971 when Sadat allowed them to resume their activities in an effort to combat his socialist opposition. His writings had special poignancy for those who shared the torture of Egyptian prisons under the Nasser regime. Sadat's assassins came from one of the many groups who quote Qutb for justification of their revolutionary fervor.

Sayyid Qutb was born in 1906 in the village of Qaha in Asyut Province to al-Haji Qutb Bin Ibrahim, a well-respected and relatively affluent gentleman farmer who was a member of the nationalist party. He attended a local school for four years where he memorized the Quran by the age of ten. His intimate and comprehensive knowledge of the Quran in the context of his religious upbringing² seems to have had an abiding influence on his life. It was the anchor of his existence and functioned as the parameter of his intellectual endeavor as in the 1950s he turned to Islam to provide meaning and direction for his life.

At the age of thirteen Qutb was sent to an uncle in Cairo to continue his education. He graduated from Dar al-Ulum where he came under the influence

of Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad and his Westernizing tendencies. He became extremely interested in English literature and read avidly anything he could lay his hands on in translation. Upon graduation he was appointed as inspector of the ministry of education, a position he eventually gave up to devote himself exclusively to writing.

Qutb's written work was prolific. Besides the interpretation of the Quran, he is credited with twenty-four books.³ He also contributed many articles to magazines, especially *al-Risalah*,⁴ discussing the issues that were being debated in the intellectual circles of Egypt at the time. The first phase of his work was mostly literary, including poetry, stories and articles, and literary criticism. He was later to renounce all these works and regret ever having written them. In the late 1940s he wrote two books on Quranic topics, asserting in the introduction, "I have found the Quran."

Like other Egyptian intellectuals who had been enamoured of the West, such as Taha Husayn, Ahmad Amin and his mentor Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, Sayyid Qutb underwent a transformation in the late 1940s. This came as a result of British war policies during World War II and as an aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel. The latter he perceived as a rejection of the rights of the Arabs to self-determination and a rejection of their equality to Western man. In 1949 he came to the United States to study educational administration in Washington, D.C., and in California. Hence he witnessed the wide and unquestioning support of the American press for Israel. This along with what he felt to be the denigration of the Arabs left Qutb with a bitterness he was never able to shed.

Sayyid Qutb was small in build, very dark, and soft spoken. He was described by his contemporaries as extremely sensitive, humorless, very intense, and issue oriented. (He also appears to have suffered from a variety of ailments; at the end of his life he is reported to have carried medication with him where he went.)⁵ The swarthinness of his complexion may have been a contributing factor in his sensitivity to what he experienced as strong racial prejudice in the United States. He now felt that this country, which like many other young Arabs he had idolized, rejected him, his being, and his identity. He saw the injustice of the uprooting of the Palestinians, fully supported by America, with its implicit rejection of all Arab peoples.

AN ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE

Upon his return to Egypt, Sayyid Qutb joined the Muslim Brotherhood and began writing on Islamic topics. In his books he proposed an Islamic ideology as an alternative to those systems competing for Egyptian allegiance, dedicating the rest of his life to articulating the content, scope, and method of this ideol-

ogy. Thus in his early books on Islamic subjects, the Islamic ideology is proposed as an alternative to those of communism, capitalism, nationalism, liberalism, and secularism. These writings, along with those of later periods of his life, continue to provide contemporary Muslims with the ideological and emotional content presently undergirding the Islamic revival. Qutb's work has had extensive dissemination throughout the Muslim world, and his ideas have become the accepted definition of Islam and its role in shaping the social, political, economic, intellectual, cultural, and ethical aspects of society. At the time, however, the content of the ideology was tentative in his mind. His writings were a kind of careful crafting of a variable synthesis of ideas which he felt might replace all others in the marketplace of ideologies. Writing almost in the spirit of dialogue, he wrote in 1959:

If it becomes evident that Islam possesses or is capable of solving our basic problems, of granting us a comprehensive social justice, of restoring for us justice in government, in economics, in opportunities and in punishment . . . then without doubt it will be more capable, than any other system we may seek to borrow or imitate, to work in our nation.⁶

During this period, Qutb was influenced by the writings of Muhammad Assad (Leopold Weiss) and Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, writings which became available in Egypt in 1951. His early Islamic writings are filled with references to their work. His later works continue where they left off, and in fact are the radical conclusion of ideas expressed by them.

Qutb believed that the Islamic ideology would present a potent argument against capitalism as well as help solve all the problems that make communism appealing to the masses, such as the uneven distribution of wealth, unemployment, low wages, unequal opportunity, corruption of the labor force, and poor productivity, as well as a myriad of social problems. Furthermore, the system would free the Muslims from subservience to either capitalism or communism, providing social justice, international respect and dignity as well as freedom from the evils of strife and war, "A system that provides us with the bread that communism provides, and frees us from economic and social disparity, realizing a balanced society while sustaining us spiritually."⁷

Thus not only would the Islamic ideology solve social and economic problems, it would provide Muslims with a sense of self-worth. "The individual without a comprehensive ideology that binds him to heaven and earth is a wretched dwarf and a neglected founding. The ideology is necessary." The ideology "provides the individual with a goal greater than himself, the goal becomes the society in which he lives and humanity of which he is a member."⁸ In this tentative proposal, Qutb suggested that the Islamic system had room for a wide range of manifestations which are correlated to the natural growth

of the society and the necessities of modern life, possible as long as they are within the circle of Islam. He saw no necessity for having a single Islamic nation, though he felt it very important for all Muslim nations to form one bloc.

The Islamic system is not restricted solely to a replica of the first Islamic society, but is every social form governed by the total Islamic view of life. . . . The Islamic system has room for scores of models which are compatible with the natural growth of a society and the new needs of the contemporary age as long as the total Islamic idea dominates these models in its expansive external perimeter.⁹

While maintaining the eternity of the *shariah* as God-given and relevant for every time and place, Qutb affirmed during this period that the *fiqh* (law as it developed from man's application of the *shariah*) is the arena of change, the means through which Muslims can reinterpret the eternal precepts in order to have them become relevant to modern life, its needs and problems. While the *shariah* is legislated by God, is eternal and unchanging, *fiqh* is made by man to deal with specific situations. Thus the original model of Islamic society "is not the final vision of this society . . . there are visions ever new." The uniqueness of the Islamic vision is that it is fashioned by the *shariah* which created it, while other legal and social systems are a response to local, temporary needs.¹⁰

The eternity and unchanging nature of the *shariah* guarantees that the new *fiqh* relevant to the events of the day be genuine and authentic. He warns against accepting modern culture and Islamicizing it. Law must be a barrier to human indulgence and desire. The necessity of keeping new interpretations in line with the *shariah* is to keep excesses out. For this he cites the example of the church in the United States where dancing is allowed in the church building. He talks about the colored lights and the sexually arousing music, he saw people dancing to the music and lyrics of "Baby It's Cold Outside."¹¹

The Islamic vision is proposed because it is more authentic and will garner the support of the masses. "There is a permanent conflict between the spirit of legislation we borrow and the ethos of the masses for whom we legislate." People are alienated from laws promulgated by the national government that are borrowed from Western sources. Thus he notes that unless the people can respond to and appropriate the laws as their own, society is doomed to disintegration and anomie. In order to have a moral society, the ideology must be grounded in the Qur'an and follow the design of God for humanity.¹²

Qutb says that there are two ways of understanding the meaning of civilization. Muslims could either claim that we have a unique civilization and have the right to have our share in providing for an authentic civilization, or we could "borrow ready made models . . . to copy indiscriminately everything we see without thought or assessment." The first meaning, he says, is one under-

stood and followed by human beings, while the second is understood by monkeys who emulate everything they see.¹³

Besides providing a sense of dignity, of self-worth, and of participation in the shaping of human society, an Islamic ideology provides also for the respect of those who have no value for us at present, by which he means both the West and the communist nations. For Qutb, both what he calls the communist West and the capitalist West are the same. They are two systems that have acted as one bloc of "enmity toward us." Palestine is a witness to this enmity.¹⁴

Communism showed us the value of the principles it preaches the day it armed Israel. Israel is the only nation established on earth based on religious affiliation. The religious element is the first thing communism denies as a constituent of nationhood. It would be the last thing it would embrace or defend. However, communism has no principle except its own interest. It tramples the principles it advocates.¹⁵

The United States also has given arms and support to Israel. It is obvious that capitalism has no respect for the Arabs. The experiment of capitalist rule in Egypt under colonial supervision left the people in an oppressed condition. It divided the country into classes of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Who will dare to claim that those million of hungry, naked, barefoot peasants whose intestines are devoured by worms, whose eyes are bitten by flies and whose blood is sucked by insects are humans who enjoy human dignity and human rights [as the Capitalist slogans claim?]. . . Who will dare to claim that the hundreds of thousands of disabled beggars, who search for crumbs in garbage boxes, who are naked, barefoot, with faces crusted with dirt. . . Who will dare to say that they are the source of authority in the nation, based on democratic election?¹⁶

Thus the political institutions devised by those emulating the West are not only alien to the people, they are a fraud. For instead of fostering dignity, they perpetuate want; in place of sufficiency, poverty and subservience to those in power. They continue the myth that the nation is the source of authority. Since the nation is made up of "millions of emaciated, ignorant, hungry people who toil night and day in search of food and who can spare no time in exercising what is called "the right to vote" and "freedom of choice," they follow the bidding of their masters who control their source of livelihood.¹⁷

The masses may be attracted to communism precisely because they have experienced the evils of capitalism. "Communism in itself" says Qutb, "is an insignificant idea which deserves no respect from those who think humanely, above the level of food and drink."¹⁸

It is out of the disgust with both capitalism and communism that a third alternative becomes necessary. The idea of the Islamic bloc was inspired by a

speech given to the American Congress by Liaqat Ali Khan of Pakistan. As a bloc, Islamic countries would be strong and therefore respected by the two other blocs.¹⁹

This Islamic alternative is the proposed response to the exclusively appropriated significance that East and West ascribe to themselves:

There are two huge blocs: the Communist Bloc in the East and the Capitalist Bloc in the West. Each disseminates deceptive propaganda throughout the world claiming that there are only two alternative views in the world, communism and capitalism, and that other nations have no alternative but to ally themselves with one bloc or the other. There is no other way out. . . . It is clear that both the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc are fighting over the world, manipulating battles for their own interest at the expense of the nations and peoples who are in their orbit. . . . As for us, what is our stake in this struggle? We have recently experienced in Palestine that neither the Eastern Bloc nor the Western Bloc give any credence to the values they advocate, or consider us ourselves as of consequence. . . . We will receive no mercy from either bloc. We are oppressed strangers in the ranks of both. We are therefore the tail end of the caravan regardless of the road we take. . . . Have the existing social conditions rendered us as a nation of slaves, not only to our resident masters, but to any authority that may hover from the West or the East thousands of miles away?²⁰

THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

The Egyptian revolution of 1952 brought enthusiastic support from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Free Officers had provided arms and training for members of the Brotherhood prior to the revolution. Upon assuming power the officers sent for Sayyid Qutb. He functioned as a consultant for six months during which he is reported to have eaten, slept, and voted on matters of policy with the Officers trying to influence their plans for the country. He left disappointed because they did not opt for his ideas of instituting an Islamic state and assigning the positions of leadership to committed Muslims from the membership of the Muslim Brotherhood.²¹

It was during this period that he wrote several books dealing with the Islamic view of reality and the world as he perceived it. These writings are less tentative in nature. They articulate in absolute terms the nature and scope of the Islamic vision, attempting to deal with such questions as the source, authenticity and function of such a worldview. Affirming its divine source, its originality and applicability to the modern world, Qutb appears throughout to be aware of the contending ideologies he was challenging. He identified the essential characteristics of this vision.

1. Lordship [of God] (*rabbaniyyah*): The primary characteristic of the Islamic vision is its divine origin. This distinguishes it from other ideologies posited by human beings in their quest to devise a comprehensive system that can give meaning to their lives, to the world in which they live and the relationship of both to the Creator, the source of all being.

It is a divine vision that proceeds from God in all its particularities and its essentials. It is received by "man" in its perfect condition. He is not to complement it from his own [resources] or delete any of it; rather he is to appropriate it and implement all its essentials in his life.²²

All visions other than the Islamic proceed from human arrogance which attempts by means of human whims and desires to devise a comprehensive worldview. This is true not only in those philosophical views that affirm idealism, pragmatism, or dialectical materialism,²³ but is also the case with polytheistic thought systems which are grounded in human emotions and fears, and in other revealed religions which have been corrupted and falsified by their adherents. The scriptures of the last are now supplemented by ideas of human origin. "Islam alone has remained preserved in its principles. Its sources have not been polluted, nor has its truth been superimposed with falsehood,"²⁴ a fact attested to by God, Himself: "Lo, Verily We have revealed the Reminder and that We are its Guardian" (S. 15:9). Thus the validity of this claim is verified in the Quran which affirms its own authenticity. (See S. 42:52-3; 53:1-4; 69:44-7; 5:67; 28:56; 6:125.)

While the Islamic vision applies to the realm of human existence and action, man is incapable of comprehending its totality.

He is limited by his creaturehood. . . . He is not perfect or eternal. His ability to know is limited by his nature and function, which is vicegerency on the earth through which the meaning of worship is fulfilled. He has been granted the capacity to comprehend what is necessary for his role as vicegerent, no less, no more.²⁵

2. Constancy (*thabat*): This characteristic of the Islamic worldview, like all others, proceeds from the Lordship of God and provides the basis on which change and progress are to be understood. Qutb sees the Islamic vision as a dynamic force that can be implemented in a variety of social structures and that can manifest itself in different forms of society. However, there is a constancy in its essential core which neither changes nor develops. This does not require the ossification of life and thought, rather it makes room for dynamism "within a constant perimeter around a constant axis."²⁶ The steadfastness is the characteristic of all of God's creation which is evident in matter, in the atom as well as the universe.

The constant axis for man is his humanity, endowed through the divine breath and thus placing him above other creatures. Although he grows and develops from sperm into old age, these developments do not alter his constant humanity. Man's elevation or degradation is in direct relation to the proximity or distance from the source of his humanity.²⁷

The existence of steadfast constancy at the core of all reality, Qutb believes, protects against rampant deviation from the truth. "It controls human activity and change so that it may not proceed without guidance, as occurred in Europe when it severed its bond to belief, leading to its miserable condition."²⁸ This constant core provides a criterion of judgment that avoids aimlessness and lack of direction, and functions as a corrective to the human tendency to follow its own whims.

The doctrine of constancy contradicts that of unrestricted progress. Developed in the West to combat the tyranny of the church, its openness to all ideas led to corruption since it grants the right and justification for the existence of every concept, value, condition or system as long as it is new. Innovation and newness are a superficial and accidental justification which should not be the criterion by which the validity of values is determined.

The doctrine of constancy in the Islamic worldview is proposed by Qutb as a dam against Westernization and the appropriation of the European values, ideas, customs, and fashions.²⁹ It also functions as a refutation of the basic intellectual premise of Darwin's theory of progressive evolution, as well as that of dialectical materialism.

The doctrine of constancy in the Islamic worldview, as Qutb saw it, both guarantees the integration and harmony of Muslim life with that of the order of the universe, and also provides assurance in the order of society and an awareness of the permanence of the orbit within which one lives and moves. Thus, the Muslim can proceed knowing that his actions are leading toward progress, that his movement is forward and upward as willed by God, linking yesterday, today, and tomorrow.³⁰

If Muslims persist in appropriating Western methods, values, and styles, says Qutb, they will harm not only themselves but all humanity since they will be falsifying and altering the only true source of guidance and revelation from God, the only true source of constancy.

Those who attempt to alter this vision either under the name of renewal, reform or progress, or under the guise of eradicating the remnants of the Medieval age or under any other slogan are our real enemies. They are the enemies of humankind.³¹

Qutb then proceeds to fault the Westernizers because "they feed on the products of the nineteenth- or eighteenth-century European thought, not their own, and they have not as yet reached the products of the twentieth century."³²

3. Comprehensiveness (*shumul*): The third characteristic of the Islamic vision is its comprehensive nature. Man himself is never able to provide an equivalent comprehensive substitute, due in large part to his finitude and his limitation in time and place. Man is unable to provide a complete system that takes into account all considerations and aspects. "It is impossible that a human concept or a humanly devised system would ever personify comprehensiveness. It will always be temporary or fragmentary."³³

The true Islamic vision has been corrupted by those who over the years have complicated it by mixing it with other ideas such as those of Plato or Aristotle as well as some Christian theologians. They are the "so-called" Islamic philosophers who incorporated these ideas into Islamic thought. This mixing is unacceptable because the Islamic vision is unique and does not accept ideas from other sources.

This vision is of such comprehensiveness and breadth, of precision and depth, of authenticity and integratedness that it rejects every foreign element, even though it is merely a verbal expression which is currently fashionable in foreign [intellectual] circles.³⁴

The comprehensive nature of Islam is reinforced by the unity that proceeds from the One Divine source. This unity is manifested in the areas of "thought and behavior, vision and initiative, doctrine and system, source and reception, life and death, striving and movement, life and means of livelihood, this world and the next. It does not divide into sections, seek various paths or horizons or march on different roads without agreement."³⁵

When humanity is united in its obedience to the one source of all its vision, understanding, values, legislation, and law, then it will be at its best. In this way "the total human endeavor must become one movement, bent on the realization of the purpose of human existence . . . worship, the worship that is made evident in man's bondage to God alone in all that he undertakes as a vicegerent."³⁶

Some Muslims have divided human activity into two spheres, *ibadat* (acts of worship) and *muamalat* (human relationships). This late interpolation into Islamic thought led some people to believe that a Muslim could continue to be a Muslim if he separates between the two and fulfills the acts of worship according to the Islamic injunctions while relegating the area of his relations to other human beings to legislative sources other than Islam. This to Qutb is unacceptable. To him the comprehensiveness of the system guarantees that "Islam is a unity that is indivisible. Any one who divides it into two sections is outside this unity, in other words, he is outside this religion."³⁷

4. Balance (*tawazun*): This characteristic has preserved the unique nature of Islam. It is evidenced in the harmony that exists between that which is revealed, which humans can grasp and apprehend, and that which is accepted by faith

since man has no capacity to comprehend it. Human nature feels comfortable with this vision since absolute knowledge rests with God in whom man places his total trust. "Any doctrine that is totally comprehensible to humans is no doctrine." It is the balance between the known and the unknown, the revealed and the hidden that is in accordance with human nature.³⁸

5. Positiveness (*ijabiyah*): The Islamic vision emphasizes the positive relation of God to the world, life, and man. From obedience to God proceeds the positiveness in the believer's life. The Islamic vision is not a negative one that dwells in the world of the conscience, it is not idealistic or merely spiritual, but rather, "it is a 'prototype' for a reality to be implemented according to its plan."³⁹ There is not a single action in life which should not proceed as a witness to this religion, not only as an affirmation of faith through the tongue but one of action, evidencing to others that which makes a difference in the world.

6. Pragmatism (*waqiiyyah*): This vision is not idealistic, but rather is grounded in the reality of life. Yet it is idealistic-realistic in that it aims at establishing the highest and most perfect system to which humanity can ascend.⁴⁰

The role of man as perceived in Islam is within the limits of his capacity. Man is taken as he is, "one who eats, marries, procreates, loves, hates, hopes, and fears." Islam takes into account "human nature, his capacities, his virtues, evils, strengths, weaknesses." It does not portray man as inferior, nor does it denigrate his role on earth. It does not elevate him to the role of divinity, nor does it see him in angelic form. This is contrary to the Brahmanic vision of man which denies the body as unreal, and to Christianity which sees man as made of body and soul and determines that which pertains to the body as evil.⁴¹

7. Unicity (*tawhid*): While *tawhid* is the essential comprehensive characteristic of the total Islamic doctrine and its primary basis, it is also one of its components.⁴² *Tawhid* is the foundation of all the revealed religions given to the prophets by God. However, it is unique to Islam in that it is the only religion which has preserved it in its pristine condition, not falsifying it.⁴³ Islam affirms that there is one God to whom alone divinity can be ascribed and there is creaturehood of everything else.⁴⁴ The only relationship between Creator and creature is that of creaturehood. This assures that "there is no ruler save God, no legislator, no organizer of human life and of human relationships to the world, to living things or human beings save God. From Him alone is received all guidance and legislation, all systems of life, norms governing relationships and the measure of values."⁴⁵

THE ISLAMIC IMPERATIVE

In 1954, Sayyid Qutb was arrested with many members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Accused of conspiring to assassinate Gamal Abdel Nasser, he was tried and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor. During his incarceration he revised

the first thirteen volumes of his interpretation of the Quran and wrote several books, including *Hadha al-Din* and *al-Mustaqbal li-Hadha al-Din*, in which his ideas acquired a radical bent and portrayed Islam as the Divine Imperative that must assume power in order to regulate all aspects of life.

After serving ten years of his sentence, Qutb was released from prison by Nasser as a result of the personal intercession of the president of Iraq, Abd al-Salam Aref. The physical and mental torture meted out by the prison authorities to members of the Muslim Brotherhood left scars on him. Upon his release he wrote *Maalim Fi al-Tariq*, his most controversial book. This resulted in his arrest in 1965. He was condemned to death on August 22, 1966, executed, and buried in a secret plot in an unmarked grave. To many he became the martyr of the Islamic Revival.

In this last phase of his writings, Qutb rejected all forms of government that did not follow what he believed to be the true Islamic system. They were condemned not only for their oppression but because he felt that they had usurped the role of God by providing legislation to govern people's lives.

The ideology he proposed in the early fifties as a guideline, a "tentative blueprint," by 1965 acquired a dogmatic nature, an absolute given. The variety of possibilities and visions were reduced to one which was mandated as the divine imperative that must command the total allegiance of the believers, summoning them to strive with all available means, not only to implement Islam in their own lives but also to eradicate all other forms and systems.

Reform was no longer sufficient since it did not deal with the root of the evil that permeates society. Only a radical transformation, a totally new beginning, what he in one place called the new birth, the categorical destruction of the old system, can guarantee the flourishing of God's system. Only then can the utopian society take root, the "Kingdom of God on earth."⁴⁶

To struggle in the path of God, for Qutb, demands the willingness of the believers to renounce egotistical achievements and individual goals. The primary goal should be the corporate benefit, the *ummah* living in righteousness under the law of God. Only then can they recapture the ascendancy they were destined to have.

In this endeavor religion is the source of true sustenance. It not only provides the *mujahid* (one who strives to realize God's will; soldier) with the courage to speak out, to prescribe the good and forbid evil, but it also endows him with equanimity, with peace and the willingness to lay down his life for the cause of God. "All people die; he is a martyr. He departs this world to the Garden while his opponent goes to the Fire."⁴⁷ Thus he faces death not out of resignation but with the full assurance of his fulfilling the will of God, through the ultimate obedience, the essential meaning of what it means to be truly human.

Religion is also the final arbiter of all that is. It is not a fact of culture or separate from it. It provides both the framework within which all aspects of life are to be designed and the measure by which they are judged. Religion moulds and shapes culture. It is the active ingredient in all that man undertakes.

Thus articulated, the religion of Islam assumes an exclusive role. It no longer functions as one alternative among others. Rather, grounded in the teachings of the Quran which is affirmed as the only preserved true revelation of God it stands in judgment over all posited systems, norms, values, and ideologies. As God's vision for humanity it alone commands obedience and commitment.⁴⁸

Jews and Christians have at one time received the vision from God, but they have distorted it. They have allowed their religious leaders to interpret the scriptures, legislate norms and values. In this they have usurped the role of God who alone is in possession of the power of governance.⁴⁹ The role of Muslims is not to legislate but to adhere faithfully in obedience to the way that God has charted for humanity. Muslims know that their victory and supremacy in the world are established by their faithfulness to the true guidance. To veer from such a vision would lead to dissipation, victory turning to defeat.⁵⁰

The Islamic vision is realized in the world through human endeavor.⁵¹ For "the truly chosen people of God are the Islamic *ummah*, that which dwells under God's banner regardless of race, nation, color or region."⁵²

Islam came to elevate man and save him from the bonds of earth and soil, the bonds of flesh and blood. . . . There is no country for the Muslim except that where the *shariah* of God is established, where human relations are bonded by their relationship to God. There is no nationality for a Muslim except his creed which makes him a member of the Islamic *ummah* in the Abode of Islam. The Muslim has no relatives except those who proceed from faith in God. . . . The relatives of the Muslim are not his father, mother, brother, wife or tribe unless the primary relationship is to the creator; from there it proceeds to blood relations.⁵³

It is clear that Islam in this context assumes a liberating role. It turns conventional relationships and traditional roles upside down. It has its own definition not only of reality and the world but of how things ought to be—the goal toward which all humanity must strive.

This religion is a general proclamation for the liberation of "man" on "earth" from bondage to creatures. . . . The proclamation of the sole Lordship of God over the worlds means: a comprehensive revolution against the governance of humans in its various shapes, forms, systems and conditions and total rebellion against all conditions in the world where government is [controlled] by humans.⁵⁴

Islam frees man from subservience to any human institutions, forces, and attitudes that are destructive to the human being and the community. Man

ceases to be passively responding, awaiting in dejection the next move of those who seek to oppress him; rather he initiates, sheds his inertness and assumes the reigns of his own destiny and that of the *ummah* through streamlining their wills and goals to those of God and His order.

From this stance and with the absolute assurance of the exclusive possession of the only truth, Qutb called on fellow Muslims to reject the West and the Westernizers because they are patterning their life styles and the norms of the society after those of the People of the Book. God prohibited Muslims from receiving guidance from any source save the Quran. "He proscribed inner defeat before any other people on the earth . . . which leads to the imitation of their society. The Muslim community was established for the role of leadership of humanity. It must derive its customs as well as its ideology from the source that chose it for leadership."⁵⁵

The Quran had clearly warned the Muslims not to have contacts with Christians and Jews because they always seek to turn Muslims away from their faith. Perceived from the scope of the Quranic vision all relations, controversies, and issues between the West and Muslim countries are reduced to a religious struggle in which Christians and Jews attempt in a variety of methods to undermine the Muslims' commitment to Islam.

It is the eternal doctrine which we see verified in every time and place . . . This is the reality of the battle which the Jews and the Christians initiate in every land and at all times against the Islamic community . . . It is the battle of doctrine that is raging between the Islamic camp and these two armies who may [at times] fight among themselves . . . however, they always cooperate in the battle against Islam and the Muslims.

It is the battle of the doctrine in its essence and reality, yet the two veteran camps of enmity to Islam and the Muslims color it in various ways and raise different banners over it in calumny, cunning and concealment. They have experienced the Muslims' zeal for their religion and their doctrine when they faced them under the banner of doctrine. After that, the enemies turned around and changed the signs of the battle. They did not announce it a war in the name of doctrine—as it is in reality—fearing the zeal and emotion of the doctrine. Rather, they announced it in the name of land, of economics, of politics, of military bases . . . whatever. They proclaimed to those who were gullible among us that the issue of doctrine is an old story that has no meaning. It is no more advisable to raise its banner nor to wage war in its name. That is the sign of the fanatical reactionaries! That is in order to allay the outpouring of zeal for the doctrine . . . while in themselves: international Zionism, International Crusaderism—in addition to International Communism—all of them enter the battle primarily and above all else to destroy this mighty rock which they have long butted and which has bloodied all of them.

It is the battle of the doctrine. It is not a struggle over land, produce or military bases nor is it any of these false banners. They falsify it to us because of a secret

purpose they keep to themselves in order to deceive us about the nature and essence of the battle and if we are deceived by their treachery we can blame only ourselves.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, it is necessary for Muslims to assume their role of leadership through Islam, not only because it is the only thing they possess as a contribution to society. Nor is it because Islam provides a unique vision of the world as he asserted during the second phase. But Islam must assume the leadership because it is mandated to do so, to liberate all humanity from allegiance to any system or law save that of the Quran.

The Kingdom of God on earth will not be established when religious leaders supervise sovereignty on earth as was the case under the power of the church, nor by men who pontificate in the name of Gods as was the case under "theocracy" or divine rule; rather it is established when God's law has sovereignty and all matters are judged in the light of God's will as evident in His *shariah*.⁵⁷

Some Aspects of the Islamic Imperative

Several concepts developed during the last phase of Qutb's Islamic writing deserve closer attention due to their great impact on the current ideas of Muslim revivalists. In a certain sense, a great deal of what is being published at present is either inspired by his writings, plagiarized from his books, or is a commentary on his ideas.

Islam and Liberation

As noted above, the Islamic imperative was articulated as a commission for liberation. This was explained by Qutb in ways reminiscent of Latin American and Afro-American liberation theology.

This religion is a universal declaration of human liberation on earth from bondage to other men or to human desires . . . To declare God's sovereignty means: the comprehensive revolution against human governance in all its perceptions, forms, systems and conditions and the total defiance against every condition on earth in which humans are sovereign, or to put it in other words in which divinity belongs to humans . . . in which the source of power is human . . . making some the masters of others with disregard to God. This declaration means the extraction of God's usurped sovereignty and its restoration to Him.⁵⁸

From his intimate experience of persecution and jail came the new militancy which saw the naïveté of proclamation, and the futility of declarations and

preaching in the face of organized police repression and opposition. Noting that Islam teaches that there is no compulsion in religion, Qutb insisted that this freedom of choice comes only after the forces of oppression have been removed and in places where it is possible for people to adhere to and appreciate the benefit of God's vision for humanity. He felt that if there are obstructions in the way of the fulfillment of this vision, it becomes necessary that "they be eradicated first by force that it may become possible to address the human heart and mind after being freed from chains."⁵⁹

Thus the jihad is crucial if the *dawah* ("call" to Islam) is to proceed unimpeded. For this he notes the precedent in the life of the Prophet Muhammad which he proposes as the prototype of the means of operating the *dawah* in order to bring it to a fruitful end. . . . For while the Muslims restricted their activities to preaching in Mecca, it became necessary for them to fight once they established the community in Medina.

Truth and falsehood cannot coexist on earth. When Islam makes a general declaration to establish the lordship of God on earth and to liberate humanity from the worship of other creatures, it is contested by those who have usurped God's sovereignty on earth. They will never make peace. Then [Islam] goes forth destroying them to free humans from their power . . . this is the constant situation. The liberating struggle of jihad does not cease until all religion belongs to God.⁶⁰

This reiteration of the necessary militancy against the forces that try to impede the way of Islam appears in several sections of his interpretation of the Quran.

Islam is not a theological system that is realized when appropriated as an ideology . . . and then its mission ceases. Islam is a pragmatic activist system of life. It withstands other systems which are based on power and is supported by material power. For Islam to establish its divine system, it is inevitable that these material powers be destroyed and the powers that administer the systems that resist the divine way be annihilated.⁶¹

Qutb defends the concept of liberation as an imperative to set humans free, to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. He sees the jihad for the realization of the righteous society ordained by God as a liberating force, not as an oppression.⁶² He defends its militancy as necessary rather than coercive. "It has never been the intent of Islam to coerce people to believe in its ideology."⁶³ However, in the same paragraph he rules out the possibility that liberated people would choose by their own free will to re-establish systems thus eliminated.

This freedom does not mean that they will [be able to] make their desires their Gods or that they would choose by themselves to be slaves of other creatures, or

that they would take others as sovereign over them, and not God. The system which rules humanity in the world must have as its foundation the worship of God alone and that is by accepting legislation from Him. . . . Anyone who grasps the nature of this religion—as discussed above . . . understands the imperative for the dynamic movement of Islam by jihad with the sword—side by side—with the jihad through admonition—and would understand that it is not a defensive movement.⁶⁴

Islam as a liberating force is universal in scope, not restricted to any peoplehood, national or geographic boundaries. Its arena is the whole world which must at times strive to implement God's will on earth. "Whenever there is oppression, Islam is commissioned to eradicate it, to combat it, whether this oppression is against Muslims, against protected people or others with whom Muslims have no treaties."⁶⁵ In his interpretation of the Quran, Qutb wrote:

This religion is not a declaration for the liberation of the Arab man! It is not a message restricted to the Arabs! . . . Its object is "man," the "human" genus—its scope is the "world" . . . the whole world. God is not the Lord of the Arabs alone not even those who believe in the Islamic doctrine alone. . . . God is the "Lord of the worlds" and this religion seeks to restore "the world" to its lord and to extricate people from bondage to anyone save Him. The greatest bondage—in the view of Islam—is subservience to human laws legislated by humans.⁶⁶

The attack on man-made systems and the insistence that the law of God must predominate are not pleas for lawlessness but pleas that are responding to the laws governments make in order to perpetuate their rule and impose their will on people. These laws, Qutb felt must be removed that true justice can exist in the world.

Jihad works to realize the idea of universal revolution not aimed at rule, control or booty. In this revolution peace in all its aspects is realized: the peace of conscience, peace in the home and peace in society . . . finally, the peace of humanity.⁶⁷

Jihad

Sayyid Qutb wrote a book on Islam and Peace in which he affirmed that peace is the essential character of Islam. It proceeds from the integration of creation with the law of life and the laws governing humans.

Peace is the eternal principle; war is the exception which becomes a necessity when there is a deviation from the integration exemplified in the religion of the one God [resulting] in injustice, oppression, corruption and discord.⁶⁸

Islam rejects all the justifications for war in the world such as nationalism, racism, greed, and economic expansion. Under the rule of Islam all people will

be co-operating together as "one close family" making "all creation a unity with no contradictory purposes."⁶⁹ The only legal war in Islam is one that is fought while striving to secure the dominance of the word of God in the world. Since His word is the expression of His will, Islamic wars seek to establish God's system, affirming His Lordship over all the world.⁷⁰

Islam insists that there is no compulsion in religion; however, the compulsion comes into being "against those who oppose its way by force."⁷¹ In this manner, Islam has placed a certain responsibility on Muslims. These include the following: 1) It is the duty of Muslims to protect the believers that they do not stray from the religion, permitting the use of force to repel force. 2) Islam must be guaranteed freedom of propagation, otherwise it becomes incumbent on Muslims to "eradicate" any oppressive powers on the earth which impede the *dawab* of Islam. 3) Muslims must be able to affirm God's sovereignty on earth and remove those who usurp this sovereignty by legislating laws. 4) Muslims must be free to establish the great justice that all people may enjoy its benefits. "This means that Muslims must combat oppression and injustice wherever they are found, even though it is the oppression of the individual against himself, the oppression of society against itself or the oppression of the government against its constituents."⁷²

Islam confronts the forces that attempt to impede its progress in three ways:

1) People are invited to join Islam, the final religion, the way of truth, the law that realizes justice for all people. 2) If they refuse, they are asked to pay *jizya* (poll tax) as a symbol of the cessation of hostilities and their affirmation of the freedom of Muslims to propagate their faith. 3) If they refuse, then the only option left is war since the enemies of Islam would be fighting God's will, keeping humanity from enjoying the benefits that accrue from the Islamic order such as "light, justice and comprehensive peace."⁷³

Mawdudi's works which were published in Arabic after 1951 appear to have had a great influence on Sayyid Qutb's writings on *jihad*. He quotes him as he accuses the West of exaggerating and embellishing the word *jihad* that it has come to mean savagery and bloodletting. It conjures up "for them" images of "savage hordes with burning eyes, yelling Allahu Akbar . . . killing kafirs" [non-believers]. The West on the other hand has "spent centuries and generations fighting and struggling to fulfill their base desires and quench their burning greed. That is their [unholy war] which they have waged against weak nations in both the East and the West seeking markets for their products and land to colonize."⁷⁴

Jihad for Qutb is a practical matter which should not be renounced. He attacks the modernists who wrote extensive apologetic on jihad insisting that it was defensive in nature. Qutb calls them "spiritual and intellectual defeatists" who believe that they are providing a service to Islam by separating it from its

method which he affirms is the destruction of all the existant unjust sovereign political systems.⁷⁵

Jihad is an essential characteristic of Islam commanded in the Quran. That Muslims of his day were not fighting is due to the fact that "they do not exist."⁷⁶ Most Muslims have compromised with oppressive powers. Meanwhile, he affirmed that a study of the Quran and the history of the early believers reveals that "when God restrained Muslims from jihad for a certain period it was a matter of strategy and not of principle."⁷⁷ Thus Muslims should not be embarrassed and renounce force. If they are incapable of fulfilling the injunction, it is a temporary situation.

Jahiliyyah

One of the concepts that Qutb popularized has come to refer to all cultural aspects of the modern world. Used in the Quran to refer to the period of ignorance in which the Meccans lived prior to the revelation, *jahiliyyah* is currently being used by many authors and preachers as a pejorative term to designate all that one considers to be alien to Islam. Qutb concedes that he has borrowed this definition from Mawdudi's *Mabadi al-Islam*.⁷⁸ "*Jahiliyyah* is not a period in time. It is a condition that is repeated every time society veers from the Islamic way whether in the past, the present or the future."⁷⁹

The difference between the historical *jahiliyyah* and the one prevailing in the world today is that the latter is more sinister since it is created willfully by men who usurp the role of God. The older *jahiliyyah* was based on "ignorance, naïveté, and youth. As for contemporary *jahiliyyah* it is grounded in knowledge, complexity and scorn."⁸⁰ Furthermore, it is established on the principle of "aggression against God's governance on the earth" under the rubric of the right to create visions and values and to legislate laws disregarding God's Path.⁸¹

Today we are in a similar or darker *jahiliyyah*, than that contemporaneous to early Islam. All that surrounds us is *jahiliyyah*, people's visions, beliefs, their habits and customs, their source of knowledge, art, literature, rules and laws, even what we consider as Islamic education, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought—all of it is the product of *jahiliyyah*.⁸²

The list of disciplines and intellectual endeavors that are relegated to *jahiliyyah* include all areas of the humanities and the social sciences including "philosophy, history, psychology (except the experimental branch), ethics, comparative religion, sociology (except statistics). . . . Most of it, if not all of it bears implicit or explicit enmity to the general religious understanding of life and in a specific way to the Islamic worldview."⁸³ The only aspects of culture that are universal and therefore could be learned from other societies are science and

technology. This is restricted only to the area of technical know-how and does not include the "philosophical and metaphysical interpretation of scientific findings."⁸⁴

The concept of *jahiliyyah* as developed by Qutb projects a Manichean view of the world. The believers are to be made aware that there is a constant struggle between the Islamic worldview and that of *jahiliyyah*: a struggle between faith and disbelief, faith in the one God and polytheism.⁸⁵ In essence, it is an ideological conflict.⁸⁶

There are two kinds of culture: Islamic culture based on the fundamentals of the Islamic worldview and the *jahili* [ignorant] culture which manifests itself in a variety of systems, all of which can be explained by one principle . . . that of elevating human thought [to the status] of a God not necessitating recourse to God's guidance.⁸⁷

The *jahili* systems which humans adopt for themselves in disregard for God's guidance bear the evident imprint of human ignorance, weakness, and desire. They are contrary to human nature and can only provide partial solutions to human problems inevitably resulting in harm to some segments of society.⁸⁸

Confined to the role of *jahiliyyah* is any system that relegates God and religion to the personal sphere. God must be in command of all life. *Jahiliyyah* is any society that is subservient to its own rulers and is obedient to its visions, values, concepts, feelings, traditions, and customs.⁸⁹ In a sense that Islamic concept of the creaturehood of man is affirmed as bondage to God. Thus any act of obedience to any system is dismissed as an act of worship. To obey anyone save God is to dwell in *jahiliyyah*.

Muslims must be wary not to accommodate the *jahili* system on any issue since that would lead to compromising the whole. The only proper relation to such a system is total rejection.⁹⁰ The systems Qutb defined as *jahili* include the communist nations because of their atheism that ascribes the moving power in the world to matter or nature and perceives human activities in terms of economics and production. They are in error also because they have established systems where allegiance is to the party, where the collective leadership usurps the role of God in determining human welfare. They limit human reality to the realm of the animal by focusing on food, drink, clothing, housing, and sex.⁹¹ *Jahili* systems include all the polytheist systems that exist in India, Japan, the Philippines, and Africa. It also includes Christian and Jewish nations because of their deviation from the truth in allowing their religious leaders to compromise with existent political orders legislating for them what is right and wrong, a matter which is the exclusive domain of God.⁹²

The *jahili* systems include all societies that claim to be Muslim. They accept alien ideas and incorporate them into the Islamic framework in areas such as

government, law, values, customs, and traditions. Some of these Muslim societies openly admit their adherence to secularism. They claim a respect for religion but ignore the laws of God as revealed in the Quran. They are *jahili* systems because they choose to operate outside the divine injunctions. They ignore the reality that God is the only source of knowledge. "He rules. His religion is the way of life." They fail to understand that "the source of power is God, not the 'people,' not the 'party' nor any human being."⁹³

Muslims must also be alert that those who develop Islamic jurisprudence do not include alien ideas, Islamizing them.⁹⁴ That can only provide half-solutions due to their human source. Only when an Islamic order is devised based on the law of God and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad can a comprehensive system come into being, one that is attuned to the reality of humanity and one that is capable of transforming people from *jahiliyyah* into Islam.⁹⁵

The only effective means of eradicating a *jahili* society is the existence of a dynamic Islamic social organism with its superior strategy, ideology, and integration.⁹⁶ Muslims have a record of the only effective method that can replace *jahiliyyah*. The Meccan experience in which the Quranic message confronted the *jahili* forces directly, challenging the very existence of their society was not a theoretical, theological, or scholastic approach⁹⁷ but one that was frank, open, and constant.

Jamaah

For Qutb, Islamic society is "not a mere historical form that is hidden in the memories of the past, it is the demand of the present and the hope of the future."⁹⁸ Although it is grounded in eternal historical values, it is not a fixed historical entity. It can take a variety of shapes and forms as long as it adheres to the basic eternal values which include the total subordination of all things to God, the adherence to the ideology, the affirmation of the humanity of man over materialism, the domination of human values over animal instincts, the inviolability of the family, the vicegerency of man on earth according to God's covenant and prescription, the governance and supremacy of God's system and laws in the affairs of the world.⁹⁹

The suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood and the imprisonment of its leaders led Qutb to define the process (*manhaj*) through which an Islamic society can be realized in a world where *jahili* systems prevail. He advocated the necessity of the *jamaah*, the coalition of committed individuals who become a vital organic cell of Muslims dedicated to the materialization of the true Islamic society, one in which the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad impact all aspects of life: political, economic, legal, as well as cultural.

The necessity of the *jamaah* as the dynamic nucleus of the Islamization process is based on prophetic precedence, the method employed by the Prophet

Muhammad in organizing the first Muslim community. Qutb points out that for thirteen years the Quran was revealed in Mecca as a confrontation, challenging the very existence of Meccan society, addressing itself to the daily interaction of members of the society. At the same time, the Quran concentrated on the ideological nurture of the *jamaah*, providing them with the assurance of divine support and the strength to persevere in their struggle against the oppression of the *jahili* society in which they dwell.¹⁰⁰

The Islamic society is therefore a coalition of believers bonded together in their commitment to a specific system. It comes into being by necessity when three individuals believe in this ideology. They form an independent entity separate from the one they live in.¹⁰¹ This separation is inevitable in view of the struggle that ensues between them and the *jahili* systems. This proceeds from the dynamic nature of Islamic society that seeks to convert all people to its own unique world view of life, history, values, and goals, rejecting all those advocated by others.¹⁰² Commitment to these ideals is guaranteed to bring forth a utopian system where social justice is the essential core of the comprehensive ideological vision.

For Islam to be a reality in this world, unencumbered by human modifications to accommodate human demands, the existence of the *jamaah*, the vanguard of committed Muslims willing to separate themselves from the allurements of society, is crucial.¹⁰³ For unless faith is realized in a dynamic *jamaah*, it is incomplete.¹⁰⁴ This is not brought about through hasty action, but by a deliberate gradual inculcation that transforms the individuals as they translate the ideology into life itself. The Islamization of the *ummah* can only proceed from the *jamaah* whose total existence is focused on the mission it has assumed. Its members become the nucleus, the agents, the life, the organization, the action as well as the evidence of Islam itself.

Hijrah

Historically used in reference to the emigration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622, hijrah was reified by Qutb to designate a necessary phase in the process of Islamizing society. From this vantage point, the goal of the historical hijrah was not the establishing of the Islamic society in Medina; rather, it was the eradication of the *jahili* system in Mecca and its environs. Thus the formation of the *jamaah* in Medina as a community governed by God's law in all aspects of life was an essential stage that must be realized before the transformation of the rest of *jahili* society can proceed. This for Qutb became the Islamic method as revealed by God.

Islam is not a mere theory to be believed and practiced by its adherents while they continue to live in a *jahili* society. Should they continue to dwell in such a system they will compromise Islam's very existence by consciously or inad-

vertently defending it against outside threats. Islam and *jahiliyyah* cannot coexist; Muslims must consciously separate themselves from the prevailing social order and seek to eradicate it.¹⁰⁵ Those who do not appropriate the Islamic vision and heed its method by organizing their existence on the basis of an organic dynamic coalition with one commitment and one leadership are responsible for the corruption and chaos in the world. The *hijrah* is necessary until restoration of the divine order is implemented.¹⁰⁶

It is important that anyone who wants to be a Muslim needs to know: he cannot practice his Islam except in a Muslim milieu, where Islam is sovereign. Otherwise he is misguided in thinking that he is able to realize Islam while he is a lost or persecuted individual in a *jahili* society.¹⁰⁷

Hakimiyyah

Among the key terms utilized by Qutb to elaborate his ideas concerning the Islamic Imperative is that of *hakimiyyah* (sovereignty, governance). Unlike the others discussed above, it is not a Quranic term but one that is derived from the term *hukm* (to rule, or govern). It appears to have come into Arabic use in the writings of Mawdudi.

For Qutb, the term *hakimiyya* designated divinity, which was synonymous with ultimate sovereignty. For him the confession of faith reiterated daily by Muslims, "there is no God but God" is a revolution against human sovereignty of any shape or form, whether that be of priests, tribal chiefs, princes, or governors—in matters of conscience, rituals, wealth, or justice.¹⁰⁸ "There is no governance except for God, no legislation but from God, no sovereignty of one [person] over the other because all sovereignty belongs to God."¹⁰⁹

Thus while the concept of *hakimiyyah* insists on God's absolute sovereignty, it also affirms man's "total bondage to God alone." This means that Muslims have to operate within the confines of the Quranic revelation as it was taught by the Prophet Muhammad, whose "role as instructor concerning this bondage" is affirmed in the second half of the *shahadah* (confession of faith): "Muhammad is the Messenger of God."¹¹⁰

A truly Islamic society can only be established according to the tenets of the *shariah* which alone can guarantee freedom and justice to all believers. "As long as there is a group of people legislating for others, equality and absolute dignity cannot be realized." In the final analysis Lordship must belong solely to God.¹¹¹

The *shariah* is not restricted to legal injunctions or to principles of government. "The *shariah* of God means everything that God has decreed to organize human life. This includes the principles of faith, the principles of the administration of justice, the principles of morality and human behavior as well as the principles of knowledge." It also includes instructions concerning all social, economic, political, ethical, intellectual, as well as aesthetic aspects of life.¹¹²

It should be noted that the ideologies of the Islamic revolutionary groups in Egypt, al-jamaat al-Islamiyyah, have been inspired by Qutb's writings. The polemics by and against the most famous among them, al-Jamaah al-Muminah, nicknamed Ahl al-Takfir wa-al-Hijrah is full of references to *hakimiyyah*, *jahiliyyah*, *jihad*, *hijrah*, and *jamaah*. It highlights the necessity of absolute commitment to the way of God superseding any kinship allegiances.¹¹³

Manhaj

Thus for Qutb, the Quran and the experience of the first Islamic community under the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina provide the Muslims with guidelines for the present as well as the future. This Islamic *manhaj* (process, method) as well as the content of the faith cannot be separated. They were revealed not only to transform perceptions and ideological commitments, they were to provide the means by which God's nation can be built in the world. This method is authentic.

It is not the product of a special period, environment or a particular situation relevant to the development of the first Muslim *jamaah*. It is the method without which this religion cannot be established at any time. . . . It is a divine program which by its nature invalidates all human systems which are [innately] deficient.¹¹⁴

This Islamic *manhaj* can be divided into four phases. The first phase is the one in which the *jamaah* is formed.

The second phase is one in which the *jamaah* becomes persecuted for its faith. Its summons to the *jahili* system in which it lives to turn to the way of God, elicit a reaction of *zulm* (oppression). This leads to a detachment from the system. This soon precipitates into an awareness that "there are two parties in all the world: the Party of God and the Party of Satan. The Party of God which stands under the banner of God and bears his insignia and the Party of Satan which includes every community, group, people, race and individual who do not stand under the banner of God."¹¹⁵

The third phase is the *hijrah*, the conscious separation from the *jahili* system, a period for the integration of the *jamaah* into an organic unity, based on mutual support and brotherhood. During this period the group is strengthened through additional consciousness raising.

The final stage is that of victory and consolidation of power. Its proof is the conquest of Mecca and its restoration to Islam. Thus Islam is realized as a new vision for life, humanity, and society. It affirms the sovereignty of God implementing a new political order, one governed by the will of God.¹¹⁶ God himself grants and consolidates the victory.

ISLAM AND GOVERNMENT

Islam must have control of the government in order to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth as well as provide guidance in matters of public policy and must seek to implement its vision and values.

The governments based on the ideology of Arab nationalism have failed.¹¹⁷ This was due mainly to the apeing of European institutions by attempting to separate religion from society with the total disregard of the fact that Europe had no other alternative since Christianity failed to provide adequate legislation for everyday life. It concentrated its efforts exclusively on spiritual matters, faith and prayer. Islam, on the other hand, is aware that an ideology cannot be realized in life unless it is embodied in a specific social system and is transformed into laws that govern life and organize its changing relationships.¹¹⁸

Political leaders in the Arab world, Qutb believes, have been aided by professional religious men who sanctioned and perpetuated the ideas of Arab nationalism. Such religious men are the enemies of Islamic government because they are aware that Islam has no professional clergy. "If Islam were to rule, the first act would be to banish the indolent who do not work" but make "a living in the name of religion."¹¹⁹

As for those "whose spirit is colonized by Europe and America" and who claim that it is reactionary and old-fashioned to establish a nation on the basis of religion, Qutb offered the example of Israel as a nation "founded on religion—and religion alone—Judaism is not a nationality but a religion. It includes the Russian, the German, the Pole, the American, the Egyptian and the Yemeni . . . everybody and his brother on the face of the earth, of all nationalities," yet it is supported by the British, funded by the Americans, and accepted by the Russians.¹²⁰

Thus for Qutb, given the example of Israel, Western objection to the formation of an Islamic government in the Arab world is not based on the objection to a nation based on religion per se; rather, it stems from the inadequacy of Christianity for such a task and the fear of Islamic success. "It is inevitable that Islam must govern because it is the only positive, constructive ideology which formulates from Christianity and communism a perfect mixture which encompasses all their goals adding balance, integration, and equilibrium."¹²¹

In all of his writings, Qutb did not offer any specifics about the form of an Islamic state. He emphasized that it must be democratic based on the Quranic principle of *shura* (consultation) (S. 3:159). However, since the *shariah* did not specify a particular method—whether that was to be the opinion of all Muslims or that of the informed leadership—he left the method of arriving at such a consensus to be determined by the needs of the age. The principle that Muslims should participate in managing their affairs is inviolable.¹²²

As for the ruler, he receives his power and authority from "one source, the will of the governed." His role is not to legislate or improvise new ways of government; rather he is restricted to the "supervision of the administration of the *shari'ah*." Only then is he to be obeyed. That is a covenant with those governed—obedience contingent on the faithfulness of the governor to the *shari'ah*. If he deviates, their duty of obedience ceases. The Quran insists that anyone who does not govern by God's revelation is a *kafr* (S. 5:44) to be disobeyed and fought by committed Muslims.¹²³

In this manner Islam guarantees individual dignity by ascribing governance to God. He is the master and the only ruler. He alone legislates. There can be no other despot since all men, ruler and ruled, are equal before Him. Thus a nation based on religious law grants complete freedom from all bondage on earth.¹²⁴

Equity in the Islamic state is not limited to the political sphere. It operates on all levels and aspects of human relations. While offering no specific blueprint, Qutb insists that Islam provides for a comprehensive social system that guarantees the means of earning a livelihood to each person.¹²⁵ He affirms that Islam is for private property; however it places limits on the means of accruing wealth. It prohibits gambling, usury, deceit, hoarding, and monopolizing of resources.¹²⁶ Capital in Islam should not be restricted to the rich. The right of ownership of personal property is tempered by the right of the Islamic government to redistribute wealth according to the needs of the time. Thus if it appears to be in the public interest and in order to establish justice, the government may appropriate from the rich not only their profits but part of their capital. Furthermore, Islam insists that natural resources such as "fire, grass and water" must be in the domain of public ownership.¹²⁷

Qutb affirmed that Islam also employs two means for recycling wealth. For him, *zakat* is not a benevolence; it is a tithe that assures that the poor participate in the bounty of the rich. The other instrument utilized is the principle of "where did you acquire this?" which places the onus on the rich to justify that what they possess was acquired through legitimate means; otherwise, it is subject to confiscation and redistribution.¹²⁸

Qutb spells out in one of his books what can be categorized as the Islamic work ethic.

Islam is the enemy of idleness that proceeds from the accumulation of wealth. There is no recompense except for effort and no wages except for work. Those who are indolent who do not work, their wealth is unlawful. The government must utilize that wealth for the benefit of society and must not keep it for the lazy unemployed. Islam is the enemy of idleness that proceeds from laziness, the love of lowliness, making a living through the easiest means such as begging. It warns those who beg and are capable [of work] that on the Day of Judgment they will

have no flesh on their faces! Islam is the enemy of idleness in the name of worship and religion. Worship is not an occupation of life. It has but its appointed time. The Quran says: When the Salat [daily ritual prayer] is done, disperse in the earth and seek the benefit of God.

The expending of life in hymn singing and praying with no beneficial employment that enhances life is not Islamic.

If matters were in the hand of Islam it would enlist all men to work. If they can't find employment the government will provide it for them. The right to work is like the right to eat.¹²⁹

CONCLUSION

In his writings on the nature, function and mission of Islam, Sayyid Qutb appears to have passed through several stages in which he became progressively radicalized. His ideas generally reflect a growing frustration with the inability of the nationalist governments to produce a comprehensive change in the social, political, and economic environment of Egypt that would be of benefit to all Egyptians. His various experiences and concerns precipitated in an intellectual journey that began by endorsing a liberal secularism, passing through a moderate transitional period, and culminating in the advocacy of Islam as revolutionism that seeks to eradicate all existent systems and to replace them with an Islamic order.

His starting point was his deep conviction that Western society (in its capitalist and Marxist versions) has failed to provide for the welfare and dignity of humanity. This precipitated the inward search for an authentic alternative that would put an end to the bewilderment and confusion that plagued the contemporary Arabs. The answer he found was in the Islamic tradition: the Islamic alternative was proposed as a response to the categorical claims of both East and West of the sole possession of truth and the insistence that all people must subscribe to one or the other system.

Qutb believed that the collapse of the West was inevitable because it was based on ideas and principles of human origin and therefore founded on misconceptions, errors, and considerations of self-interest. As such, Western systems are diametrically opposed to the Islamic foundation of life grounded in the revelation of God. By separating the social dimension from the fundamentals of religion, Western society became an enemy of the religious perception of being. Thus for Muslims to emulate social, political, or economic patterns of European society is an apostasy.¹³⁰

Recognizing the appeal of Marxist thought to the poor and the dispossessed, Qutb consciously set out to design an Islamic vision that would supersede it. The Quranic verses that he highlighted projected an Islamic worldview that

accepted the struggle between a variety of social forces as a given. While realizing that oppressive forces are active in the world and must be combatted by the believers, the Quran saw it as a struggle between the Party of God and the Party of Satan. Communism failed to see that the underlying conflict in the world is not economic but spiritual in nature. The arena of the struggle is not over the possession and monopoly of wealth, but for the heart, soul, allegiance, and commitment of human beings.

In this, religion is not the opium of the people utilized to reflect the ideas of those in power, justifying and legitimizing their position; rather it is the active ingredient that alters the consciousness of the individual who becomes a transformer of society.

From this vantage point, Islam, as the divine revelation, must organize all aspects of life; and every committed Muslim is charged with the task of summing the world to the truth. This is the way of God which has been made manifest in the lives of the prophets. Muslims must pattern their lives according to this precedent. This ensures that the method used for the rebirth of the dynamic Islamic society follows the model in which God has consistently functioned, manifesting Himself in history. Those who seek to propagate Islam in the world must aspire to purity and constancy of commitment; there can be no compromise in the hope of gaining some transitory advantage. They should reject anything that is un-Quranic. A period of separation (*hijrah*) for consciousness raising, nurture, growth, and strength is necessary for both the individual and the group. Finally, persistence and patience will prevail if men but streamline their work with the laws of nature which is the divine order that governs the world.

Notes

1. His book *hadha al-Din* has been translated into Urdu, German, and Swahili: *al-Mustaqbal li-Hadha al-Din* into Turkish, and *Maalim fi al-Tariq* appeared in two French translations. Those available in English include: *This Religion of Islam, Islam the Religion of the Future, Milestones, Islam and the Universal Peace, Social Justice in Islam, and In the Shade of the Quran*, vol. 30.
2. Sayyid Qutb dedicated his *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi-al-Quran* (Cairo: Dar al-Maarif, 1963) to his mother. In the introduction he relates that his abiding vision was of her sitting listening with visible pleasure to Quran recitation on the radio or during the recitations she sponsored at home (p. 5). His *Mashahid al-Qiyama fi-al-Quran* (Cairo: Dar al-Shurug, 1947) is dedicated to his father of whom he writes, "You planted in my consciousness while I was a small child—the fear of the Last Day. You did not preach to me, nor did you reprimand me, but you lived an awareness of the Last Day." The image

that persisted of his father was when each night after finishing supper he recited the first sura of the Quran and dedicated it to his departed parents in the hereafter (p. 5).

3. For a complete list see Mahdi Fadlallah, *Maa Sayyid Qutb fi Fikrihi alsiyasi wa-al-Dini* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah, 1978), pp. 57–61. Fadlallah divides them into several categories: (a) works of literary criticism—*Muhimmat al-shair fi-al-Hayat*, *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Quran*, *Mashahid al-Qiyamah fi al-Quran*, *Al-Naqd al-Adabi: Usuluhu wa-Manahijuhu*, *Naqd Kitab Mustaqbal al-Thaqafah fi Misr*; (b) novels—*Tiff min al-Qaryah, Al-Atyaf al-Arbaa, Ashawk* (co-author), *al-Madina al-Mashurah*; (c) education (allco-authored)—*al-Qasas al-Dini, al-Jadid fi al-Lughatu al-Arabiyyah, al-Jadid fi al-Mahfuzat, Rawdat al-Tifi*; (d) religious—*al-Adalah al-Ijtima'iyyah fi al-Islam, Maarakat al-Islam wa-al-Rasmaliyyah, al-Salam al-Alami wa-al-Islam, Nahwa Mujtama Islami, Fi Zilal al-Quran, Khasais al-Tasawwur al-Islami, al-Islam wa Mushkilat al-Hadarah, Dirasat Islamiyyah, Hadha al-Din, Al-Mustaqbal li-Hadha al-Din*, and *Maalim fi al-Tariq*. Several collections of his essays have appeared posthumously including: *Tafsir surat al-Shurah, Tafsir Ayat al-Riba, Qissat al-Dawwah, Maarakatuna Maa al-Yahud, Islam Aw La Islam, Fi al-Tarikh Fikratun wa-Manhaj*, and *Afrod al-Rub*. Other books announced but not published include: *Hulm al Fajr, Qafilat al-Raqiq, Lahazat maa al-Khalidin*, and *Amerika allati Raayt*.

4. Numerous articles in such magazines as *al-Liwa al-Jadid, al-Dawwah, Majallat al-Shihab, Majallat al-Azhar*, and *Majallat al-Iman*.

5. Fadlallah, *Maa Sayyid Qutb*, p. 44. He reportedly suffered from ailments in his stomach and lungs, among others.

6. Sayyid Qutb, *Maarakat al-Islam wa-al-Rasmaliyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Shurug, 1975 (4th printing)), p. 36.

7. *Maarakat*, pp. 34–38.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

10. Sayyid Qutb, *Nahwa Mujtama Islami* (Beirut: Dar al-Shurug, 1975 (2nd printing), pp. 47, 50, 64.

11. *Maarakat*, pp. 67–68.

12. Sayyid Qutb, *Maalim fi al-Tariq* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1964) (English translation: *Milestones*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Unity Publishing Company, n.d.).

13. *Maarakat*, p. 29.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11

17. *Ibid* p. 11

18. *Ibid.*, p. 21

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26

21. *Fadlallah*, p. 91.

22. Sayyid Qutb, *Khasais al-Tasawwur al-Islami wa-muqawwamatuhu* (Cairo: Issa al-Babi al-Halabi wa-Shurakauhu, 1962), p. 45.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-10.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
 46. The Nature of the Islamic method . . . is the insistence on the establishment of the kingdom (*mamlakat*) of God on earth and to bring all humanity from the worship of created things to the worship of God alone." *Fi Zilal al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1973-74) vol. 10, p. 117.
 47. *Maalim*, p. 226.
 48. Sayyid Qutb, *Hadha al-Din* (Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1962), p. 19ff.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 52. *Maalim*, p. 196.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6.
 54. Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1433.
 55. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 128-9.
 56. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 108.
 57. *Maalim*, pp. 82-3; cf. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1434.
 58. *Maalim*, p. 81; cf. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1433.
 59. *Maalim*, p. 90; cf. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1436.
 60. *Maalim*, p. 93.
 61. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 10, p. 1544.
 62. *Maalim*, p. 173.
 63. *Fi Zilal*, p. 1435.
 64. *Ibid.*, p. 1435.
 65. Sayyid Qutb, *al-Salaam al-Alami wa-al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1974), p. 174.
 66. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1434.
 67. *al-Salaam*, p. 172.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 69. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 70. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.
 71. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
 72. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
 74. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 9, p. 1444.
 75. *Maalim*, p. 78.
 76. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 10, p. 1634.
 77. *Maalim*, p. 112.
 78. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
 80. *Hadha al-Din*, p. 93.
 81. *Maalim*, p. 9.
 82. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 83. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
 84. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
 85. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
 86. *Ibid.*, 248.
 87. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
 88. *Hadha al-Din*, p. 34.
 89. *Maalim*, p. 63; cf. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 10, p. 1556.
 90. *Maalim*, p. 24.
 91. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-21.
 92. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-3; see also Yvonne Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 89-96, 162-68.
 93. *Maalim*, pp. 125-28.
 94. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
 95. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
 96. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
 97. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 98. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
 99. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 100. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.
 101. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
 102. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
 103. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 104. *Fi Zilal*, vol. 10, p. 1560.
 105. *Ibid.*, p. 1556.
 106. *Ibid.*, p. 1560.
 107. *Hadha al-Din*, p. 33.
 108. *Maalim*, p. 28.
 109. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
 110. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
 111. *al-Salaam*, p. 63.
 112. *Maalim*, pp. 166-67.
 113. Qutb insisted that Islam does not demand that the Muslim refrain from having relations with relatives; however, it warns against any human relationship becoming dominant in the life of the individual at the expense of his undeviating commitment to God (*Fi Zilal*, vol. 10, p. 1615). For further information on the relation of the group to Sayyid Qutb see Yvonne Haddad, "The Quranic Justification for an Islamic Revolution," *The Middle East Journal*, 37:1 (Jan. 1982): 18. See also Salim Ali al-Bahnasawi, *al-Hukm*

- wa-Qadhiyyat Takfir al-Muslimin* (Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, 1977) and Hasan Ismail al-Hudaybi, *Du'at la Qudat* (Cairo: Dar al-Tibaah wa-al-Nashr al-Islamiyyah, 1977).
114. *Maalim*, p. 54.
 115. *Haadha al-Din*, p. 84.
 116. *Fi Zilal*, Vol. 10, p. 1522.
 117. *Maalim*, p. 59.
 118. *Maarakat*, p. 55.
 119. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
 120. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
 121. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 122. *al-Salaam*, p. 123; *Maarakat*, p. 72.
 123. *Maarakat*, pp. 73-74; *al-Salaam*, p. 123.
 124. *al-Salaam*, p. 63.
 125. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 126. *Maarakat*, p. 40.
 127. *al-Salaam*, p. 144.
 128. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 129. *Maarakat*, p. 52.
 130. *Maalim*, p. 181.