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Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*,
 But Couldn't Be Bothered to Find Out

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INTRO

Who is Sayyid Qutb, and what's so special about his book *Milestones*, aka *Signposts*?



Qutb (1906-1966) was an Egyptian government bureaucrat, author, literary critic and finally an Islamic political leader, but is most famous as an Islamist theoretician. He grew up in British-occupied Egypt and was imprisoned and executed in Nasser's independent Egypt. Though he came from a pious rural background, he studied Western literature extensively and wrote literary criticism as well as poetry, short stories and articles. Qutb spent two years in America (which he loathed) and came back a determined fundamentalist. He became one of the leading members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the first and largest mass Islamist group. After the Brotherhood fell out with the ruling Arab nationalists in Egypt and an attempt was made on the life of president Gamal Abdul Nasser, the nationalists' leader, Qutb was imprisoned. 10 years later, accused of another plot against the government, he was hanged. [1]

Qutb wrote many books, but his most famous and widely read by far is *Milestones*, generally considered one of, if not the most influential Islamist tract ever written. *Milestones (Ma'alim 'ala Al-Tariq)*, was an immediate best seller and is said to have been published in close to 2,000 editions [2]

At the time of writing it was also available in full text on at least two websites:

http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/index_2.asp
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27alim_fi-l-Tariq

Some accolades for *Milestones* and Qutb's influence:

... regarded as the father of modern fundamentalism and described by his (Arab) biographer as "the most famous personality of the Muslim world in the second half of the 20th century," Qutb was the most influential advocate in modern times of jihad, or Islamic holy war, and the chief developer of doctrines that legitimise violent Muslim resistance to regimes that claim to be Muslim, but whose implementation of Islamic precepts is judged to be imperfect....

["Is This the Man Who Inspired Bin Laden?" Robert Irwin, *Guardian*, November 1, 2001](#)

The essential charter of the jihad movement -- its *Mein Kampf* -- is Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*...

["Truly, madly, deeply devout," Jonathan Raban, *Guardian*, March 2, 2002](#)

And lest anyone think such testimonials come only from non-Islamists, here's an Islamist British convert to Islam, Hamid Algar, writing before 9/11:

Sayyid Qutb ... some 28 years after his death is *still the most influential ideologue of the Islamic movement in the contemporary Arab world ... Ma'alim fi 'l-Tariq [Milestones]* must definitely count among the historic documents of the contemporary Islamic movement. [3]

What's this book like?

One of the most common English language editions of *Milestones* (and the one from which quotes and page numbers on this FAQ come from) was published by The Mother Mosque Foundation in 1981. It looks like an oversized pamphlet. It's full of typos and has no index, no notes, no introduction to tell you who the author is, or even when the book was first published. As for the content, non-Islamists (and in fact most everyone) will find *Milestones* badly in need of an editor, alternately repeating some points over and over while skipping over others that beg to be explained further. Marxist author Tariq Ali assessed it "repetitive, banal, uninspiring." No doubt this is in part because *Milestones* was written in prison and smuggled out, and also because it was written for the "vanguard" of the revival of Islam rather than average Muslims (never mind non-Muslims). Be that as it may, although only 160 pages, non-Islamist readers may find it the lonnnnggggest 160 pages they've ever read.

Why was this FAQ created?

Influential and compact as it is, *Milestones* is in some ways the ideal place to begin learning about

radical Islam. And if in fact it is "the *Mein Kampf*" of the al Qaeda, it may not only be interesting but rather important to understand. Just as Radical Islamists were able to plan and carry out terror attacks because of their familiarity with the West, so too the West may be able to turn the tables and defend itself better by understanding how their would-be murderers and destroyers think. On the other hand, if the portrayal above of Qutb (or more generally the Islamist revival) is slander, as some allege (see below), that also would be important to clear up. The problem is, Qutb's writing is so bad many non-Muslims and non-Islamists won't have the patience to make their way through the whole thing, or through the whole thing carefully. This FAQ, then is an attempt to make *Milestones* easier to understand by breaking it down point-by-point and clarifying it. Such points include the questions:

- Was Qutb an anti-Western fanatic as some of the quotes in the first Answer indicate? Or has the West "chosen to dub" Qutb and the Islamic religious revival in general "as fundamentalist, as fanatic, as anti-Western, as anachronistic, as what not, when nothing could be farther from the truth"? [4] Are followers of Qutb in reality merely pious and proud Muslims who demand respect and sensitivity for their religion and people, but are willing to give the same to others in return?
- When does Qutb think violence is necessary? Is he "careful to emphasize that [jihad] does not necessarily mean the use of violence..."? (["A Fresh look at Sayyid Qutb's Milestones" by Muqtedar Khan](#)) Did he refrain from "invit[ing] people to any clandestine movement" or "instigat[ing] them to violence and destructive activities"? [5]
- When Qutb talks about "complete freedom," "freedom of man from servitude to other men," and "a practical religion" (phrases he uses repeatedly), what does he really mean?
- Can the enemies of Qutb's enemies (e.g. the foes of imperialism and global capitalism) make common cause with followers of Qutb?

QUTB and THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

What does Qutb think of the contemporary Muslim community?

That it doesn't exist. "The Muslim community has long ago vanished from existence." It's "been extinct for a few centuries." How can this be? Well, without the "laws of God," i.e. *Shari'ah* law, Islam does not exist, so today's Muslims, or people who call themselves Muslim, live in not in an Islamic world, but in *Jahiliyyah*, pre-Islamic ignorance.

... the Muslim community has long ago vanished from existence ... we can say that the Muslim community has been extinct for a few centuries, for this Muslim community does not denote the name of a land in which Islam resides, nor is it a people whose forefathers lived under the Islamic system at some earlier time. It is the name of a group of people whose manners, ideas and concepts, rules and regulations, values and criteria, are all derived from the Islamic source. The Muslim community with these characteristics vanished at the moment the laws of God became suspended on earth. [p.9]

Our whole environment, people's beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws -- is *Jahiliyyah*, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought are also constructs of *Jahiliyyah*! [p.20]

What exactly is wrong with "*Jahiliyyah*" society?

Everything.

Jahiliyyah is everywhere:

The whole world is steeped in *Jahiliyyah*... [p.10-11]

Jahiliyyah is evil and corrupt, whether it be of the ancient or modern variety. [p.132]

We must ... free ourselves from the clutches of *jahili* society, *jahili* concepts, *jahili* traditions and *jahili* leadership.. [p.21]

No compromise with it is tolerable:

We will not change our own values and concepts either more or less to make a bargain with this *jahili* society. Never! [p.21]

A live-and-let-live co-existence with it is unthinkable:

Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half-Islam and half-*Jahiliyyah* ... The mixing and co-existence of the truth and falsehood is impossible. [p.130]

But if Muslims pray, fast, give alms, go on Hajj, proclaim that there is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet, how can they be ignorant pagans (i.e. *Jahili*)?

Anyone who does not obey traditional *Shari'ah*, or "God's rule on earth," is by (Qutb's) definition not a Muslim. The problem with these "*jahili*" Muslims is

not that they believe in other deities besides God or because they worship anyone other than God, but [that] their way of life is not based on submission to God alone. Although they believe in the Unity of God, still they have relegated the legislative attribute of God to others and submit to this authority. [p.82]

And "accepting the sovereignty of others besides God," (the others in question being human beings), is *shirk*, (polytheism). [p.45] You may not think you are worshiping priests or presidents when you obey the regulations or laws legislated by their governance, but you are.

The Prophet - peace be on him - clearly stated that, according to the *Shari'ah*, 'to obey' is 'to worship'. ... Anyone who serves someone other than God in this sense is outside God's religion, although he may claim to profess this religion. [p.60]

"Obedience to the *Shari'ah*, of God, is" not just as important as the five pillars; it is "even more necessary than the establishment of the Islamic belief" (p.89) in making a Muslim a Muslim. Thus (as noted above),

... the Muslim community ... vanished ... the moment the laws of God became suspended on earth... [p.9]

Where does Qutb think the *Umma* (Muslim community) went wrong?

In deviating from the model for Muslims -- the original "Companions of the Prophet."

If Islam is again to play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form. [p.9]

Unlike Muslims of today, the companions isolated themselves from the *Jahiliyyah* learning and culture of non-Muslims and looked to the Qur'an for orders to obey, not as information or solutions to problems. Specifically, the Companions ...

- Avoided any contamination from non-Islamic culture or learning -- Greek, Roman, Persian, Christian or Jewish logic, art, poetry, etc., -- i.e. anything other than the Qur'an. "The spring from which the Companions of the Prophet (p) drank was the Quran, only the Quran... (p.16)
- Read the Qur'an as orders to be followed ("what the Almighty Creator had prescribed for him"), as a source of "instruction for obedience and action" (p.21), and not "for the sake of discussion, learning and information" or "to solve some scientific or legal problem." (p.17-18)
- "Cut [themselves] off from *Jahiliyyah*," i.e. the rest of the world, and "separating [them]selves completely from [their] past life," a life of "ignorance of the Divine Law." They renounced "the *Jahili* environment, its customs and traditions, its ideas and concepts." (p.19-20)

Qutb later contradicts this first prescription, declaring it OK to study some Western knowledge ...

chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, medicine, industry, agriculture, administration (limited to its technical aspects), technology, military arts... [p.109]

although not others:

principles of economics and political affairs and interpretation of historical processes ... origin of the universe, the origin of the life of man ... philosophy, comparative religion ... sociology (excluding statistics and observations) ... Darwinist biology ([which] goes beyond the scope of its observations, without any rhyme or reason and only for the sake of expressing an opinion ...). [p.108-110]

QUTB AND SHARI'AH LAW, THE ISLAMIC VANGUARD, SLAVERY

What is so special about the *Shari'ah*, or "God's rule on earth," that it is indispensable to Islam?

Because the *Shari'ah* is God's law, it brings "total harmony between human life and the law of the universe." It "is the only guarantee against any kind of discord in life" -- whether mental or physical. It brings both "peace of mind" and "peace and cooperation among individuals". (p.90)

Shari'ah is also a part of that universal law which governs the entire universe, including the physical and biological aspects of man. Each word of God, whether it is an injunction or a prohibition, a promise or an admonition, a rule or guidance, is a part of the universal law and is as accurate and true as any of the laws known as the `laws of nature`... [p.88]

and thus can no more be denied than the laws of gravity or nuclear physics.

Shari'ah is so wonderful it achieves the "results" of heaven (though not absolutely perfectly) right here on earth.

... when harmony between human life and the universe ensues, its results are not postponed for the next life but are operative even in this world. However, they will reach their perfection in the Hereafter. [p.91]

The *Shari'ah* is not just a legal code but everything legislated by God, from "belief" to "administration and justice" to "principles of art and science." (p.107)

So if lack of *Shari'ah* is the cause of the demise of true Islam and the Muslim community, how does Qutb propose to reestablish *Shari'ah*?

Well, of course, through preaching to persuade people of the *Shari'ah's* necessity, but

the abolition of man-made laws cannot be achieved only

through preaching. Those who have usurped the authority of God and are oppressing God's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching. [p.59]

So in addition "the movement" is needed.

If through `preaching` beliefs and ideas are confronted, through `the movement` material obstacles are tackled. Foremost among these [material obstacles] is that political power which rests on a complex yet interrelated ideological, racial, class, social and economic support ... For the achievement of the freedom of man on earth -- of all mankind throughout the earth -- it is necessary that these two methods should work side by side. This is a very important point and cannot be overemphasized. [p.59]

Material obstacles is also described as "the political system of the state, the socio-economic system based on races and classes, and behind all these, the military power of the government." (p.63) Later on he expands the list of the "many practical obstacles in establishing God's rule on earth" to include not just "the power of the state, the social system and traditions" but "in general, the whole human environment." (p.72)

So how will these "material obstacles" in the way of *Shari'ah* be removed?

Through force.

This movement uses ... physical power and *Jihaad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways [i.e. what they want to do] and make them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord. [p.55]

`There is no compulsion in religion;` but when the above mentioned obstacles and practical difficulties

i.e. the political system of the state, the socio-economic system and behind all these, the military power of the government (not to mention "the whole human environment")

are put in [Islam's] way, it has no recourse but to remove them by force so that when it is addressed to peoples' hearts and minds they are free to accept or reject it with an open mind. [p.63, 72]

Who will do this forceful removing of the "organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system ... the whole human environment"?

The Islamic vanguard for whom *Milestones* is written.

How is it possible to start the task of reviving Islam? It is necessary that there should be a vanguard which sets out ... and keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of *Jahiliyyah* which has encompassed the entire world.
[p.12]

The Islamic society is born out of a [vanguard] movement ... the origin of this movement [is the faith of] a single individual ... As soon as this single individual believes in this faith, the Islamic community comes into existence (potentially). When the number of Believers reaches three, then this faith tells them, `Now you are a community, a distinct Islamic community, distinct from that *Jahili* society ...

These three individuals increase to ten, the ten to a hundred, the hundred to a thousand, and the thousand increase to twelve thousand[p.101-3]

Because

Jahiliyyah is all around him, and its residual influences in his mind and in the minds of those around him, ... every individual of this society must move!

To separate themselves from insidious *Jahiliyyah* against which

... the struggle goes on and the *Jihaad* continues until the Day of Resurrection. [p.101-3]

Will the vanguard force others to accept the *Shari'ah*?

Qutb is ambiguous on this point. On the one hand Qutb calls for waiting and delaying the legislation of the *Shari'ah* until people are "ready" and have accepted Islam.

The course prescribed by God for this religion is ... first, belief ought to be imprinted on hearts and rule over consciences -- that belief which demands that people should not bow before anyone except God or derive laws from any other source. Then, when such a group of people is ready and also gains practical control of society, various laws will be legislated according to the practical needs of that society.
[p.35]

On the other hand Qutb also indicates that some things can't wait for belief to be imprinted. Islam gives people

complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs ... However this freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings, making some men lords over others. [p.61]

("Making some men lords over others," he explains, is the practice of Jews and Christians of "obeying laws which were made by ... priests and rabbis" and is "not permitted by God." (p.82))

How, specifically, does divine law or *Shari'ah* differ from current man-made law? Aren't the punishments of the *Shari'ah* rather severe - thieves hands cut off, drinkers lashed, and adulterers stoned?

Curiously for someone describing *Shari'ah* as the solution to all problems of humanity, social or individual, Qutb never gives any examples of how particular pieces of "divine" legislation are superior to equivalent kinds of "man-made" law. Laws against fornication and drinking liquor, the wrongness of charging interest on loans and "free mixing of the sexes" are mentioned only in passing. Presumably he thought his other works explained it well enough or that his audience already knew enough about it.

Qutb does make it clear *Shari'ah* does not give a lot of leeway in what people can do...

Its system extends into all aspects of life; it discusses all minor or major affairs of mankind; it orders man's life ... people should devote their entire lives in submission to God, should not decide any affair on their own, but must refer to God's injunctions concerning it and follow them. [p.32, 47]

As for the severity of *Shari'ah*, Qutb claims that (almost all) people will just naturally want to obey God's laws, so there will be very little "occasion" to punish wrongdoers. Qutb's goal is to restore the "Muslim community ... to its original form." (p.9) Back then ...

... justice was God's justice ... Morals were elevated, hearts and souls were purified, and with the exception of a very few cases, there was no occasion even to enforce the limits and punishments which God has prescribed; for now conscience was the law-enforcer, and the pleasure of God, the hope of Divine reward, and the fear of God's anger took the place of police and punishments. [p.9, 30]

But isn't it true that Qutb emphasized the "practical" nature of Islam and the importance of the *Shari'ah* serving the needs of the Muslim community?

According to one of Qutb's defenders...

... The most remarkable aspect of Qutb's book is his insistence on an approach in 'stages' and the repeated assertion that the need for implementing Islamic law would not arise until

every member of the community had completely submitted to the sovereignty of Allah and by that agreed to live under Allah's laws. Laws would then be framed merely to serve the needs of this 'living community of Islam'. A far cry from the perception that a handful of Islamists are out to impose an essentialized *Shari'ah* on all Muslims and non-Muslims living in Muslim lands...) ["A Fresh look at Sayyid Qutb's Milestones" by Muqtedar Khan](#)

Qutb describe the *Shari'ah* in what seems like two contradictory ways:

- 1) As a "practical religion" with "general laws" or "a method for legislation," patiently waiting to find a "viable society" of true Muslims, whose social needs, the *Shari'ah* then pliantly "satisf[ies]" by shaping itself "according to the practical needs" and "actual conditions" of the society. (p.34-35)
- 2) "Uniform law" of utter perfection beyond human comprehension. "As accurate and true as any of the laws known as the `laws of nature,`" and from which a human being "cannot deviate by a hair's breath," let alone mold or shape. (p.89)

Here's the first: Islam

first looks at the prevailing conditions, and if it finds a viable society which, according to its form, conditions or temperament, is a Muslim society, which has submitted itself to the law of God and is weary of laws emanating from other sources, then indeed this religion provides a method for the legislation of laws according to the needs of such a society. [p.34]

After everyone has become a good Muslim

then, when such a group of people is ready and also gains practical control of society, various laws will be legislated according to the practical needs of that society. [p.35]

Here's the second:

Man cannot understand all the laws of the universe, nor can he comprehend the unity of this system; he cannot even understand the laws which govern his own person, from which he cannot deviate by a hair's breath. Thus he is incapable of making laws for a system of life which can be in complete harmony with the universe or which can even harmonize his physical need with his external behavior. This capability belongs solely to the Creator of the universe and of men, Who not only controls the universe but also human affairs, and Who implements a uniform law according to His will [p.89]

... that uniform law being the *Shari'ah*.

How can people legislate "according" to their "needs" and at the same time be "incapable of making laws for a [harmonious] system of life"?

The confusion may stem from what "practical" means. Most Westerners will assume it means pragmatic

as opposed to doctrinaire -- using what works and throwing out what doesn't. But when Qutb says: "This is a practical religion; it has come to order the practical affairs of life," (p.33) he's contrasting it not with inflexible doctrine, but with "abstractions and theories" (p.34) that aren't enforced in real life. Since God's laws are harmonious, perfect, quasi-heavenly, questioning whether or not they will serve "the practical needs" of society isn't being practical it's being blasphemous. How could they not? God would never allow it!

So while saying that "various laws will be legislated according to the practical needs of that society" sounds to Westerners as though *people* will be legislating the laws, writing (and rewriting) them to get it right, it may be Qutb's use of the future tense is misleading. Islamic Legislation has already been done -- by God. As he says elsewhere, "Legislation is a Divine attribute; any person who concedes this right to such a claimant [like a national parliament, state legislature, city council], whether he considers [the claimant] Divine or not, has accepted [the claimant] as Divine." (p.75)

If Qutb didn't make clear the specifics of divine law or *Shari'ah*, what have his followers said or done about instituting *Shari'ah*?

In the last few decades following Qutb's death, the "vanguard" Islamic societies that he talked about have sprouted up in his home country Egypt and provided a number of examples of their own *Shari'ah* `rule.` At Cairo University, for example an Islamist *Jama'at Islamiyya* group created a *Shari'ah* Muslim community and shut down theater, poetry readings, cinema, and music programs on the grounds that they brought men and women together and distracted people from religious activities...

... couples were physically attacked for violations of upright Islamic morals; films could not be shown; concerts and evening dance could not be held ... All artistic and cinematic exhibitions were considered `provocations against the *jama'at*`

... which were shut down by Islamists wielding iron bars. [6]

So when Islamists in Cairo had to chose between Qutb's contradictory admonishments -- "remove" the "obstacles" of *jahili* society "by force," or wait until "society" was "ready" for true Islam -- they chose the former.

Slavery existed in the early Muslim society Qutb so admired, though it was more humanely regulated than in other societies. Qutb didn't plan to bring that back, did he?

This opens an interesting question. In *Milestones*, Qutb says nothing about slavery, its history or its legality in Islam past or present. He does enthuse about how

When Islam entered the central part of Africa, it clothed naked human beings, socialized them, brought them out of the deep recesses of isolation, and taught them the joy of work for exploring (sic) material resources. [p.105]

He doesn't say when this happened or which Africans these were, but ironically the most famous case of Africans "brought" out of their "isolated" homeland by Muslims and "taught" to "explore" for "material resources" were zanj slaves who worked in mines. This system was famous because unlike domestic or

military slavery in Islamic lands, it was *not* in any way benevolent or enlightened. For example, reports of conditions in the Saharan salt mines are that no slave survived working in the mines for more than five years.

Zanj slaves used to drain the salt flats of southern Iraq, and the blacks employed in the salt mines of the Sahara and the gold mines of Nubia. These were herded in large settlements and worked in gangs. Large landowners, or crown lands, often employed thousands of such slaves. While domestic and commercial slaves were relatively well-off, these lived and died in wretchedness. Of the Saharan salt mines it is said that no slave lived there for more than five years ... [7]

Other Zanj slaves working in the Tigris and Euphrates river valley of present day Iraq have gone down in history for a huge revolt in 868-69 AD (255 Hijra). Zanj there were discontented enough to stage a rebellion that lasted over 10 years. 300,000 died when the rebels sacked and burnt Basra. [8]

It's fair to say most Muslims think slavery was acceptable at that time, but no longer. Qutb's silence on the issue and his praise of what sounds like it might be a particularly nasty form of slavery, raises the question of whether he thought the education of Africans in "the joy of work" by early Muslim slave masters is an example of why the Muslim community should be "restored to its original form"! (p.9)

I'm starting to have doubts! Qutb talks about the "total harmony" and "peace and cooperation among individuals" and how there were almost no lawbreakers to punish when the Muslim community was in its "original form," but do we really know what it was like back then 1400 years ago? One thing we do know is that three of the four original caliphs - the "rightfully guided caliphs" -- died by assassination! And even if the original *Shari'ah* was wonderful, a lot has changed in the millennium or so since God's law was applied on earth. Perhaps there isn't just one system of *Shari'ah* bestowed by God on humanity. Wouldn't it be better to use a broader approach and consider adding other principles -- like the good of humanity -- as the basis of law? Surely God wouldn't disapprove of that!

Qutb has already given your question some thought!

The question may be asked, `Is not the good of mankind the criterion for solving actual problems?` But again we will raise the question which Islam raises itself, and which it answers: that is, `Do you know better, or God?` and, `God knows and you do not know.`

The good of mankind is inherent in the Divine Laws sent down by God to the Prophet ... If at any time men think that their good is in going against what God has legislated, then first of all, they are deluded in their thinking ... Second, they are unbelievers. It is not possible for a person to declare that in his opinion good lies in going against that which God has legislated, and simultaneously be a follower of this religion ... [p.86]

The punishment levied by the traditional *Shari'ah* against *murtad* (an apostate) like you is death. Better

watch your mouth!

QUTB ON SEX, WOMEN, AND THE FAMILY

What does Qutb think of extramarital sex and gay rights?

He considers tolerance towards homosexuality as gross example of the lack of morality in *Jahili* society.

In all modern *jahili* societies, the meaning of `morality` is limited to such an extent that all those aspects which distinguish man from animal are considered beyond its sphere. In these societies, illegitimate sexual relationships, even homosexuality, are not considered immoral. [p.98]

Qutb mentions the sex and spy scandals in Great Britain of the 1960s (involving Christine Keeler, et. al.), exclaiming that "these affairs are not considered immoral because of sexual deviations, but because of the danger to state secrets!" (p.98)

What does Qutb think of Women's Liberation?

Qutb vehemently opposes the idea of a woman being "freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children" to take a job as "a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company" (common jobs for women back then). This violates the "division of work" between the sexes "based on family responsibility and natural gifts." (p.98)

If ... free sexual relationships and illegitimate children become the basis of a society, and if the relationship between man and woman is based on lust, passion and impulse, and the division of work is not based on family responsibility and natural gifts; if woman's role is merely to be attractive, sexy and flirtatious, and if woman is freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children; and if, on her own or under social demand, she prefers to become a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company, thus spending her ability for material productivity rather than in the training of human beings, because material production is considered to be more important, more valuable and more honorable than the development of human character, then such a civilization is `backward` from the human point of view, or `*Jahili*` in the Islamic terminology. [p.98]

Does Qutb Espouses "Family Values"?

At first it might appear so. He certainly thinks childrearing duties and traditional sex roles leave no room for sexual equality or women's individual fulfillment in careers or sex.

If the family is the basis of the society, and the basis of the family is the division of labor between husband and wife, and the upbringing of children is the most important function of the family, then such a society is indeed civilized
[p.98]

But pre-eminent over the family (like everything else in society) is Islam. Family preservation cannot interfere with the God-given right of divorce, as it does in the West where ...

unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce ... are contrary to the demands of practical life. [p.139]

Islam even replaces the family unit, blood relations.

Islam freed all humanity ... from the chains of blood relationships -- the biological chains -- so that they might rise above the angels. [p.124]

... a Muslim has no relatives except those who share the belief in God ...

A Muslim has no relationship with his mother, father, brother, wife and other family members except through their relationship with the Creator, and then they are also joined through blood. [p.118-119]

Qutb relates as exemplary the story of Abdullah bin Abdullah bin Ubayy, who offered to behead his (anti-Islamic) father, saying

`if it is the pleasure of God and His Prophet that I cut off his head, then I shall do so.` (p.119)

Qutb's contradiction: If "the family is the basis of the society" then "society is indeed civilized." But "blood relationships" are "chains" from which "Islam freed all humanity."

QUTB ON POLITICS: PROGRESSIVE ISLAM, NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM

What does Qutb think of progressive Islam?

Not much. Those who subscribe to what they call "progressive Islam" are not real Muslims.

Islamic society is not one in which people call themselves `Muslims` but in which law has no status; even though prayer, fasting and Hajj are regularly observed; and the Islamic society is not one in which people invent their own version of Islam, other than what God and His Messenger -- peace be

on him -- have prescribed and explained, and call it, for example `progressive Islam.` [p.93]

What does Qutb think of nationalism, e.g. Arab nationalism?

He thinks it an error and a failure.

All nationalistic and chauvinistic ideologies which have appeared in modern times, all the movements and theories derived from them have also lost their vitality. In short, all man-made individual or collective theories have proved to be failures. [p.8]

Qutb offers as proof of the falsity of nationalism the fact that it would have been much easier for the Prophet Muhammad to unite Arabs under a message of Arab nationalism ...

instead of bearing tortures for thirteen years due to the opposition of the people in authority in the peninsula ... But the All-Knowing and All-Wise God did not lead His Prophet -- peace be on him -- on this course The way is not to free the earth from Roman and Persian tyranny in order to replace it with Arab tyranny. All tyranny is wicked! The earth belongs to God and should be purified for God and it cannot be purified for Him unless the banner, `No deity except God,` is unfurled across the earth... [p.26]

What does Qutb think of Democracy?

Very little.

Democracy in the West has become infertile to such an extent that it is borrowing from the systems of the Eastern bloc, especially in the economic system, under the name of socialism. [p.7]

An opinion that has not withstood the test of time! [9]

He also presents as evidence that Christian and Jewish societies are lost to *Jahiliyyah* pagan ignorance the fact that they "have established assemblies of men which have absolute power to legislate laws." (p.82) As Qutb, his Muslim Brethren and their kindred publications all suffered from suppression at the hands of Nasser's dictatorship, you might logically expect Qutb to put in a good word for freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, or self-determination if not free elections. But he makes not mention of any of the principles commonly held to be necessary for some kind of democracy. Qutb does say that

any system, in which the final decisions are referred to human beings, and in which the source of all authority are human,

is doomed to failure because it

deifies human beings by designating others than God as lords over men. This declaration means that the usurped authority of God be returned to Him and the usurpers be thrown out -- those who by themselves devise laws for other to follow, thus elevating themselves to the status of lords and reducing others to the status of slaves. [p.58]

The possibility that regular, open and honest elections might keep human lawmakers servants, rather than lords, of the voters is never mentioned, let alone explored.

How about Capitalism?

Hates it.

the exploitation of individuals and nations due to greed for wealth and imperialism under the capitalist systems are but a corollary of rebellion against God's authority ... [p.11]
Look at this capitalism with its monopolies, its usury and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law... [p.139]

... Socialism then?

Organizing the poor to rise up against the rich and redistribute wealth equitably is also an error, as is the Marxist way of looking at the world. "Declaring war against the class of nobles" who "monopolized all wealth and commerce" and "distributing it among the poor" would have been an effective way for Muhammad to gain authority.

But the All-knowing, the All-Wise God ... knew that this was not the way. He knew that true social justice can come to a society only after all affairs have been submitted to the laws of God... [p.26-7]

Human values and human morals are not something mysterious and undefinable, nor are they `progressive` and changeable, having no roots and stability, as is claimed by the exponent of the materialistic interpretation of history of `scientific socialism.` They are the values and the morals which develop those characteristics in a human being which distinguish him

from the animals and which emphasize those aspects of his personality which raise him above the animals... [p.96]

OK, Qutb is disdainful of Western-style socialism or pluralist liberal democracy, but how about some kind of non-Western Islamic Democracy or Islamic Socialism?

`Islamic Socialism` and `Islamic Democracy` are to Qutb examples of unnecessary (and wrong) attempts by Muslims to meet non-Muslims halfway. Islamic socialism in particular is an intolerable deviation followed only by the "enemies of mankind." Muslims should not "propose similarities" between the Islamic and non-Islamic "system or manners" (such as socialism)

to please them [non-Muslims] as some do today when they present Islam to the people under the names of `Islamic Democracy` or `Islamic Socialism,` or sometimes by saying that the current economic or political or legal systems in the world need not be changed except a little to be acceptable Islamically. [p.134]

He is adamant that there is no compromise to be made on the issue of nationalism and socialism.

Islam ... is the only Divine way of life ... those who deviate from this system and want some other system, whether it be based on nationalism ... class struggle, or similar corrupt theories are truly enemies of mankind! [p.51]

QUTB ON POLITICS: RACIAL EQUALITY and FREEDOM

What Does Qutb think about racism?

Initially he seems to support racial equality. Being dark skinned, Qutb experienced segregation visiting pre-civil rights America. In *Milestones* he talks repeatedly of the need to end race and class divisions in society as was done in the wondrous era of early Islam.

[The original] Islamic society became an open and all-inclusive community in which people of various races, nations, languages and colors were members, there remaining no trace of these low animalistic traits ... Their intermingling gave rise to a high level of civilization in a very short span of time, dazzling the whole world, and compounding the essences of all the human capabilities, ideas and wisdom of that period... [p.49]

Thus they [the early Muslims] all came together on an equal footing in the relationship of love, with their minds set upon a single goal; thus they used their best abilities,

developed the qualities of their race to the fullest. [p.50]

But if Contemporary anti-racists may assume equality is part of inclusiveness, Qutb does not. He was angered by American whites who thought him racially inferior, that doesn't mean he doesn't think others are racially inferior to him. Despite his talk about an "equal footing in the relationship of love," Qutb strongly believes Islam did Africans a favor putting them to work as slaves in dangerous mines (see slavery heading above), apparently thinking this "developed the qualities of their race to the fullest." As for African (or African-American) culture, Qutb wrote elsewhere that the Americans' love of jazz music was one (of many) reasons he detested America ...

Jazz is his preferred music, and it is created by Negroes to satisfy their love of noise and to whet their sexual desires ... [10]

What does Qutb think of freedom?

He's all for it. Phrases about "the freedom of man from servitude to other men," "complete freedom," "freeing human beings throughout the earth," and the need to do away with "one man's lordship over another," run like a mantra through *Milestones*. The words "free," "freeing" and "freedom" appear 56 times by my count in one chapter (chapter four) alone. But like "inclusive," the word "freedom" seems to have a different meaning to Qutb than it does to us. What does he mean by freedom?

- Not freedom of speech, assembly, association, or press -- they are never mentioned.
- Not freedom for Muslims to choose how to live their lives. The Islamic

system extends into all aspects of life; it discusses all minor or major affairs of mankind; it orders man's life ... people should devote their entire lives in submission to God, should not decide any affair on their own, but must refer to God's injunctions concerning it and follow them ... [p.32,47]

- And not freedom for non-Muslims to run their own societies or obey their own religious leaders. Although he's a bit coy, never using words like "conquest," Qutb makes it clear Islam must rule

Whatever system is to be established in the world ought to be on the authority of God, deriving its laws from Him alone [p.61]

Offensive *Jihad* is required of Muslims for

the establishment of the sovereignty of God and His Lordship throughout the world ... and the implementation of the rule of the Divine *Shari'ah* in human affairs [p.61]

The two "freedoms" Qutb talks of are ...

- 1) the replacement of the rule of men with the rule of God (i.e. replacing non-Islamic government or

"servitude to other men" with Islamic government or God's law, the *Shari'ah*); and

When, in a society, the sovereignty belongs to God alone, expressed in its obedience to the Divine Law, only then is every person in that society free from servitude to others, only then does he taste true freedom ... [p.94]

2) the freedom for non-Muslims to accept or reject Islam the religion (though not Islamic authority).

When Islam releases people from this political pressure of ... servitude to other men ... it gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs. [p.61]

Qutb's love of (talking about) freedom is such that even when he is telling us about what will be forbidden he couches it in terms of freedom.

This religion is really a universal declaration of the *freedom* of man from servitude to other men and *from servitude to his own desires*, which is also a form of human servitude. [p.57, italics added]

When Islam releases people from this political pressure of ... servitude to other men ... it gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs. *However this freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings, making some men lords over others.* [p.61, italics added]

This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion ... and it uses physical power and *Jihaad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system which *prevent people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but force them to obey their erroneous ways* and makes them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord. [p.55, italics added][10]

So what political system then does Qutb favor?

"God's rule on earth" -- the *Shari'ah*.

The way to establish God's rule on earth is not that some consecrated people -- the priests -- be given the authority to rule ... To establish God's rule means that His laws be enforced and that the final decision in all affairs be according to these laws. [p.58]

But God is not going to descend to earth to administer His law! Actual human beings will have to do it. How are these judges/administrators going to be chosen? How will they handle disputes over interpretation of God's law? And who will enforce their decisions?

Interpretation, of course, is a matter of great interest in Islamist republics like Iran (and formerly Sudan) where there has been considerable and sometimes violent disagreement over just what is God's law. What does Qutb have to say? He only asserts that it won't be a problem.

God's religion is not a maze nor is its way of life a fluid thing ... It is bounded by those principles which have come from the Messenger of God ... The principles of *Ijtihad* and deduction are well known, and there is no vagueness or looseness in them. [p.85]

Enforcement of the law won't be a problem either. People will just naturally obey *Shari'ah* as they did in the early days of Islam

... the believers learn the Islamic regulations and laws with eagerness and pleasure. As soon as a command is given, the heads are bowed, and nothing more is required for its implementation except to hear it. In this manner, drinking was forbidden, usury was prohibited, and gambling was proscribed, and all the habits of the Days of Ignorance were abolished -- abolished by a few verses of the Qur'an or by a few words from the lips of the Prophet -- peace be on him ... [p.32]

It may not be very practical but it allows Qutb to claim (as mentioned above) that *Shari'ah* will free man from the "servitude to man".

Some have explained the Qutbian system as revolutionary takeover of the *jahili* state by the vanguard followed by "Islamization from above", presumably by encouraging but not forcing citizens to become Muslims. [12]

Now wait a minute, what about the non-Muslims. They *don't* believe in Islam, so they don't believe in *Shari'ah*, so they won't just naturally obey it. How can they be free from servitude to other men but forbidden to follow priests and rabbis and forced to live under a new political system whether they want to or not?

Good question. Qutb specifically claims the conquest of non-Muslim states as "a movement to wipe out tyranny and to introduce true freedom to mankind ..." (p.62) But while at least some Muslims support a return to traditional *Shari'ah*, obviously the same can't be said for non-Muslims. Someone will have to make them live under *Shari'ah*, and stop them from following their religious leaders. Presumably those someones will be people, or "men," and those obeying them will be in a form of "servitude."

It's this claim -- that to conquer non-Muslims would be to liberate them -- that's probably Qutb's most serious absurdity. The first Muslim conquerors could make some claim to be liberators if not "a movement to wipe out tyranny." Their invasions and conquests were of lands were one elite ethnic/religious group (Byzantine Greeks or Sassanid Persians) ruled over others, and those others sometimes welcomed and supported their new Muslim rulers. But today, its "infertility" notwithstanding, democracy has spread widely and there are few empires in non-Muslim lands. An invasion and takeover of most countries adjacent to the Muslim world would mean overthrowing governments made up not only of those non-Muslims' own countrymen/women, but governments freely elected according to the local peoples own constitution, on the grounds that the non-Muslim needed to be "freed from servitude to others". The idea that these non-Muslims would support the Muslim conquerors and obey their laws extending "into all aspects of life" (p.32), rather than fight back, is hard to take seriously.

Aside from that, what about the real-life organization Qutb belonged to when he was alive. How was that run?

For someone harping on the intolerability of "serving human lords" and the self-evident nature of Islamic legal interpretation, you might think any Muslim organization Qutb belonged to would be run by consensus. But that organization, the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al Ikhwan al Muslimun*) was originally run organized more along military lines according to a glowing description of the original written by a fellow fundamentalist. There was an undisputed leader, Shaikh Hassan al Banna, seated at "General Headquarters," where any decisions made by branches of the brotherhood could be overruled. Members were classified by grades (determined by examinations), and grouped into "nuclei, cells, families and phalanxes."

All members had to take a Ba'it or Oath of allegiance that they would protect the Brethren even with their lives and have implicit trust and confidence in their superiors, enforcing their decisions even if they personally differed with them. At every meeting each member had to renew his allegiance and repeat; `I hear and I obey.` The most trusted active members were thoroughly known to Shaikh Hassan al Banna. Each of them was required to keep a daily record of his activities ... [13]

So How did these Muslim Brethren handle theological disagreements?

Disagreements weren't allowed. Leader Hassan al Banna "was determined that *al Ikhwan* would never become a battleground of theological disputes." [14]

QUTB AND NON-MUSLIMS: THE WEST

What does Qutb think of Westerners who study Islam and the Middle East, aka the Orientalists?

They are mentioned repeatedly, almost always in connection with their "shrewdness" (p.64), "treachery" (p.62, 69) or their being "wily" (p.62) or "vicious" (p.75) in spreading disinformation on

Islam. Qutb believed Orientalists had misled Muslims into thinking that *Jihaad* should only be fought defensively, and had spread the lie that Islam sometimes converted people by force.

There is no room to say that the basic aim of the Islamic movement was `defensive` in the narrow sense which some people ascribe to it today, defeated by the attacks of the treacherous Orientalists! [p.69]

The orientalists have painted a picture of Islam as a violent movement which imposed its belief upon people by the sword. These vicious orientalists know very well this is not true ... [p.75-76]

What does Qutb think of the West?

Qutb's loathing of the West goes well beyond hatred of imperialism or materialism. To Qutb, Europe and North America are "backward," a "rubbish heap ... filth ... hollow and worthless" (p.139, 136). [15] They have nothing to offer the Muslim world. Though aware that Western Civilization possesses nothing "which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence" (p.7), the West is pursuing a "well-thought-out scheme" to "demolish the structure of Muslim society," (p.116) which, unlike the West, can "justify its existence."

Western society is immoral...

Look at this capitalism with its monopolies, its usury and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law; at this materialistic attitude which deadens the spirit; at this behavior, like animals, which you call `free mixing of the sexes;` [16] at this vulgarity which you call `emancipation of women;` at these unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce, which are contrary to the demands of practical life; and at Islam, with its logic, beauty, humanity and happiness ... these facts, when seen in the light of Islam made the American people blush. Yet there are people -- exponent of Islam -- who are defeated before this filth ... they search for resemblances to Islam among this rubbish heap of the West ... [p.139]

Western society is oppressive...

. . . . consider the British Empire. It is like the Roman society to which it is an heir. It is based on national greed, in which the British nation has the leadership and exploits those colonies annexed by the Empire. The same is true of other European empires. The Spanish and Portuguese Empires in their times, and the French Empire, all are equal

in respect to oppression and exploitation. [p.50]

Western society is backwards ...

The Islamic society is, by its very nature, the only civilized society, and the *jahili* societies, in all their various forms, are backward societies. It is necessary to elucidate this great truth. [p.94]

...materialistic....

Materialism ... in the form of material production ... is given the highest value" in "the United States and European countries ... such a society is a backward one ... [p.96]

and its concepts a hindrance to clear thinking and intuition. Qutb complains that when

the Western concept of civilization was my standard ... it had prevented me from seeing with clear and penetrating vision [its influences] had clouded my intuition and concepts. [p.94]

It is (in part) responsible for Muslim society's "state of inertia" and lack of "empirical sciences" because of its invasions of the Muslim world."

Some of the causes which led to this state of inertia [in the Muslim world] were ... the invasions of the Muslim world by the Christians and Zionists. Europe removed the foundation of Islamic belief from the methodology of the empirical sciences... [p.111-112]

It is trying to destroy Islam.

The Western ways of thought ... [have] an enmity toward all religion, and in particular with greater hostility toward Islam. This enmity toward Islam is especially pronounced and many times is the result of a well-thought-out scheme the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society. [p.116]

... but knows it itself has nothing to offer the world

... the Western world realizes that Western civilization is unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind. It knows that it does not possess anything which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence. [p.7]

It may be this combination of malicious worthlessness and *awareness* of its worthlessness is what makes Qutb think freedom won't be an issue when the West is conquered by Islam. Knowing that their civilization's "existence" can't be "justified," Westerners will just go along with Islamic supremacy.

But surely something is right with Western society! What about its science and technology that raised 100s of millions from poverty and gave it the power to conquer huge areas of the Muslim world?

The "dynamic spirit" of the West was only borrowed from Islam.

Modern Europe's industrial culture did not originate in Europe but in the Islamic universities of Andalusia and of the East. The principle of the experimental method was an offshoot of the Islamic concept and its explanation of the physical world, its phenomena, its forces and its secrets.
[p.111]

Muslims reached their current state of backwardness "by abandoning Islam, and not because they are Muslims." (p.136)

How will Muslims take the lead in science and technology? By following religious duty, which tells Muslims "Islam appointed them as representatives of God and made them responsible for learning all the sciences." (p.112) And by following the *Shari`ah*, which will insure that

blessings fall on all mankind, [and] leads in an easy manner to the knowledge of the secrets of nature, its hidden forces and the treasures concealed in the expanses of the universe.
[p.90]

Besides, we needn't pay so much attention to science:

The period of resurgence of science has also come to an end. This period, which began with the Renaissance in the sixteenth century after Christ and reached its zenith in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, does not possess a reviving spirit. [p.8]

(Remember, this was written in 1967!)

Qutb has nothing to say about how and why the *Jahili* West developed its science and technology so far beyond what it "stole" from Muslim Andalusia and "the East" hundreds of years ago; about whether the famous groundbreaking scientific discoveries of the golden age of Islam (many made by freethinking Muslims or non-Muslims) had anything to do with a sense of religious "responsibility" such as he plans to inspire of future Muslim scientists; or whether something other than duty, (such as a spirit of free inquiry and questioning of traditional beliefs) might be necessary for the development of scientific knowledge.

The modern systems ... which have dazzled many [Muslims] and

have defeated their spirits, are nothing but a *jahili* system at heart, and this system is erroneous, hollow and worthless in comparison with Islam. The argument that the people living under it are in a better condition than the people of a so-called Islamic country or `Islamic world` has no weight. The people in these [Muslim] countries have reached this wretched state by abandoning Islam, and not because they are Muslims. The argument which Islam presents to people is this: Most certainly Islam is better beyond imagination. It has come to change *Jahiliyyah*, not to continue it; to elevate mankind from its depravity, and not to bless its manifestations which have taken the garb of `civilization.` [p.136]

Muslims have drifted away from their religion and their way of life, and have forgotten that Islam appointed them as representatives of God and made them responsible for learning all the sciences ... [p.112]

Is Qutb's hatred for Western civilization and devotion to Islamic revival really just an expression of his loathing of Western oppression and imperialism stated in terms more dear to his heart -- i.e. in religious vocabulary?

No, it's the other way around. Western imperialism in the Middle East is (to Qutb) really just a manifestation of religion. It's an expression of the same anti-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* hatred that launched the Crusades. In fact, those who claim Western imperialism WASN'T motivated by religion are not just in error, but dangerous deceivers and enemies of Islam!

Enemies of the Believers may wish to change this struggle into an economic or political ... struggle so that the Believers become confused concerning the true nature of the struggle and the flame of belief in their hearts becomes extinguished ... We see an example of this today in the attempts of Christendom to try to deceive us by distorting history and saying that the Crusades were a form of imperialism. The truth of the matter is that the latter-day imperialism is but a mask for the crusading spirit, since it is not possible for it to appear in its true form, as it was possible in the Middle Ages. [p.159-160]

**QUTB and NON-MUSLIMS:
CHRISTIANS, JEWS and FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

What does Qutb think of Zionism?

Qutb mentions Zionism as partially to blame for the backwardness of the Muslim World. . .

Some of the causes which led to this state of inertia [in the Muslim world] were ... the invasions of the Muslim world by the Christians and Zionists. Europe removed the foundation of Islamic belief from the methodology of the empirical sciences ... [p.111-112]

... but mainly his interest is in the Jews.

... So what does Qutb think of the Jews?

It's hard to overstate Qutb's hatred for Jews. He teaches that Jews are conspiring to "penetrate" governments all over the world to "perpetuate their evil designs," including a plan to take control of all the "wealth of mankind." He warns against the concept that "culture" outside of "science and technology" is "the human heritage." This is dangerous because

explaining the purpose of man and his historical role in philosophical terms ... is one of the tricks played by world Jewry, whose purpose is to eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that Jews may penetrate into body politics of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs. At the top of the list of these activities is usury, the aim of which is that all the wealth of mankind end up in the hands of Jewish financial institutions which run on interest. [p.110-111]

In another book of his, *Ma'rakatuna ma'a al-Yahud (Our battle with the Jews)*, Qutb expands on his theory...

At the beginning the enemies of the Muslim community did not fight openly with arms but tried to fight the community in its belief through intrigue, spreading ambiguities, creating suspicions. They do likewise today. They have plotted and they go on plotting against this nation. Hundreds and thousands have infiltrated the Muslim world, and they still do in the guise of Orientalists. The pupils of the latter fill today the positions of the intellectual life of the countries whose people call themselves Muslim. Their aim is clearly shown by the Protocols [of the Elders of Zion]. The Jews are behind materialism, animal sexuality, the destruction of the family and the dissolution of society. Principal among them are Marx, Freud, Durkheim and the Jew Jean-Paul Sartre. [17]

What does Qutb think of Christians and Jews being "People of the Book", different from polytheists?

That contrary to usual Muslim belief, "People of the Book" (*ahl-ul-kitab*) ARE polytheists (*mushrik*).

...when the Jews and Christians `disobeyed` God, they became like those who `associate others with God` [i.e. polytheists] [p.60]

Jews and Christians are also dangerous to listen to or deal with because of their "ultimate designs" on Islam.

When the Jews and Christians discuss Islamic beliefs or Islamic history, or when they make proposals concerning Muslim society or Muslim politics or economics, [Muslims who think the Jews and Christians are] doing it with good intentions, or with the welfare of the Muslims at heart or in order to seek guidance and light ... are indeed deluded. [p.114]

In support of this Qutb quotes several *ayat* and a *hadith* warning about the danger of People of the Book leading Muslims in "to the state of unbelief" and of being untrustworthy -- `Do not ask the People of the Book about anything. They will not guide you.` (p.113)

Christians believe in the trinity of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," which Muslims do not consider true monotheism because it "associates others with God." But Jews don't believe in a divine trinity, so why does Qutb consider them polytheist?

When Qutb talks about "others" that Christians and Jews are "associating with God," he means religious officials, not deities (Jesus and the Holy Spirit). Just as legislating and following any law not in the traditional *Shari'ah* is polytheism (*shirk*), so to is following "laws" legislated by priests and rabbis.

Sayth Qutb: Jews and Christians

did not consider their priests or rabbis as divine, nor did they worship them; but they gave them the authority to make laws, obeying laws which were made by them [and] not permitted by God... [p.82]

This is not permitted by God because

it clear that obedience to laws and judgments is a sort of worship [p.60]

Obedience to clerics then makes people of the book polytheists. As evidence, Qutb quotes a hadith (narrative) by Tirmidhi where the Prophet says:

`They [the People of the Book] have taken their rabbis and priests as lords other than God` Adi reports: "I said, `They

do not worship their priests.` God's Messenger replied, `Whatever their priests and rabbis call permissible, they accept as permissible; whatever they declare as forbidden, they consider as forbidden, and thus they worship them.` [Since] the Prophet -- peace be on him -- clearly stated that, according to the *Shari'ah*, `to obey` is `to worship`. Taking this meaning of worship, when the Jews and Christians `disobeyed` God, they became like those who `associate others with God` [p.60]

Jews and Christians are thus polytheists, subject to all the penalties such people are deserving of under traditional Islamic Law.

With his very dim view of the religious predecessors of Islam does Qutb teach that Christians and Jews should be forced to abandon their religion?

No. As Qutb repeats several times, his Islamic movement "does not use compulsion for changing the ideas of people" and "Islam does not force people to accept its belief." (p.56)

In an Islamic system there is room for all kinds of people to follow their own beliefs, [as long as they are] obeying the laws of the [Islamically-ruled] country which are themselves based on the Divine authority. [p.61]

The idea that Islam ever did use compulsion is (he says) simply a lie concocted by Western scholars.

The orientalist have painted a picture of Islam as a violent movement which imposed its belief upon people by the sword. These vicious orientalist know very well this is not true... [p.75-76]

So under the Qutbian system then Christians and Jews would be able to continue practicing their religion?

Welllll ... again Qutb is ambiguous, not to say downright contradictory. On the one hand:

In an Islamic system there is room for all kinds of people to follow their own beliefs, [as long as] obeying the laws of the [Islamically-ruled] country which are themselves based on the Divine authority. [p.61]

And again:

when Islam releases people from this political pressure of ... servitude to other men ... it gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs.

But in the next breath adds:

However this freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings, making some men lords over others. [p.61]

"Servitude" (as previously explained) refers to the obedience of Christians and Jews to their religious leaders. Though these People of the Book "did not consider their priests or rabbis as divine", they "gave them the authority to make laws, obeying laws which were made by them, [and] not permitted by God" (p.82) because "'to obey` is `to worship,'" and "this religion has come to annihilate such practices ..." (p.60)

As usual this raises all sorts of questions Qutb does not begin to answer. Setting aside the issue of whether Jews and Christians follow their religious authorities any more slavishly than say the Muslim Brotherhood followed fearless leader Shaikh Hassan al Bannas, how exactly can a religion function without rules, without someone to make rules? Would non-Muslim religious leaders be allowed to give ANY instruction or advice? And what might be in store for these priests and rabbis whose "practices" are in line for "annihilation"? Doubtless Christians and Jews will be wondering if the banning of any rules made by non-Muslim religious leaders isn't just a way of weakening or decapitating competing religions, while allowing Qutbians deny any compulsion in religion and work themselves up into a rage over the alleged slander of "vicious orientalist."

QUTB and PEACEFUL CO-EXISTANCE with NON-MUSLIMS

Hundreds of millions of Muslims live in countries where they are a minority. How does Qutb think Muslims should relate to non-Muslim majority countries like India, the U.S., Canada or countries in Europe -- or for that matter any country no matter who's in the majority -- where it's clear most people do not want to live under *Shari'ah* and don't think it's divine law?

A true Muslim not only has no loyalty to any country "where the Islamic *Shari'ah* is not enforced," but must be prepared to fight against such countries.

Any place where the Islamic *Shari'ah* is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant becomes the Home of Hostility (*Dar-ul-Harb*) ... A Muslim will remain prepared to fight against it, whether it be his birthplace or a place where his relatives reside or where his property or any other material interest are located.

The homeland of the Muslim, in which he lives and [upon] which he depends, is not a piece of land; the nationality of the Muslim, by which he is identified, is not the nationality determined by a government ... striving is purely for the sake of God, for the success of His religion and His law [p.124-5]

What does Qutb think of peace? Can "Islam" (i.e. Qutb's ideal Islamic homeland) live in peace with non-Muslim states?

Hypothetically perhaps.

It may happen that the enemies of Islam may consider it expedient not to take any action against Islam, if Islam leaves them alone in their geographical boundaries to continue the lordship of some men over others and does not extend its message and its declaration of universal freedom within their domain. But Islam cannot agree to this unless they submit to its authority by paying *Jizyah*, which will be guarantee that they have opened their doors for the preaching of Islam ... [p.73]

But in reality, no.

- A situation where an Islamic and non-Islamic state live in peaceful coexistence and do not threaten each other is a "superficial peace." True peace does not and cannot exist unless "the obedience of all people" is "for God alone."

It is immaterial whether the homeland of Islam -- in the true Islamic sense, *Dar ul-Islam* -- is in a condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbors. When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the religion (i.e. the Law of the society) be purified for God, that the obedience of all people be for God alone, and that some people should not be lords over others. [p.63]

- Peace with non-Muslim society is unfeasible because *Jahiliyyah* won't surrender without a fight .

Jahiliyyah is always ready and alive to defend its existence consciously or unconsciously. It crushes all elements which seem to be dangerous to its personality. (p.46)
Those who have usurped the authority of God and are oppressing God's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching. [p.58-9]

And Qutb's Islam is (by definition) "dangerous to [*Jahiliyyah*'s] personality," as his brand of Islam aims to eliminate *Jahiliyyah*.

- Peace with non-Muslim society violates the duty of *Jihaad*.
Qutb gives an elaborate explanation of how (contrary to what some "treacherous Orientalists" have claimed), Muslims today must follow the model of "non-defensive" *Jihaad* war that recognizes only two kinds of non-Muslims:
1) those who submit to Muslim authority, living under *Shari'ah* and paying a special tribute tax (called

Dhimmies), and

2) those who are "at war" with Islam. (p.63)

According to this classification system, non-Muslims who wish for peaceful co-existence with true Muslims must submit to Muslim authority.

- Allowing a non-Muslim society to exist prevents any Muslims within that society from really BEING Muslims (according to Qutb) because (as explained above) Muslims cannot really be Muslims without *Shari'ah* rule.

The Muslim community ... vanished ... the moment the laws of God became suspended on earth [p.9]

- And in any case, there's no room for any land on earth not ruled by *Shari'ah*.

Islam has the right to take the initiative...this is God's religion and it is for the whole world. It has the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions ... it attacks institutions and traditions to release human beings from their poisonous influences, which distort human nature and curtail human freedom. (p.75)

But isn't *Jihaad* for defensive purposes these days? Wasn't expansive *Jihaad* just a temporary phase of Islam?

As mentioned above, Qutb angrily and repeatedly denounces the idea that *Jihaad* war "is merely for defense," blaming this foolish misconception on those so-called Muslims "defeated by the attacks of the treacherous [Western] Orientalists!"

There is no room to say that the basic aim of the Islamic movement was `defensive` in the narrow sense which some people ascribe to it today, defeated by the attacks of the treacherous Orientalists! [p.69]

... Those who say that Islamic *Jihaad* was merely for the defense of the `homeland of Islam` diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life ... [p.71]

He admits that Muslims were restrained from fighting for a brief time "in Mecca and in the early period of their migration to Medina," but that following this "Muslims were permitted to fight, then they were commanded to fight against the aggressors; and finally they were commanded to fight against all the polytheists," which as we have seen includes Christians and Jews. (p.64)

If there are four stages of *Jihaad* ([1] non-violent, [2] fighting optional, [3] defensive fighting mandatory, and [4] violently expansionist), can Muslims choose which of the four to use depending on the circumstances?

Not according to Qutb. "Only the final stages of the movement of Jihaad are to be followed, [where "polytheists" replaces "aggressors" as the enemy]; the initial or middle states are not applicable." (p.63)

Another time he points out that limiting *Jihaad* to a defensive war makes no sense because it's not what the first Rightfully Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafaa Rashidun*) -- Abu Bakr, Umar Ali, or Othman -- did. They would never have refrained from attacking and invading "the Roman and Persian powers" simply because they were "satisfied" that the "Roman and Persian powers" had no aggressive intentions and "were not going to attack the Arabian peninsula." (p.62) Does this mean Qutb considered India, Europe, China and all countries surrounding Muslim land to be the equivalent of Persia and the Byzantine Empire before they were conquered by Muslim armies? It certainly sounds like it.

QUTB and the FUTURE

What can "true" Muslims look forward to following Qutb's path (according to Qutb)?

A total way of life...

- The word religion includes more than belief; `religion` actually means a way of life," (p.61)
- Its system extends into all aspects of life; it discusses all minor or major affairs of mankind; it orders man's life [p.32]

... completely different from what they are use to ...

- The change from this *Jayiliyya*, which has encompassed the earth, to Islam is vast and far-reaching; the Islamic life is the opposite of all modes of *jahili* life, whether ancient or modern. [p.134]
- Islam cannot accept any mixing with *Jayiliyya*, either in its concept or in the modes of living which are derived from this concept. [p.130]

... free of relations with (non-vanguard) parents, siblings, children ...

... a Muslim has no relatives except those who share the belief in God... [p.119]

... and with much pain and suffering.

While you might expect Qutb to end his tract on an inspirational note, proclaiming the glories of the new world to come in order to encourage his readers to join the Islamic vanguard, he does something very different. In his concluding chapter, "This is the Road," Qutb prepares his followers for *Jihaad* with some vividly gruesome imagery. He reminds them not to forget the story of the Makers of the Pit, where sadistic heathens burned believers to death ...

... arrogant, mischievous, criminal and degraded people ... sat by the pit of fire, watching how the Believers suffered

and writhed in pain. They sat there to enjoy the sight of how fire consumes living beings and how the bodies of these noble souls were reduced to cinders and ashes ... shouts of mad joy would escape their lips at the sight of blood and pieces of flesh. [p.150]

or of other torturers who ...

would catch a man, bury him halfway in a hole dug in the ground, then saw his head until it split in two; or would comb with iron combs between his flesh and bones ... [p.157]

in their attempt to make a man renounce Islam.

[This] example ... in which the Believers have no escape and the unbelievers are not punished ... must not be forgotten! ... Believers -- the callers toward God -- should remain fully aware that they can also meet this extreme end in the way of God, and they have no say in it. [p.155]

Believers must be prepared for a "life until death in poverty, difficulty, frustration, torment and sacrifice..." (p.157) and look forward to "traversing this road ever paved with skulls and limbs and blood and sweat." (p.158)

What can non-Muslims look forward to if Qutb's path is followed (according to Qutb)?

Although Qutb never summarizes his vision by saying, "We will not be satisfied until the whole world submits to the authority of true Islam (as defined by me), imposed by force and made up of laws (a.k.a. the traditional *Shari'ah*) over anything and everything you do," the dots to follow are few and close together:

God's Lordship over the whole world ...

- [A] vast ocean of *Jahiliyyah* ... encompass[es] the entire world [p.12]
- [*Jihaad*] struggle is not a temporary phase but an eternal state -- an eternal state, as truth and falsehood cannot co-exist on this earth ... [p.65]
- Islam has the right to take the initiative ... this is God's religion and it is for the whole world. It has the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions ... it attacks institutions and traditions to release human beings from their poisonous influences, which distort human nature and curtail human freedom. [p.75]
- "We understand the true character of Islam, and that it is a universal proclamation of freedom of man from servitude to other men, the establishment of the sovereignty of God and His Lordship throughout the world, ... and the implementation

of the rule of the Divine *shari'ah* in human affairs." [p.62]

- Islam is not "a geographically-bound system ... Islam came into this world to establish God's rule on God's earth ... [p.74]

... imposed by force ...

- Whenever Islam stood up with the universal declaration that God's Lordship should be established over the entire earth ... the usurpers of God's authority on earth have struck out against it fiercely and have never tolerated it. It became incumbent upon Islam to strike back and release man throughout the earth from the grip of these usurpers. [p.65]
- [The Islamic movement to reestablish Islam] uses ... physical power and *Jihaad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways and make them serve human lords [non-*Shari'ah* government] instead of the Almighty Lord. (p.55)

... by a vanguard that believes its Western enemy is simultaneously conspiring to destroy Islam and aware Islam is superior ...

- the Western world realizes that Western civilization is unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind. It knows that it does not possess anything which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence. [p.7])
- Look at this capitalism ... at this individual freedom, ... at this materialistic attitude ... at this ... `free mixing of the sexes;` at this `emancipation of women;` at these unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce, ... these facts, when seen in the light of Islam made the American people blush.[p.139]

... which will eliminate obstacles including virtually everything non-Islamic ...

- There are many practical obstacles in establishing God's rule on earth, such as the power of the state, the social system and traditions and, in general, the whole human environment. Islam uses force only to remove these obstacles so that there may not remain any wall between Islam and individual human beings. [p.72]

... and require obedience to *Shari'ah* laws, including the paying of tribute tax and end to following of religious regulations of priests and rabbis.

- Enemies of Islam [must] submit to [Islam's] authority by paying *Jizyah* [p.73]

- freedom [to refuse to be a Muslim] does not mean that [non-Muslims] can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings, making some men lords over others. [p.61]

Those who do not convert to Islam should expect the attitudes of Muslims they meet (including those running the government) to vary from distrust ...

`Do not ask the People of the Book about anything. They will not guide you.` (p.113)

... to hostility ... (Western civilization has a "crusading spirit" to attack Islam)

... to implacable hatred (for Jews).

The Jews are behind materialism, animal sexuality, the destruction of the family and the dissolution of society. Principal among them are Marx, Freud, Durkheim and the Jew Jean-Paul Sartre. [18]

What can "*Jahili*" Muslims look forward to if Qutb's path is followed (according to Qutb)?

This is the group lying directly in the path of Qutb's movement. Like everyone else their lives will be deeply changed by true Islam and subject to "force" by the movement (since they are part of the "whole human environment"), whether they like it or not. What happens if they do not heed Qutbian preaching and become "true" Muslims, is unclear. Qutb says Islam "gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs" [p.61], but whether "them" refers only to non-Muslim non-Muslims or also to people who consider themselves Muslims but who Qutbians do not, will make a big difference. If Qutbians declare Muslims who resist their preaching hypocrites (*munaafiqeen*) or enemies of Islam, they (the "hypocrites") will be subject to punishment under *shari'ah* law, as have modernist Muslims killed or threatened with by death Egyptian Islamists in the last decades.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/7BB654F1-7D5C-4E7D-B251-28A6E20A461D.htm>
<http://www.derechos.org/wi/2/egypt.html>

What is certain is that lives of the "authorities of the *Jahili* system" will be in real danger. These people not only falsely declare themselves Muslims, but prevent the masses of *Jahili* Muslims from becoming true Muslims. The "arrogant, mischievous, criminal and degraded people" of *Milestones* last chapter, who saw open Muslims' heads before burning them alive is undoubtedly a reference to the *Jahili* authorities of Egypt who tortured Qutb and his Muslim Brotherhood brothers in prison. Many Muslims in Egypt (and elsewhere) have already been slain by Islamists for far less.

ADDENDUM

What *has* been the impact of *Milestones*? Is it responsible for some, or much of Islamic terrorism?

Much of what's been described above (e.g. new military conquests of non-Muslims and jizyah tax) has not come to pass since Qutb's death and isn't likely to. Utopian revolutionary visions like *Milestones* seldom make an impact from fulfilling their promises, their impact comes from trying to.

In the decades following Qutb's execution more than a few groups devoted to armed *Jihaad* made news with terrorist attacks. By the mid 1990s, one list of Qutb-inspired groups included *al-Jihaad al-Islami*, *al-Takfir wa al-Hijrah*, *Jund Allah*, *al-Jihaad*, *Tanzim al-Faniyyah al-Askariyyah* -- all violent insurgent groups. [19]

Two movements dedicated to renewing Islam and overthrowing the Egyptian government -- *al-Jihaad al-Islami*, and particularly *Jama'at Islamiyya* -- have been responsible for hundreds of deaths in Egypt during the 1980s and 90s, including those of a president (Anwar Sadat), a head of the counter-terrorism police (Major General Raouf Khayrat), a parliamentary speaker (Rifaat el-Mahgoub), dozens of European tourists and Egyptian bystanders, and over 100 Egyptian police.

http://gemsofislamism.tripod.com/timeline_egypt.html [20]

The most direct connection between *Milestones* and terrorism is through Qutb's brother Muhammad and al-Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri. Muhammad fled to Saudi Arabia after his brother's execution and there carried on the torch, "editing and publishing" Sayyid's books and preaching his ideas. [20] In Saudi, "one of Muhammad Qutb's students and ardent followers was Ayman al-Zawahiri", [22] who after returning to Egypt went on to join the above mentioned *al-Jihaad al-Islami*. Following the crackdown on terrorism there, he and other jihaadis went into exile in Afghanistan where he met bin Laden and became his "mentor." Zawahiri emerged as the new head of *al-Jihaad al-Islami* and merged his group into al Qaeda. [23]

Zawahiri has praised Qutb in his writings. Zawahiri has been called "jihad's main ideologist." The leadership of his *al-Jihaad al-Islami* organization "comprises the majority of al Qaeda's ruling council (shura)." [24]

There is some dispute over how much of this posthumous Islamic terror was inspired by Qutb. After all, *Milestones* doesn't specify what "force" Qutb calls for will entail. Some say Qutb was speaking in metaphor. [25] And of course some Qutb supporters either deny *Milestones* instigated "violence and destructive activities," [26] or attribute connections between terrorism and Qutb mainly to Western commentators. [27] It could be the terrorists mentioned overshadow a larger but less media-attracting group who patiently, peacefully preach, believing Islam must "first ... be imprinted on hearts and ... consciences" (p.35) before *Shari'ah* rules.

But most commentators do attribute at least some blame to Qutb. [28] The worldview of *Milestones* makes terrorism -- i.e. extreme violence to demoralize the terrorists' target with fear -- compelling in several ways. There is what Qutb and Qutbians believe ...

- The stakes are huge. The life or (continued) death of Islam itself hangs in the balance. Action is not just vital but urgent. "Mankind today is on the brink of a precipice." (p.7) Human beings have only two ways to go: God or Satan (p.117); good or evil (p.154); a wonderful world (rule by perfect law, harmony, peace, discoveries of nature), or the evil and corruption of everything non-Muslim. There's no middle ground. Surely with all this in the balance, Muslims should not hesitate to use violence if necessary.
- Violence will be necessary (and justified). Qutbists will be up against a *Jahiliyya* fighting to try to preserve itself, and fighting dirty -- torturing Muslims to death for fun. There will be Westerners

plotting conspiracies against Islam as they have since the Crusades. And there will be Jews trying to control the world so that they can make everyone miserable. What shame can there be in killing people this wicked?!

- Violence shouldn't be necessary for long. In fighting their most powerful enemy, the West/America, Muslims needn't worry too much about a long bloody cycle of violence and retaliation that advocates of nonviolence are always warning about. This enemy realizes it's no good. Surely it won't put up much of a fight when it sees the firmness of its Islamic enemy and is reminded that all it has to do to make the world a better place is cease its wickedness and accept true Islam.

... and what they do not believe but will have to confront anyway:

- Many Muslims will resist. Most Muslims simply don't think Islam is dead or that they aren't Muslims. Few are enthusiastic about the government that rules over them but only a minority these regimes are kufr. Nor is the heartland of the Muslim world famous for its enthusiasm for revolt and revolution. [29]
- What makes Qutbism wonderful makes it impossible. Everyone will be free from "servitude to other men;" not even Islamic judges or police will be needed to uphold God's law. This promise has and will inspire and motivate followers and justify Qutbism (attempts) to overthrow governments. But even many pious Muslims living in Muslim lands who think their government should be more Islamic will have serious doubts about it. It's likely to sound more like a fanatic's utopian pipedream -- a recipe for chaos and for less freedom, not more. The one Islamist revolution the Muslim world has seen (although somewhat different in ideology than Qutbism) has kept few of its promises. (See [What Happens When Islamists Take Power? - The Case of Iran](#))
- Virtually all Non-Muslims will fight Qutbism. *Very few* Westerners think their civilization has no redeeming value. *Very few* Americans blush with embarrassment at the inferiority of their society in comparison with Islam. They do *not* see themselves engaged in conspiracy against Islam. They'll see Qutbian "freedom" as a flimsy, nonsensical rationalization for aggression and domination.

This collision of Qutbist passion and equally determined *Jahili* resistance, and the frustration of Qutbists with *Jahiliyya's* failure to convert or collapse in the face of the necessity of true Islam does not auger well for peace.

References

[1] Ruthven, Malise *A Fury For God : the Islamist attack on America*. Granta, 2002

[2] Lisbeth Lindeborg *Dagens Nyheter*, (Stockholm, Sweden), Oct. 25, 2001.

[3] *Social Justice in Islam* by Sayyid Qutb, translated by John Hardie, translation revised and introduction by Hamid Algar, Islamic Publications International, 2000, p.1, 9, 11

Algar goes on to say that within the Muslim Brotherhood (which at the time *Milestones* was published was *the* Islamist organization of the Arab world), only some of the Egyptian old guard "disavowed Qutb's ideas of Islam," with non-Egyptians and Egyptian radicals all embracing it.

Leaders and sympathizers of the Brethren outside Egypt, such as Sa'id Hawwa and Marwan Hadid in Syria, Fathi Yakan in Lebanon, Rashid al-Ghannushi in Tunisia, and Hasan Turabi in Sudan, all assimilated Sayyid Qutb's analysis of the Muslim predicament to one degree or another, and oriented their movements accordingly. Within Egypt itself, the legacy of Sayyid Qutb has helped give rise to a new generation of radical

activists no longer affiliated to the Brethren: `Abd al-Salam Farj, author of *al-Fridat al-Gha'ibah (The Neglected Duty)*, a text that supposedly inspired the assassins of Anwar Sadat to act; the group labeled by the Egyptian authorities *al-Takfir wa `l-Hijrah* the amorphous but evidently powerful groupings known as *al-Jama'at al-Islamiyyah (The Islamic Societies)*; and their supposed mentor; Shaykh `Umar `Abd al-Rahman, now incarcerated in the United States.

[4] "The Nature of Islamic Resurgence" by Khurshid Ahmad from *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, 1983

see also <http://www.disinfo.com/site/displayarticle8626.html>

"Qutb: Between Terror And Tragedy posted by alex on Jan 10, 2005 -- 10:31 AM"

... Even after his Execution in 1966 popular media labels him a terrorist, and more recently, he is considered the intellectual godfather of Osama bin Laden. The 9-11 Report established by a bipartisan committee of Congress in 2004 has depicted Qutb's philosophy as one of holy war and the killing of innocents. Never does the report quote Qutb as ever saying that carnage was an answer to the condition of his countrymen that were still living under British occupation and, in service to the British Crown. Despite all of these labels being inaccurate and misguided, the myth of Qutb's violent nature continues

[5] Hasan, S. Badrul, *Syed Qutb Shaheed*, Karachi, Pakistan, International Islamic Publishers, 1982

Wikipedia also pulls its punches on Qutb's ideology, merely describing *Milestones* as "encompassing his radical, antiestablishment claims based on his interpretations of the Qur'an, Islamic history, and the social and political problems of Egypt." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayyid_Qutb

[6] (*Al Ahram Weekly*, November 18, 1993, "Summary of report by the Egyptian Shura" (the upper house of parliament), cited in Caryle Murphy, *Passion for Islam : shaping the modern Middle East : the Egyptian experience.* , Scribner, 2002.

[7] Lewis, Bernard, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East : an Historical Enquiry*, Oxford University Press, 1990, p.14

[8] Segal, Ronald, *Islam's Black Slaves : The Other Black Diaspora*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, (p.44)

[9]"The number of liberal democracies currently stands at an all-time high, and has been growing without interruption for some time." Democracy spread through South America in "the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was followed by nations in East and South Asia by the mid- to late 1980s. Economic malaise in the 1980s, along with resentment of communist oppression, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the associated end of the Cold War, and the democratisation and liberalisation of the former Soviet bloc countries. The most successful of the new democracies were those geographically and culturally closest to western Europe, and they are now members or candidate members of the European Union. The democratic trend spread to some nations in Africa in the 1990s, most prominently in South Africa."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy#20th_century_waves_of_democracy

[10] Qutb, Sayyid (1951c) "Amn-Ica allati ra'ayt: fi mizan al-insaniyya," *Al-Risala*, 961, 1357-60, quoted in "'The World is an Undutiful Boy!': Sayyid Qutb's American Experience," by John Calvert, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol.II, No.1 2000, pp.87-103:98.

It maybe Qutb apologists overstate Qutb's indignation with American/Western racism. In his longest and angriest rant against the West in *Milestones* (p.139), Qutb rubbishes capitalist monopolies, usury, individual freedom, materialism, free mixing of the sexes, cumbersome divorce laws, but says nothing about racial discrimination. Calvert's long, well-documented and sympathetic description of Qutb's visit to America quotes Qutb often on the scandalous sexual behavior and materialist triviality of Americans, but never on their racism.

[11] It's hard not to get the feeling that Qutb is at least bordering on the misleading when talking about freedom.

- Qutb talks repeatedly about giving people "freedom" from "servitude" and wanting to remove "obstacles" that "prevent people from listening and accepting Islam" (p.61), from being able "to accept or reject it with an open mind." (p.63) *Shari'ah* will wait until people are "ready" and have accepted Islam.

The course prescribed by God for this religion is ... first, belief ought to be imprinted on hearts and rule

over consciences -- that belief which demands that people should not bow before anyone except God or derive laws from any other source. Then, when such a group of people is ready and also gains practical control of society, various laws will be legislated according to the practical needs of that society." (p.35)

- Qutb explains the mentality of those who will oppose his Islamic vanguard, by quoting the Qur'an: "The enemies are angered [with believers] only because of their faith." (85:8) The enemies of the believers oppose Muslims "only because [the believers] believe in God." (p.157)

All this makes sense if Qutb's political agenda is simply one of removing any prohibitions on freedom to preach and freedom to accept (his form of) Islam.

On the other hand, if the Qutb agenda includes using "physical power and *Jihaad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system," and establishing "a new social, economic and political system ... after annihilating the tyrannical force" of non-Islamic government (p.61). And if that system "extends into all aspects of life; ... discusses all minor or major affairs of mankind" (p.32, 47)

... which it does, then obviously some people are going to be made to accept Qutb's Islam whether they want to or not. And these enemies are angered by much more than what Qutb and Qutbists *believe*, they are angered by what Qutbists are *doing* or trying to do: use physical power and *jihaad* to annihilate the current social, economic and political system.

[12] "Sayyid Qutb recommended that a revolutionary vanguard should first establish an Islamic state and then, from above impose Islamization on Egyptian society that had deviated to Arab nationalistic ideologies." from: "Sayyid Qutb" by Ahmed El-Kadi <http://www.icna.org/tm/greatmuslim3.htm>

[13] Jameelah, Maryam, *Shaikh Hassan al Banna and Al Ikhawan al Muslimun* Mohammad Yusuf Khan, Lahore Pakistan, 1980 p.16-17

Another example of Qutbists' departure from the Qutb doctrine of servitude-to-no-man was one of the first Islamist group to make news in Egypt following the execution of Qutb, the Society of Muslims (Jama'at al-Muslimin), aka *al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra*. It was headed by Shukri Mustafa, an agricultural engineer, former Muslim Brethren member and prison convict. Firm believers in Qutb's contention that *jahiliyya* had overtaken the Muslim world, the Society kept apart from other Egyptians and lived communally in rented furnished flats. They gained notoriety and mountains of bad press when they kidnapped former minister Muhammad al-Dhahabi in July 1977 and made numerous demands (the release of 60 of its members from jail, public apologies from the press, the publication of Mustafa's book, 200,000 Egyptian pounds in cash, etc.) in return for his release. Following the governments noncompliance and al-Dhahabi's murder, society members were rounded up and interrogated. Mustafa's M.O. came to light and looked very much like that of the archetypical cult leader of Western countries: deciding for his members who would marry who, who would go to work in the Arabian Gulf, that no one would work for the government, that defectors from the cult would be killed and finally that al-Dhahabi would be kidnapped and killed if necessary. (p.87, 89, 94, *Le Prophete et Pharaon* by Gilles Kepel) In other words, he had even more power over his followers than al-Banna had over his, and certainly much more than *jahili* priests, rabbi, or mainstream Imams have over theirs.

[14] *ibid.* p.18

By the time Qutb joined *Al-Ikhwan* (1953), its founder al Banna had been assassinated in retaliation for the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister and other violent attacks. Without al Banna, *Al-Ikhwan* may have lost at least some of its regimentation, becoming more a "fluid mass movement rather than a well-structured political organization" according to Malise Ruthven. But without al Banna, it also lacked "a coherent set of policies capable of being translated into action," including a consensus on what Islam or *Shari'ah* was, (notwithstanding Qutb's confidence in there being no vagueness or looseness in the well-known principles of *Ijtihad* and deduction). Its split was between al Banna's original doctrine following the reformism of Muhammad Abduh, and the more "positively traditional" beliefs of the Brotherhood's "petite bourgeois" and "rural immigrant" grassroots. (*Islam in the World*, Malise Ruthven, Penguin, 1984, p.316-7) So either way *Al-Ikhwan* can't be said to reflect Qutb's description of true Islam.

[15] Qutb's direct exposure to the West was the two and half years he spent in the United States after World War II. But despite this length of time and the fluency in English that he gained, there is serious question as to whether he understood (or even honestly portrayed) American history, customs, or behavior.

Qutb gave his version of American history for Arab readers in an earlier book, *Amrika allati Ra'aytu*, (America that I Saw):

America pushed Latinos south toward Central America before the Revolutionary war (when American settlers hadn't actually made it across the Appalachian mountains). The American Revolution itself was "a destructive war led by George Washington." And fighting in the western United States with Native Americans was still underway while Qutb was studying in America (it had actually ended decades before Qutb was born).

Some of Qutb's stories about his trip are also questionable -- sounding more like attempts to inspire outrage among his Muslim readers than to tell what actually happened.

- Qutb told his Egyptian biographer that an "American agent" in the form of a 'drunken, semi-naked' woman attempted to seduce him to "engineer his moral collapse" and tempt him astray from Islam, one night on his voyage from Alexandria to New York. (Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb*, 1987, 27-8). Qutb doesn't explain why he thought the woman was an American agent, why he thought the American government would feel a need to undermine the faith of prominent Muslims by sending out women agents to have sex with them, or why they would target him. At the time of his trip Qutb was, (or had been), an opinion columnist and literary critic but was not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimoon*) or any other political organization.
- Qutb maintains that employees at a hospital in Washington DC he was convalescing in "openly rejoiced" at news of the assassination of Ikhwan Supreme Guide Hasan al-Banna. (Sayyid Qutb "Amn-lca allati ra'ayt: fi mizan al-insaniyya," (*Al-Risala*, 959, 1301-6. 105-6; Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb*, 1987, 30). But very few Americans had any knowledge of or interest in the Ikhwan at the time of al-Banna's death. Diligent readers of *The New York Times* would know only that a "Terrorist Leader Is Killed In Cairo" (as the Times' continued story headline put it), and that Banna and the Ikhwan were behind a series of assassinations including that of the Egyptian premier a month and a half earlier.

Even when he stayed in a small town where alcohol was illegal Qutb found little good to say about contemporary American culture. American males were "brutish." American women were vixens. Amateur wrestling matches were "bloody" and "monstrous". Grass front lawns of in small towns symbolic of America's materialism and selfishness. *All Things Considered*, May 6, 2003

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1253796>

"The world is an undutiful boy!": Sayyid Qutb's American experience" by John Calvert. *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations*. March 2000. v. 11, n.1 p.87, (17 pages)

[16] At a time when an overwhelming number of Americans married as virgins or only had premarital sex with their future spouse, [source: for example over 80% of the women surveyed who were born between 1933 and 1942 either had no premarital intercourse or premarital intercourse only with their future husband, according to the National Health and Social Life Survey (*Sex in America : A definitive Survey* by Robert T. Michael, John H. Gagnon, Edward O. Laumann, Gina Kolata, Little Brown and Co., 1994)], Qutb sputtered "at this behavior, like animals, which you call 'free mixing of the sexes.'"

How did he get the idea that the Western, in this case American, sexual behavior he witnessed was animal-like? Likely in part from his own psychological projections. He describes the "American girl" as being

well acquainted with her body's seductive capacity. She knows it lies in the face, and in expressive eyes, and thirsty lips. She knows seductiveness lies in the round breasts, the full buttocks, and in the shapely thighs, sleek legs -- and she shows all this and does not hide it.

(Bear in mind that Qutb was a life-long bachelor, noted for his sickly, pale appearance and introverted personality and there is no evidence of his ever having had a sexual relationship. (source: Hamudah, Adil Sayyid Qutb: min al-qarya ila al-mashnaqa (Cairo, Ruz al-Yusuf, 1987). *Sayyid Qutb* p.60-61),

Amrika allati Ra'aytu, (America that I Saw), quoted in *All Things Considered*, May 6, 2003

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1253796>))

Maybe also from an encounter with "a young American women at the [educational] institute in Greeley, CO," who allegedly told an appalled Qutb that

The issue of sexual relations is purely a biological matter. You ... complicate this matter by imposing the ethical element on it. The horse and mare, the bull and the cow ... do not think about this ethical matter ... and, therefore live a comfortable, simple, and easy life. (from *Amrika allati Ra'aytu*, (America that I Saw), quoted in *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: the Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb* by Ahmad S.

Moussalli, American University of Beirut, 1992, p.29)

Obviously most Americans, especially in conservative post-war America, did not/would not agree with this. What Qutb passed on to thousands, perhaps eventually hundreds of thousands, of Muslims as the typical American attitude seems far more likely to have been either fiction or an undergrad's attempt to freak-out this uptight, middle-aged foreigner, his pious disapproval intensified by her "body's seductive capacity."

[17] Sayyid Qutb, "Ma'rakatuna ma'a al-Yahud," [essay] 1951. Published in book of the same name [*Ma'rakatuna ma'a al-Yahud*], Jedda, Saudi Arabia, 1970.

[18] *ibid.*

[19] Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: the Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb", American University of Beirut, 1992, p. 244 *al-Jihaad al-Islami, Jama'a al Jihaad*, and *al-Takfir wa al-Hijrah* were Egyptian terrorist groups. There was a *Jund Allah* in Egypt (Ruthven, *Malise Islam in the World*, Penguin, 1982, p.315) and Lebanon (mentioned in *Radical Islam : Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, 1985 by Emmanuel Sivan). Not sure about Tanzim al-Faniyyah al-Askariyyah.

[20] Gilles Kepel, "Le Prophète et Pharaon : aux sources des mouvements islamistes," Seuil, 1993
Caryle Murphy, *Passion for Islam : Shaping the Modern Middle East: the Egyptian Experience*, New York : Scribner, c2002.

[21] *The War for Muslim Minds : Islam and the West* by Gilles Kepel, Belknap Press, 2004, p.174,
Jihad : the Trail of Political Islam by Gilles Kepel, p.51

[22] [More on Qutb and Zawahiri](http://www.answers.com/topic/sayyid-qutb) <http://www.answers.com/topic/sayyid-qutb>
other commentators, like Paul Berman, ("The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *New York Times*, March 23, 2003), state bin Laden was a student of Muhammad Qutb but say nothing about Zawahiri.

[23] from: *The War for Muslim Minds : Islam and the West*, Gilles Kepel, Belknap Press, 2004, p.79
Understanding Terror Networks by Marc Sageman, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p.35, 147, 148

[24] Zawahiri paid homage to Qutb in his book *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*
from: *The War for Muslim Minds : Islam and the West*, Gilles Kepel, Belknap Press, 2004, p.74, 79, 98
Understanding Terror Networks by Marc Sageman, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p.63

[25] "Sayyid Qutb, The Pole Star of Egyptian Salafism," www.pwhce.org/qutb.html

[26] S. Badrul Hasany *Syed Qutb Shaheed*, Islamic Publications International, 2nd ed., 1982, p. 44.

[27] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qutb>

[28]

Qutb defined the times as jahiliyya. ... It meant that the members of society as a whole were not longer viewed as Muslims. In Islamic doctrine, this is a very serious accusation, called *takfir*. it means that one who is, or claims to be a Muslim is declared to be impure ... For those who interpret Islamic law literally and rigorously, one who is impious to this extent ... is condemned to death. Qutb, who died before he could fully explain his theories, left unclear his use of the term *jahiliyya* and its dire consequence, *takfir*.

... The young wished to break off all contact with the state and punish the society for its passive acceptance of an impious government ...

from: (Kepel, Gilles, *Jihad, The Trail of Political Islam*, Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002, p.31-2 See also: Cook, David, *Understanding Jihad* by David Cook, University of Clifornia Press, 2005
Sivan, Emmanuel, *Radical Islam, Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, Yale University Press, 1985, p.26-27

[29] To quote the old maxim: `Forty years of tyranny are better than one year of anarchy.` (from Tartushi, a Muslim lawyer from Sapin, quoted in *Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal* by Muhammad Iqbal p.49)

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