Adnan Musallam

Sayyid Qutb

The Emergence of the Islamicist, 1939-1950

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International Affairs

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INTRODUCTION

1.   Background

This is an inquiry into the intellectual career of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), an Egyptian poet, educator, journalist, literary critic and a leading intellectual of the contemporary Islamic movement in Egypt and the Arab world.[1] Qutb was imprisoned with many of the rank and file of the Society of Muslim Brothers from 1954 to 1964 and was subsequently rearrested and tried in 1965 and 1966 for allegedly leading an underground apparatus which was conspiring to overthrow the Nasser regime by force.

Qutb is noted for the revolutionary zeal with which he promoted what he considered the inevitable establishment of a true and just "Islamic society" in place of the "Jahili society" which exists throughout the world including Egypt.[2] This revolutionary thought which is crystalized in his work *Ma`alim fi Al-Tariq* (Milestones on the Road), 1964, was utilized by the Egyptian state security prosecutor's office in building its case against him and was instrumental in sending him to the gallows in August 1966.[3]

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[1] Many parts of my research on Qutb are not included in this book. See *The Formative Stages of Sayyid Qutb's Intellectual Career and his Emergence as an Islamic Da'iyah, 1906-1952*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1983. Qutb's career in the 1930s is seen in my article "Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Qutb's Literary and Spiritual Orientations, 1932-1938," which will appear in *The Muslim World* (Hartford, Conn., US) in 1990.

[2] By *Jahili* society Qutb refers to modern manifestations of pre-Islamic Arab pagan society in which God's Rule on earth *(Al-Hakimiyah)* is violated by man's deification of his fellow man and man's aggression against man. Both the capitalist and communist systems, according to Qutb, are manifestations of the Jahili system. See Qutb, *Ma'alim fi Al-Tariq*, Beirut, n.d., p.8.

[3] See my article "On the Road to the Gallows: Sayyid Qutb's Career and Thought, 1952-1966," *Bethlehem University Journal*, vol. 4 (August 1985), pp. 32-61.

Qutb's execution only created a new 'martyr' for the contemporary Islamic movement. Qutb's Qur'anic commentary *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an* (In the Shadows of the Qur'an), 1952-1965, is universally recognized as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Muslim thought and culture. Indeed, Qutb's writings have become an integral part of Islamic resurgence in the past 30 years which draws much of its strength, *inter alia*, from the unmitigated failures of the Arab regimes to build viable societies and from the repeated humiliation of the Arabs in their confrontation with Israel.[4]

Qutb's writings like those of other Muslim revolutionary writers are grounded in and justified by quotations from the Qur'an. Haddad points out the following:

> They quote them (Qur'anic Verses) repeatedly in an effort to instill Islamic consciousness, calling on fellow Muslims to renounce defeatism and the feelings of subservience, irrelevance and inferiority which appear to be the by-products of European colonialism and repeated Israeli victories. These verses are utilized to affirm a sense of dignity, of worth and of mission. From this vantage point Muslims are urged to renounce the allurement, norms and values of other cultures. As citizens of the best nation, Muslims are assured of the leadership role. Their ideology supersedes that of the two contending systems in the world, capitalism and Marxism. Muslims need not choose between one or the other. They have their own superior order which has divine validation.

2.   The Nature of the Research

The serious student who is aware of the transformation in Qutb's world-view (*Weltanschauung*) in the 1940s inevitably raises questions about the factors that led to the emergence of Qutb as an Islamicist in the late 1940s.

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[4] See, for example, R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Anatomy of Islamic Revival: Legitimacy Crisis, Ethnic Conflict and the Search for Islamic Alternatives", *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 3-12.

[5] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The View of Sayyid Qutb", *The Middle East Journal*. vol. 37, no. 1 (Winter 1983) p. 20, and see William E. Shepard, "Islam as a 'System' in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies*, January 1989, pp. 31-50.

Various answers have been suggested. For example, Muhammad Tawfiq Barakat in his work on Sayyid Qutb attributes the origin of Qutb's commitment to an Islamic ideology to one of Hasan Al-Banna's lectures and to the magic effects it supposedly had upon him.[6] Such an assertion, however, does not warrant serious consideration since it is lacking in both documentation and collaborating evidence. This and similar simplistic answers to the question fail to take into account the various forces that worked to shape Qutb's personality and outlook on life, for example his upbringing, religious training, personal disappointments and the state of Egyptian life and society in the first half of this century.

Therefore, in order to understand the changes that took place in Qutb's world view, it will be necessary to trace the various stages of his life within the context of the prevailing intellectual, political, religious and social conditions from 1919 to 1950. However, this study focuses on Qutb's career between 1939 and 1950 only, that is prior to the July 1952 "Free Officers" revolution and his subsequent emergence as a leader and ideologue for the Muslim Brothers. This stage in Qutb's life has received the least amount of attention from writers, although it is of the highest importance for attaining an understanding of the transformations in his world view.

3. Methodology

This study is framed as an historical study of ideas. Chronological presentation of Qutb's thought and career is maintained throughout the research. Under this approach transformations in his career and thought are kept within proper historical perspective which is crucial to our understanding of Qutb's transformation from a literary critic to an Islamic *da`iyah*.

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[6] Muhammad Tawfiq Barakat, *Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut, n.d., p. 17 n. 1.

The analysis presented here describe and interpret the primary sources, which are Qutb's published books and journal articles dealing with politics, literature, religion and society. Attention has also been paid to unpublished material and to the available biographies of Qutb, most of which, however, are characterized by outright partisanship.

Needless to say, anyone reading this study with a view to finding propaganda for or against the Muslim Brothers or Nasser will be disappointed. Such works are plentiful enough already and, in Ishak Musa Husseini's words, "to them can turn he who has an axe to grind and wishes to see the picture as would please his eye."[7]

In avoiding the biases of the available literature on Sayyid Qutb this study attempts to help Arab, Muslim and Western scholarship better understand the career and thought of a prominent Muslim intellectual of the 20th century.

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[7] Ishak Musa Husseini, *The Moslem Brethren - The Greatest Modern Islamic Movements,* Beirut, 1956, p. V.

CHAPTER 1

INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN EGYPT, 1919-1952

The liberal nationalist forces who drew much of their inspiration from the Western world appeared to have gained the upper hand in the aftermath of the 1919-1922 revolt and the introduction of the constitutional parliamentary system of government in 1923. They managed to leave their mark on the intellectual life of the country in the 1920s and to open the doors for the emulation and mimicry of Western civilization. However, the more the Westernizers proceeded and gained momentum the more violent was the reaction of the religiously-oriented Egyptians and the more the country became polarized.

By the mid-1930s a widespread reaction against rampant Westernization, Western suppression of the nationalist movements in the Arab East and Arab West, and the failure of the liberal nationalist establishment to achieve the independence of the Nile valley and to solve society's pressing problems was taking place even among the liberal literati. World War II and its adverse effects on the political, social and economic life of the Egyptians further alienated the one-time adherents of the liberal nationalist ideal and discredited the liberal nationalist politicians. Following the war the country slipped into a period of increasing violence and breakdown of law and order.

Thus, in the seven-year period preceding the July 1952 military revolt, the country was dominated by a sense of anger, grief and despair at the established political institutions, only exacerbated by the Egyptian defeat in the 1948 Palestine War. The result was the defection of many Egyptians to the camps of the two viable alternative groups who were

prepared to challenge the existing order, namely the Marxists and the Muslim Brothers.

It is within this context, to be examined in detail in this chapter, that the transformation of Qutb's world outlook and his joining the ranks of the Muslim Brothers in 1952 can be properly understood.

1. World War I and the Emergence of the Nationalist Movement

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, a formal British Protectorate was declared, martial law was imposed which, *inter alia*, gave sweeping powers to the British High Commissioner including the dismissal of the pro-Ottoman Khedive 'Abbas Hilmi.

British wartime measures, especially those that were carried out in the wake of the Palestine campaign in 1917 and 1918, led to ever increasing demands for labor, food and animals which naturally fell on the shoulders of the peasants.[1] The urgent demands for new recruits and volunteers to man the Labor Corps and the Camel Transport Corps led indirectly to the restoration of the practice of forced labor in the provinces. Richmond points out the following:

> In wartime the army's needs are paramount, so the military pressed for conscription to fill their ever-growing requirement. Unwilling to incur the odium of legal measures of compulsion the Egyptian government was eventually driven to resort to the time honored procedures of the corvee. The *Mudirs* of the provinces were required to produce the necessary recruits by any effective means.[2]

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[1] J.C.B. Richmond, *Egypt 1798-1952*, New York, 1977, pp. 172, 173; and see, for example, V. Lutsky, *Modern History of the Arab Countries*, trans. Lika Nasser, Moscow, 1969, pp. 377-383, and 'Abd al-'Azim Ramadan, *Tatawwur Al-Harakah Al-Wataniyah fi Misr, 1918-1936*, Cairo, 1968, pp. 66-68.

[2] Richmond, op.cit., pp. 173-174.

These wartime measures caused much resentment of the British and gave impetus to the rise of pan-Islamic and pro-Ottoman sentiments in the country. Sayyid Qutb points out in his childhood biography, *Tifl Min Al-Qaryah* (Child from the Village), that during the war the villagers were in sympathy with the Muslim Ottoman Caliphate and harbored ill feelings toward the Allies who to them represented "infidels" fighting the nation of Islam.[3]

Likewise, the war-years caused many liberal nationalists, including some with records of pro-British leanings, such as Sa'd Zaghlul, to become embittered nationalists by 1918. The transformation of Zaghlul's opinions of Britain, Richmond says, "closely paralleled those of most other Egyptians." At the beginning he advocated moderation and patience. Zaghlul believed that cooperation with the British would bring its rewards after the war. "But the heavy-handedness of British policies during the hostilities had gone far to unite the country in a demand for early independence, and an immediate end to martial law".[4]

Thus, by 1918 a strong nationalist movement was in the making, spearheaded by Sa'ad Zaghlul and colleagues from the defunct Legislative Assembly who were associated earlier with the pre-war Ummah-Jaridah group.[5]

2. The Leadership of the 1919-1922 Uprising

It is beyond the scope of this study to give a detailed account of the 1919-1922 popular revolt in Egypt.[6] It suffices to mention that Sa'ad Zaghlul and the Egyptian Delegation *(Al-Wafd Al-Misri)*, which came into existence on November 13, 1918, became its unchallenged leader and the representative of all Egypt, Muslims and Christians alike.

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[3] Sayyid Qutb, *Tifl Min Al-Qaryah*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 31, 139.

[4] Richmond, op.cit., p. 177.

[5] P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, 2nd edition, Baltimore, 1980, pp. 258-259.

[6] Ibid., pp. 247-270; Ramadan, *Tatawwur Al-Harakah Al-Wataniyah fi Misr, 1918-1936;* and 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Rafi'i, *Thawrat 1919*, 2 vols., Cairo, 1937.

In their demand for the liberation of Egypt and the Nile Valley from the British, Zaghlul and Al-Wafd Al-Misri were able to unite "the unlimited poverty of some and the insultingly bloated fortunes of others, the demand for change and the demand for conservatism, reaction and movement".[7]

From this pluralistic background the mass Wafd Party and its leadership emerged to dominate the Egyptian political scene for the next 30 years. The contradictions inherent in this pluralism, however, planted the seeds of disintegration within the party and explain the recurring splits among rank-and-file members throughout its history.[8]

It was evident, furthermore, that the leadership of the 1919-1922 revolution was dominated from its inception by secularists whose records in the pre-1919 period indicated that they were under "the spell of European thought and who were willing to adopt not only European ideas, but the very institutions that grew in Europe".[9] This was not, however, indicative of any grass-root support for the secular ideals of the Wafd. The life of the Egyptian masses continued to be shaped by Islam, its unitary world-view and its social and ethical principles. Rather, as Safran points out,

"a relatively small class of Western-educated and Western-oriented liberal nationalists had managed to ride to a decisive political victory on the wave of two elemental and hitherto inchoate forces that moved the large massed of the people: hatred of a religiously alien power, based on a Muslim view of world, and excessive economic suffering."[10]

It can be said, further, that the failure of Muslim reformists and other Islamic groups to become the rallying point for the Egyptian masses in the 1919-1922 revolution clearly indi-

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[7] Jean and Simone Lacouture, *Egypt in Transition*, trans. Francis Scarfe, New York, 1958, p. 91.

[8] See, for example, Zaheer Masood Quraishi, *Liberal Nationalism in Egypt: Rise and Fall of the Wafd Party*, Allahabad, 1967.

[9] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 244.

[10] Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community, An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952*, Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 107.

cates the absence of a viable, alternative Islamic movement
and program at that time. As Sharabi points out,

> "by 1914 Islamic revivalism had run its course; nationalism
> and its demands, not the problems of Islamic reform, had
> become the central social force in both Egypt and the Fertile
> Crescent".[11]

Thus, the secularists and the masses shared a common na-
tionalist vision - the liberation of the motherland from alien
rule.

This further explains why the secular leadership managed
"to ride to a decisive political victory" in the 1919-1922
revolution.[12]

3.   Secularism on the Offensive:
Revolt Against Tradition

The assumption of power by the Liberal Nationalists was
enhanced by Britain's unilateral declaration of Egypt's
semi-independence in 1922, followed by the promulgation of
a parliamentary constitutional monarchy in 1923 and the
holding of general elections in 1924.[13] And if the triumph of
the secular leadership of the nationalist movement did not
necessarily imply the triumph of the secular nationalist ide-
ology among the masses, it at least, according to Safran,
meant

> "the coming to power of a group of people who were
> motivated by that ideology and who could therefore use the
> important instruments of the state, such as legislation, public
> education, and other means, to foster its promotion and
> general acceptance by the public".[14]

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[11] Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914,*
Baltimore, 1970, pp. 131-132

[12] 'Abd al-'Azim Ramadan, *Tatawwur al-harakah al-wataniyah fi Misr 1937-1948,* Vol. I,
Cairo, 1973, p. 283.

[13] For an account of events leading up to the Wafd victory in 1924, see, for example,
Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 271-277.

[14] Safran, op.cit., p. 108.

The predominance of liberal nationalists in centers of power in Egypt during this period partially explains why secular forces appeared on the offensive in the 1920s, challenging the traditional Islamic ethos and causing much public uproar, as well as panic, among Muslim conservatives and Muslim reformists alike. Thus, in the aftermath of Mustafa Kamal Ataturk's abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the question was raised as to whether the position of `caliph' was indeed necessary in Islam, and if so, who would succeed Sultan Muhammad VI. King Fuad of Egypt, through discreet efforts, was one of the claimants aspiring for the title.

In 1925, in the midst of this controversy, the jurist 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq, a disciple of Muhammad 'Abduh, published his controversial work *Al-Islam wa-Usul Al-Hukm* (Islam and the Principles of Government).[15] He argued both that the Caliphate had a disasterous effect on the progress of the Muslims and that it was unnecessary on the grounds that, while the Qur'an and the Sunnah had imposed moral precepts binding on the individual conscience, they were not concerned with the problems of political power. His conclusion was that religion and politics should be separated. 'Abd Al-Raziq's work raised much controversy and, as a result of the opposition of the royal court and various Islamic groups, he was dismissed from the position of judge in the religious courts.[16]

An even more provocative work than that of 'Abd Al-Raziq appeared in 1926 entitled, *Fi Al-Shi`r Al-Jahili* (On Pre-Islamic Poetry), later reissued in 1927 as *Fi Al-Adab Al-Jahili* (On Pre-Islamic Literature), by Taha Husayn, a former student of Al-Azhar and Muhammad 'Abduh. Using the principles of Cartesian logic, the author casts doubt both on Pre-Islamic poetry and the Qur'anic stories of Abraham and Isma'il, and in the process created a public uproar. Had it not been for the intervention of the Constitutionalist Liberal Prime Minister

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[15] Cairo, 1925.

[16] For a detailed account of this controversy, see Mukhtar Al-Tuhami, *Thalath Ma'arik Fikriyah*, Cairo, 1977, pp. 53-143; Anwar Al-Jundi, *Al-Ma'arik Al-Adabiyah*, Cairo, n.d., pp. 318-328; and Safran, op.cit., pp. 140-143.

'Abd Al-Khaliq Tharwat, Husayn would probably have lost his teaching post at the Egyptian University.[17]

One can observe in the literature of the period as well strong signs of a general rebellion against traditional methods. A prime example is the emergence of the modernist Diwan School of Poetry which was spearheaded by Abbas Mahmud Al-'Aqqad, 'Abd Al-Rahman Shukri and 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Mazini, which directed bitter criticism at the neo-classical principles of such well-established literary figures of the time as Ahmad Shawqi, Hafiz Ibrahim, and Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i.

According to Ostle, *Al-Diwan: Kitab fi Al-Naqd wa-Al-Adab* (Cairo 1921) of Al-'Aqqad and Al-Mazini should be viewed in the same category as the controversial works of Taha Husayn and 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq, in that they all reflect the cultural and political crisis of the period.[18] On the nature of the Diwan group's poetry and its relation to the time, Ostle points out that "it is hardly surprising that poetry should have been showing more subjective, egocentric tendencies throughout a period when the writings and activities of figures such as the feminist Qasim Amin and the political theorist Lutfi Al-Sayyid were concerned basically with the significance of the individual in social and political terms". He adds that popular leaders such as Mustafa Kamil and Sa'd Zaghlul "gave broad sections of the Egyptian population the conviction that they too as individuals had a part to play in the struggles and the destiny of the newly emerging nation state".[19]

Commenting on the Diwan group, Gibb writes that they shared the aims and characteristics common to all Egyptian modernist in that they "do not hide their conviction that a literary revival, reflecting a revolution in the ideas and out-

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[17] Al-Tuhami, op.cit., pp. 147-185; Al-Jundi, op.cit., pp. 328-359; and Safran, op.cit., pp. 153-156.

[18] R.C. Ostle, "Ilya Abu Madi and Arabic Poetry in the Inter-war Period," in *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature*, edited by R.C. Ostle, London, 1975, pp. 40-41.

[19] Ibid., p. 41.

look of the people, is a necessary preliminary to a full revival of national life, and that it is the present task of the writer and thinker to guide the people towards the formulation and achievement of their national contribution to civilization.[20]

In addition to the literati, other secularists began to quicken the pace of attack on traditional Islam and its teachings. There was, for example, more discussion of Darwinian and social evolutionary theories, which had been put forward earlier by Shibli Shumayyil, Salama Musa, Isma'il Mazhar, Husayn Fawzi, and others. They had, in fact, carried on an extensive criticism of religious thought and had "declared Islamic civilization and culture as dead and useless and advocated the adoption of Western civilization and culture without reservation as the only way for the advancement of their country".[21] These non-literati intellectuals brushed aside Islamic reform and dubbed Al-Afghani an "ignorant reactionary". Only "evolution, science and a positivist philosophy constituted the formula which they advocated for the advancement of Egypt".[22]

Traditional society came under attack in other fields as well. Since Qasim Amin publicized the case for women's emancipation there had been repeated attempts to elevate the cause of female liberation to the national level, chief among them attempts by Malak Hifni Nasif in her *Al-Nisa'iyyat* (1910), 'Abd Al-Hamid Hamdi in the weekly journal *Al-Sufur* (1919), and Huda Sha'rawi and the Feminist Union in Egypt (founded 1923). The feminist cause was further enhanced by legislative acts from 1923 to 1931 that challenged the traditional Islamic conception of marriage.[23]

The erosion of traditional values was further advanced by a reassertion of Pharaonism, which was given impetus by the discovery of the tomb of Tutenkhamon in 1922, and which

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[20] Hamilton A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, edited by Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk, Boston, 1962, pp. 281-282.

[21] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 306.

[22] Ibid., p. 307

[23] Ibid., pp. 309-310.

assumed an important place in the writings of prominent secular Egyptian literati such as Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Tawfiq Al-Hakim in the 1920s.[24] This current was an integral part of the liberal constitutional experiment which "undermined Islam not only as a basis of community and a source of legislation but also as a determinant of national feeling and identity".[25]

4. Resurgence of Islamic Sentiments

Many Muslims were alarmed by this wave of secularism in public life, which they saw as Western destruction of Islamic teachings and the Islamic way of life. Led by Al-Azhar, Rashid Rida and the Islamic reformist circles, they clustered around Rida's *Al-Manar* and Muhibb Al-Din Al-Khatib's *Al-Fath*. They accused the secularists of being ignorant of the problems of Islam because they placed every issue in a European setting. According to *Al-Fath* "they cannot see anything except in European terms."[26]

Already in 1927 there was evidence of a renewal of Islamic sentiments resulting from the reaction of a number of Muslims who, according to Heyworth-Dunne, "were sad to see their heritage disappear, to be substituted by the Western system."[27] This renewal took the form of active Islamic associations such as *"Jam`iyyat Al-Shubban Al-Muslimin"* (The Young Men's Muslim Association, YMMA). This society was founded in November 1927 by prominent Muslims with the express purpose, *inter alia*, of opposing irreligion and libertinism, reviving the glory of Islam by restoring its religious law and its supremacy, spreading the knowledge best suited to the modern way of life, and making use of the best of

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[24] Ibid., pp. 310-311; and Safran, op.cit., pp. 145-147.

[25] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 310.

[26] See, for example, Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, London, 1960, p. 119.

[27] J.Heyworth-Dunne, *Religious and Political Trends in Modern Egypt*, Washington, DC, 1950, p. 9.

Eastern and Western cultures while rejecting what was bad in them.[28]

A year later in 1928/1929, *Jam'iyyat Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin* (Society of Muslim Brothers), which was destined to play a significant role in Egyptian political/religious life in the 1940s and early 1950s, was founded by Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949).[29]

Islamic sentiments were also evident in 1928 in public outcry and agitation against missionary activities, especially in March and April when the World Congress of non-Catholic Christian Missionaries held its annual convention in Jerusalem.[30] In 1932, further anti-missionary agitation was apparent in the accusations leveled at the American University of Cairo for allegedly encouraging the conversion of Muslims to Christianity.[31] In 1933, similar public outcries recurred when the principal of school in Port Said was accused of attempting to convert a Muslim child.[32] As a result of these incidents, a Committee for the Defense of Islam was formed in 1933, under the leadership of the former and future Shaykh Al-Azhar, Muhammad Mustafa Al-Maraghi, to combat missionary activity and influence.[33]

5. Emergence of Easternism

The resurgence of Islamic sentiment in the late 1920s, when examined within the larger intellectual trends of the period, can be seen as an integral part of a more active and general concern to return to the cultural roots of Egyp-

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[28] Ibid., pp. 11-13; and Marcel Colombe, *L'Evolution de l'Egypte, 1924-1950*, Paris, 1951, pp. 140-141.

[29] See, for example, Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, London, 1969, pp. 1-11.

[30] Colombe, op.cit., p. 143.

[31] Charles D. Smith, "The Crisis of Orientation: The Shift of Egyptian Intellectuals to Islamic Subjects in the 1930s," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 4 (October 1973), p. 400.

[32] Colombe, op.cit., p. 143.

[33] Smith, op.cit., p. 400 n. 2.

tian society and to reject the blind mimicry of Western civilization. A case in point is the development of the intellectual current of *"Al-Sharqiyah"* (Easternism), or *"Al-Rabitah Al-Sharqiyah"* (Eastern League) in the 1930s and the growing distinction in the writings of many intellectuals in Egypt and the Arab East between the "spiritual" East and the "materialistic" West, the "oppressed" East and the "imperial" West. Such intellectuals included Ahmad Amin, Tawfiq Al-Hakim, 'Abd Al-Wahhab 'Azzam, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Mikha'il Nu'aymah, and Fahmi Al-Mudarris (from Iraq) who attacked blind imitation of the West and called for the rejuvenation of Eastern cultural roots.[34]

According to Ibrahim, the attempt to revive and glorify the East appeared at a time when Egyptians were in the process of searching for cultural identity as well as political independence. Eager to assert themselves, they tended to stress the alleged spirituality of the East and Eastern civilization and to emphasize the materialistic character of Western civilization.[35]

Ramadan points out that the current of "Easternism was a transition between the pre-war current of pan-Islamism and the later notion of pan-Arabism which developed in the late 1930s and 1940s. This transitional stage was occurring at a time when Egyptians were going through a period of ambivalence, searching for their roots and gradually rediscovering their Arabic Islamic heritage.[36]

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[34] See, for example, Muhammad Jabir Al-Ansari, *Tahawwulat Al-Fikr wa-Al-Siyasah fi Al-Sharq al-'Arabi, 1930-1970*, Kuwait, 1980, pp. 37-54; and Ibrahim Iskandar Ibrahim, *The Egyptian Intellectuals between Tradition and Modernity*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1967, pp. 161-179.

[35] Ibrahim, op.cit., p. 171.

[36] A. Ramadan, *Tatawwur Al-Harakah Al-Wataniyah fi Misr, 1937-1948*, I, pp. 336-369; Al-Ansari, op.cit., p. 42; and 'Asim Ahmad Al-Disuqi, *Misr fi Al-Harb Al-'Alamiyah al-Thaniyah, 1939-1945*, Cairo, 1976, pp. 271-272.

6. Interest in Islamics

A further evidence of the search for cultural heritage in the 1930s was the renewed interest of liberal literati such as Taha Husayn, Ahmad Amin, 'Abbas Mahmud Al-'Aqqad, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, and Tawfiq Al-Hakim, in Islamic subjects.[37]

Safran categorizes this period as the "reactionary phase" of Egypt's intellectual development in the liberal nationalist era, 1919-1952. He argues that in the first phase, the "progressive phase", "which reached its height during the years of inspiring national unity and struggle right after World War I (...) the work of the intellectual leaders was characterized by a vigorous rationalist spirit, a confident Western cultural orientation, buoyant ethical aspirations, and a bold assertion of Liberal Nationalist principles and themes."[38] In the "reactionary phase", Safran asserts, "the work of the intellectual leaders reached a point that could be described as a complete retreat on all these fronts." He concludes that "the end result of the whole endeavor was disastrous. The writers had surrendered their previous guide and bearing-rationalism and a Western cultural orientation - without being able to produce viable Muslim-inspired alternatives".[39]

Charles D. Smith disagrees with Safran's thesis and asserts that "the shift of intellectuals, and particularly Taha Husayn and Husayn Haykal, was a device designed to placate the religious and political opposition of the time and that, rather than seeking Muslim-inspired alternatives, the intellectuals were trying to achieve their previous goals by different means because of the resurgence of Islamic sentiment which had occurred".[40]

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[37] For an overview of these Islamic works, see Samih Karim, *Islamiyat Taha Husayn, Al-'Aqqad, Husayn Haykal, Ahmad Amin,Tawfiq Al-Hakim*, 2nd printing, Beirut, 1977.

[38] Safran, op.cit., pp. 139-140.

[39] Ibid., p. 140.

[40] Smith, op.cit., p. 384.

Safran's controversial categorization of intellectual development into a "progressive phase" and a "reactionary phase" is an oversimplification of the complexities involved in the making of intellectuals in a transitional society and reflects the author's own distinctively Western value-judgments, that are not necessarily valid in a Muslim Arab society.

Smith's thesis, on the other hand, is relevant in the case of Taha Husayn. Husayn published his Islamic work in 1933 and followed it in 1938 with his controversial work *The Future of Culture in Egypt.* In this controversial work he advocated Egypt's close affinity with European culture. The greatest pitfall in Smith's thesis, however, is that it fails to take into consideration the fact that intellectuals, as integral members of Egypt's transitional society, were reflecting genuinely society's quest for cultural roots and heritage, a phenomenon which many authors believe to be authentic.[41]

Ibrahim explains the interest in Islamics in a more convincing manner than either Safran or Smith. In his view, the intellectuals, especially the literati *(Udaba'),* never possessed a vigorous rationalist spirit which they later abandoned, as Safran suggests. "It is misleading to conceive them as systematic thinkers, who began as `progressive' rationalists, glorifying reason, and ended as `reactionary', attacking reason and advocating the superiority of passion."[42]

He points out that these literati were masters of the traditional culture and that they were deeply influenced by their Islamic upbringing and by their profound knowledge of Arabic and its classical literature. In his view "the impact of traditional life on the minds of this generation was so deep that it could occupy a large space in their autobiographies".[43]

Thus, the literati represented the "transitional" society that was in the process of formation. they grew up in a tradi-

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[41] See, for example, Al-Ansari, op.cit., p. 47; and Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Ittijahat al-Wataniyah fi Al-Adab Al-Mu'asir,* vol. 2, Beirut, 1970, pp. 158-182.

[42] Ibrahim, op.cit., p. 27.

[43] Ibid., p. 20.

tional society and attained manhood "when the beliefs, culture and outlook of that society were disintegrating and finally came to experience life in another social structure which was obscure and to some extent confused". Ibrahim points out that as a result the literati were the product of two worlds which eventually merged to form a single unstable world.[44] "Hence, their double *Weltanschauung*."[45] As Al-'Aqqad puts it, this unstable and confusing transitional age was "like the Tower of Babel, which was built and rebuilt year after year".[46]

These literati were, according to Ibrahim, "enlightened" Muslims who, unlike such secularists as Salama Musa, Isma'il Mazhar and Husayn Fawzi, tried to renew, not refute, the traditional culture.[47] They had much to admire in Western civilization, but were reluctant to accept it fully. Instead, they sought to reconcile the "technique" of the West with the "spirituality" of the East. Once this was achieved, a new Eastern civilization would emerge.[48]

The literati, therefore, were "neither totally emancipated from the hold of the old traditional culture, nor enthusiastic Westernizers. They were the connective link between tradition and modernity".[49] Furthermore, in their writings they attempted to bridge the gap between East and West and to steer a middle course in a society which had been polarized since Muhammad 'Abduh's death into two camps: Westernizers, on the one hand, and Muslim reformers and conservatives on the other.

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[44] Ibid., p. 21.

[45] Ibid., p. 29.

[46] Quoted from 'Abbas Mahmud Al-'Aqqad, *Hayat Qalam*, Cairo, 1964, p. 43, as cited in ibid.

[47] Ibrahim, op.cit., p. 23.

[48] Ibid., pp. 23, 30, 33.

[49] Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

7.   Failure of the Political System

The resurgence of Islamic and anti-Western sentiments in
public life in the late 1920s and 1930s, as well as the
emergence of mass movements in the 1930s, including the
Society of Muslim Brothers, Young Egypt Party, and Com-
munist Party which functioned outside the political system
can be attributed, *inter alia*, to the bankruptcy of the Egyp-
tian liberal nationalist regime. A closer examination of the
parliamentary monarchial regime of 1923 to 1952 attests to
an undistinguished record of failure in its efforts both to
realize the ideals of the 1919-1922 uprising (the total libera-
tion of the Nile Valley from British tutelage), and to solve
the pressing problems of the nation. Thus, whenever there
was a free election under the provisions of the 1923 consti-
tution, the Wafdists, who represented the nationalist forces
under the leadership of Sa'd Zaghlul and after 1927 under
Mustafa Nahas, would inevitabely come to power. King
Fuad and after 1936 his son King Faruq, both of whom
firmly believed that a benevolent despotism and not liberal-
ism was best suited to Egypt and who were determined to
govern as they pleased, would then seek ways of removing
the Wafd, dissolving parliament and modifying or suspend-
ing the 1923 Constitution.

With the help of a coalition of anti-Wafdist forces which
included the King's henchmen of *Ittihadists* (Union Party)
and *Sha'bists* (People's Party), as well as other parties which
were formed by successive splits from the Wafd, such as the
Constitutional Liberals, the Sa'dists and the Wafdist Bloc, the
King was able to prevent the Wafd from enjoying the fruits
of its constitutional victories.[50]

The Wafd was able to mobilize mass support and organize
city and town mobs for demonstrations against those
usurping constitutional powers. However, it remained in
opposition until a quarrel between the King and the Consti-
tutional Liberals or the Sa`dists (for example, in 1925 and

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[50] For an excellent account of these political developments, see Yunan Labib Rizq, *Tarikh
Al-Wizarat Al-Misriyah, 1878-1953*, Cairo, 1975, pp. 261-527.

1949), or a change in Britain's politics toward internal politics, brought about its return to power (as happened in 1930, 1936 and 1942).[51]

Failure of the political system can also be attributed to British interference in the internal affairs of Egypt. Britain and its High commissioner (who often had the last word in Egyptian internal policy) manipulated both the struggle between the king and the Wafd, and the divisions in the nationalist movement to Britain's strategic interests.[52]

The exploitation of Egypt's domestic front by the British can be seen clearly in the recall of the Wafd to power both in 1936 and 1942; each time the recall had disastrous effects on the Wafd's grip on the nationalist forces.

The signing of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, which provided for mutual defense arrangement and the continued presence of British forces in the Suez Canal area, was seen by many of the Wafd Party rank-and-file as a betrayal of the nationalist cause. They also saw it as a negation of the Wafd's role as the leader of the movement for complete independence, a role it had held from 1919 to 1935.[53]

According to Vatikiotis, students, professionals and intellectuals, left the Wafd: and many of them joined other mass movements including the Muslim Brothers and Young Egypt organizations.[54] Thus, it appeared that by the late 1930s and 1940s both internal and external factors were causing liberal nationalist ideology to lose ground. The failure of the liberal nationalist regime to build viable democratic institutions for achieving complete independence from Britain in accordance with the ideals of the 1919-1922 revolution, as well as its failure to solve the nation's ills, discredited it internally.

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[51] For example, see ibid.; and Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century: An Economic Survey*, London, 1954, pp. 260-261.

[52] See, for example, Peter Mansfield, *The British in Egypt*, London, 1971, pp. 277-279.

[53] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 320.

[54] Ibid.

Externally, the successful challenge put to Western democracies by Fascism and Marxism in the aftermath of the great depression of the late 1920s and the 1930s left a deep impression on Egyptians, further lowering the credibility of the liberal nationalist experiment.[55] Safran points out the following:

> The contrast between the misery, despair, and social discord that pervaded the Western democracies and the discipline, orderliness, and aggressive confidence that appeared to characterize the totalitarian regimes made a deep impression on Egyptians, who had seen in their own country a record of unmitigated failures of democracy. Consequently, the Wafd and other political groups, rather than seeking to reactivate the constitution in earnest, began to turn their eyes to altogether different forms of political organization. In 1937-1938, the Wafd organized a paramilitary movement after the model of the S.A. and the Fascist phalanges which became known as the Blue Shirts and adopted all the paraphernalia of the German and Italian groups, including the Fascist salute, the swaggering, the hero-worship and the promotion of the 'Fuehrerprinzip'. At about the same time, in an attempt to capitalize on the Wafd's surrender of the national cause, another organization, the Green Shirts, was formed with an ideology and a program copied from Fascism...[56]

The discrediting of the liberal nationalist regime and institutions at home was given impetus, furthermore, by the increasing Egyptian awareness of the suffering of their fellow Arabs and Muslims at the hands of Western democracies such as Britain and France. As a result of the rapid growth of the Arabic press and the advent of Arab broadcasting, Egyptians became increasingly aware of the French suppression of the nationalist movements in the Levant and North Africa in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, as well as of British sponsorship of the Jewish National Home in Palestine and their concomitant suppression of the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

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[55] Safran, op.cit., p. 192; and Al-Ansari, op.cit., pp. 85-86.

[56] Safran, op.cit., p. 192.

Their awareness of these circumstances helped influence Egyptian nationalists to redirect their efforts. Instead of aiming to create an "Egypt for the Egyptians" modelled after Western democracies, they began to turn more and more to a vision of Arab and Muslim solidarity under Egypt's leadership.[57]

8. The Impact of World War II

The rapid growth of industry and Allied workshops and services in Egypt during World War II, 1939-1945, created a great movement of people from the rural areas to the major urban centers, especially Cairo. Thus, between 1937 and 1947 alone, Cairo's population increased more than 60% over the previous decade, while the population of Egypt as a whole for the same period increased 20%.[58] According to Lerner "the ancient metropolis has not the social capacity to absorb them as participants, and these urbanized nomads increase the nation's explosive rather than productive potential".[59]

The years during and following World War II put further strain on the social and political spheres, and saw a continued erosion of popular support for the liberal nationalist regime.[60] Issawi says:

Perhaps the most important single factor was the imposition of a 20th century inflation on a social structure in many ways reminiscent of the 18th century. The gap between rich and poor, already great, was further enlarged; the unskilled rural and urban laborer suffered severe privations; and the salaried middle and lower middle classes, whose money incomes rose very little, were relentlessly pressed down. Moreover,... the withdrawal of the Allied troops from Egypt

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[57] Richmond, op.cit., pp. 201-202. and see A. Ramadan, *Tatawwur Al-Harakah Al-Wataniyah fi Misr, 1937-1948*, II, pp. 344-369.

[58] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, Paperback edition, New York, 1964, p. 218; and Issawi, op.cit., pp. 55, 60.

[59] Lerner, op.cit., pp. 218-219; and Safran, op.cit., p. 182.

[60] For a detailed examination of the war-time period, see Al-Disuqi, op.cit.

after the war led to an estimated unemployment of over
250,000 and to much distress and agitation.[61]

Furthermore, during the war years, when the Anglo-Ameri-
can Middle East Supply Center made Egypt the central focus
of the Allied war effort in the Middle East and North Africa,
relations between Egyptians and the occupying forces dete-
riorated. Mansfield points out the following:

> For the average British soldier a typical Egyptian was a
> Cairo prostitute or a Port Said pimp selling Spanish fly and
> tickets to a blue film. After a few beers he would be ready to
> belt out the British army version of the Egyptian national
> anthem:
>
> > King Farouk, King Farouk
> > Hang your ballocks on a hook
> >
> > or
> >
> > Queen Farida
> > Queen of all the wogs
> > Most Egyptians knew enough English to
> > understand and if they did not the sentiment
> > was clear.[62]

The ethos of World War II was no more visible than in the
post-war writings of Egyptian novelists, especially Najib
Mahfuz in his 1947 novel, *Zuqaq Al-Midaqq*,[63] which was re-
ceived with much acclaim for its realistic portrayal of the
impact of the war on the inhabitants of a blind alley in the
Husayni quarter of old Cairo, near Al-Azhar. The residents of
the Zuqaq are noncombatants; nevertheless the war invades
their lives in the form of rising prices, well-paid jobs on Allied
bases in Cairo and at the Suez Canal, and drastic changes in
their own lives.

Through the central characters of the novel, Hamidah, the
restless beautiful maiden of the alley who is willing, at any
cost, to leave the alley and its wretched conditions; Kirsha,

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[61] Issawi, op.cit., p. 262; and see Al-Disuqi, op.cit., pp. 204-212.

[62] Mansfield, op.cit., p. 279.

[63] Mahfuz's work has been reprinted several times and was translated into English. See
Naguib Mahfouz, *Midaq Alley*, trans. Trevor LeGassick, Beirut, 1965, and London, 1974.

the homosexual owner of the alley's coffeehouse; Zita, the kingmaker of beggars; Doctor Bushi, the self-appointed dentist and a partner of Zita; and Sayyid Radwan Al-Husayni, the dignified and philanthropic mystic who is loved by all, the reader gets a personal feel for the impact of the war and the presence of large numbers of Allied forces in Egypt upon Egyptian urban society, as well as for the other social and economic ills which afflicted it at the same time.

For example, Hamidah, the principal figure in the novel, represents the restless Egyptian youth who were overanxious to seek a more exciting life and better job opportunities in the Allied camps. Hamidah is lured by money and fine clothes, which she always desired, and by a pimp, Faraj Ibrahim, who trains her to cater to the pleasures of Allied soldiers. When her fiance, 'Abbas Al-Hulw, the barber of the alley who gave up his profession for a more lucrative job in a British army camp, discovers her entertaining a group of drunken British soldiers, he attacks her only to be beaten to death by the soldiers.

Commenting on Mahfuz's *Zuqaq Al-Midaqq*, Sakkut writes:

> "the world of the Zuqaq exists as a criticism of the real world. The novel is a cry in the ears of the authorities: this is your society, or by far the greater part of it, which receives nothing from you but neglect and contempt. One admires Mahfuz for having the courage and humanity to describe in such detail a man like Zita, while most other people either try to pretend that such sordidness and filth do not exist, or else deny that this is a proper subject for a work of art."[64]

Another World War II development which had a far-reaching impact on Egyptian political development in the postwar period was British imposition of a Wafdist cabinet on the king and the country. The return of the Wafd to power on February 4, 1942 with the aid of Sir Miles Lampson, British High Commissioner since 1933, and General R.C.W.H Stone, Commander of British troops and armor in Egypt,

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[64] Hamdi Sakkut, *The Egyptian Novel and Its Main Trends, From 1913 to 1952*, Cairo, 1971, p. 124.

likewise, caused even grater anger and frustration among Egyptians.[65]

The incident caused a great rift between the humiliated king and the Wafd, as well as dismay among many of the Wafd's followers and young army officers. As Vatikiotis points out:

"Politics "became a game of revenge: The Wafd struck against all those who helped keep them out of power since 1937, and the king and Palace minions watched for the first opportunity to destroy the Wafd. Meanwhile, the public suffered in a struggle to make ends meet under adverse economic and financial wartime conditions."[66]

Commenting on the February 1942 incident, Safran writes,

"The supreme irony of the spectacle could scarcely be exaggerated. The party that called itself custodian of the national aspirations, that for years had fought more ardently than any other on behalf of the democratic constitution, was now accepting office through an act that was in flagrant violation of both Egyptian sovereignty and the constitution."[67]

Mansfield asserts that the February 1942 incident was a "seminal event in the history of modern Egypt. Its immediate effect was to upset the 20-year old triangular balance of forces in Egyptian political life, ultimately it destroyed the monarchy, the Wafd, and, in helping to provoke the 1952 Revolution, the British position in Egypt".[68]

9.   Trends of the Post-War Period, 1945-1952

After the war ended the country slipped into a period of increasing violence, chaos and breakdown in law and order, which came to an end only with the overthrow of the monarchy and liberal nationalist regime by the Free Officers in July 1952. According to Vatiokiotis

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[65] Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 347-348; and Mansfield, op.cit., pp. 277-279. Also see Al-Disuqi, op.cit., pp. 100-129.

[66] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 349.

[67] Safran, op.cit., p. 193.

[68] Mansfield, op.cit., p. 278.

"the old political groups had lost their hegemony after the last war partly because they had lost their control over the organized-and not so organized-masses of city fold, the youth in schools and universities, the increasing numbers of industrial works, but most important the soldiers".[69]

This breakdown of law and order between 1945 and 1952 can be seen in the epidemic eruption of waves of strikes among industrial workers and public employees, including the police force. Many of the strikers and demonstrators were violently suppressed.[70] These strikes were accompanied by other outbreaks of discontent, including violence, which resulted from the inability of the political leadership to reach agreement on the revision or abrogation of the 1936 Treaty during Anglo-Egyptian negotiations.[71]

The social and political breakdown can also be seen in the frequent assassinations or attempted assassinations of public figures that took place during this period. Those assassinated included: Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir (1945), the Wafdist Anglophile Amin 'Uthman (1946), the Secretary of the Cairo Court of Appeals (1948), the Chief of Cairo Police, Salim Zaki (1948), Prime Minister Nuqrashi (1948) and the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brothers, Hassan Al-Banna (1949). Abortive attempts were made against Wafdist leader Mustafa Nahas (1946 and 1948), and Prime Minister Ibrahim 'Abd Al-Hadi (1949).[72] Violents acts were also committed against public places, as can be exemplified in the bombings of Metro Cinema (May 1947), Cairo's Jewish quarter (1948) and some large department stores in Cairo (Summer 1948).[73]

Other factors contributing to the breakdown of the political system included the scandalous behavior of the once-promising King Faruq who, according to Issawi, discredited both the monarchy and the existing order; and Egypt's defeat in

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[69] Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 356-357.

[70] Safran, op.cit., p. 200.

[71] Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 360, 364.

[72] Ibid., pp. 364, 365.

[73] Ibid., p. 364.

the 1948 Palestine War, which devastated the morale of the armed forces.[74]

Under these war-time and post-war conditions two alternative groups appeared on the Egyptian scene which were prepared to challenge the existing order: leftist groups, which had gained much confidence by the defeat of fascism in Europe following two decades of agonizing struggle to formulate viable Marxist alternatives to the liberal nationalist regime; and the Society of Muslim Brothers, with years of discipline and experience behind them. According to Ahmed, "for a time these two groups seemed to be the only social and political groups existing in Egypt, and to a large extent in the whole Arab world."[75]

10. The Leftist Groups

The 1940s saw the proliferation of radical student and workers' committees and clubs in Egypt which gave the nationalist movement new direction. These groups set up in 1945 national committees of students and workers which challenged the regime by its continuous agitation.[76] In addition, there was a growth in leftist political and cultural organs, including The Institute for Scientific Research and the Committee for the Propagation of Modern Culture, as well as the journals *Al-Fajr Al-Jadid*, *Al-Tali'ah* and *Al-Jamahir*.[77]

At the same time, a National Popular University was created for the training of working-class leaders. During the six months the University was in existence it offered evening classes in, political economy, history, philosophy, literature and international affairs.[78]

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[74] Issawi, op.cit., p. 264.

[75] Ahmad, op.cit., p. 123.

[76] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 358. Also see Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, New York, 1968, p. 22; and Tariq Al-Bishri, *Al-Harakah Al-Siyasiyah fi Misr, 1945-1952*, Cairo, 1972, pp. 78-84

[77] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 358; Abdel-Malek, op.cit., p. 22; and Al-Bishri, op.cit., pp. 75-78.

[78] Abdel-Malek, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

Vatikiotis points out that these Marxist groups combined a program of national liberation (i.e., the evacuation of British forces from Egypt) with the "liberation of exploited masses from a capitalist minority,(...) and played a major role in labor strikes and student demonstrations which followed from February 1946 until 1952".[79] He adds that these groups influenced the "tactics and programs" of other well-established groups, which in turn adopted more radical reforms into their own political programs. For example, the left wing of the Wafd took up "the cause of the urban proletariat" and attacked the "capitalists" and the state of the national economy, in order to make the Wafd's program more appealing to the masses.[80]

The monthly review *Al-Ba'th*, founded by the Wafdist man of letters Muhammad Mandur in 1944, became a platform for intellectuals who advocated a close link between the intelligentsia and the rural and urban working classes. They advocated radical economic and social measures to alleviate the nation's ills as well as to promote social justice, economic equality and political freedom.[81] Likewise, the Muslim Brothers introduced "vast social welfare schemes into their activities, including insurance for workers and health care". In Addition, the Nationalist Islamic Party, formerly *Misr Al-Fatat*, changed its name to the Socialist Party of Egypt "to reflect the trends of that period".[82]

In 1945 the Wafdists, the nationalist and communist intellectuals, and the trade unions formed a common front, the National Committed of Workers and Students, in order to demand the total British evacuation of Egypt, the internationalization of Egyptian demands, and liberation from economic subjection.[83] The National Committee's influence, according to Abdel-Malek, extended to universities, secondary and technical schools, the intelligentsia, the professions and the

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[79] Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 358-359.

[80] Ibid., p. 359.

[81] Ibid.; and 'Abdel-Malek, op.cit., p. 26.

[82] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 359.

[83] Abdel-Malek, op.cit., p. 23.

trade unions.[84] It spearheaded mass action in the form of local committees, demonstrations, strikes and armed struggles against the British.[85]

11.   The Muslim Brothers

The inability of earlier Muslim reformers, such as Muhammad 'Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida, to translate their Islamic ideology into religious mass movements was overcome by their disciple Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949), who was able to create a viable Islamic movement in the 1930s and 1940s. The Muslim Brothers had a unique opportunity to benefit from and to expand as a result of the failure of the Wafd and also the failure of successive governments to solve the massive problems of society. According to Safran, these unsolved problems "drove millions to despair, and hundreds of thousands to the ranks of the one organization that promised to eliminate the whole system".[86]

The bulk of the Society's supporters and propagandists had come form the Wafd party, which had already been losing members for several years. Heyworth-Dunne points out that "the greatest secession took place after the Wafd was dismissed in October 1944, when Makram Ebeid published his *Black Book* in 1945 on the misdeeds of the Wafd while in power, thus giving Hasan al-Banna all the materials he needed to attack the Wafd and to undermine its position".[87]

In addition to their basic call for a *Shari'ah*-based Muslim society to replace the Western-inspired regime of 1919-1952, the Muslim Brothers' program for the rebirth of Egypt called for such economic reforms as the abolition of usury in all its forms, the nationalization of natural resources and also financial institutions such as the Misr Bank, the industrialization of the whole nation, the reform of the tax system, the

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[86] Safran, op.cit., p. 200.

[87] Heyworth-Dunne, op.cit., p. 19.

redistribution of land, the protection of farm renters from landowners, the introduction of labor reform measures in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and the institution of Zakat-based social security.[88]

The Society embarked upon a series of industrial and commercial enterprises to demonstrate the feasibility of an Islamic alternative to the Western-inspired economic system. Mitchell points out the following:

> In its 'industrial' and commercial operations, the Society sought not only to demonstrate the viability of Islamic economic theory, but also to provide itself and the membership with profitable earnings. In its labor activity, the Society sought not only to demonstrate the feasibility and desirability of harmonious labor-management relations within an Islamic framework, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to establish itself as the spokesman for the needs and expectations of the vast and inarticulate body of Egyptian labor, a fact of great significance in its claim to authority on the Egyptian scene.[89]

The society's labor union activities were intensive and met with much success among transport, textile, utilities and refinery workers. However, the withdrawal of the Society-dominated unions from the above mentioned National Committee of Workers and Students, according to Mitchell, "brought upon the Society the wrath of all 'progressive' forces" in the leftist alliance,[90] and signaled the renewal of internecine struggle between the leftist groups and the Muslim Brothers for the leadership of the masses.

According to Vatikiotis, the Brothers were

> "politically more successful until 1952, having won over a great number of followers from the masses. The leftists were at a disadvantage, for not only were their leadership and spokesmen from the Western and Westernized sectors of society, but their proposals for reform and change were based on foreign ideology".[91]

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[88] Mitchell, op.cit.,pp. 272-274.

[89] Ibid., p. 274.

[90] Ibid., p. 281.

[91] Vatikiotis, op.cit., p. 360.

Ibrahim, likewise, forwards the notion that the "secular views of the leftists were extremely alien to the mind of the Egyptian workers not to speak of the fellah".[92]

In light of these developments the decade preceding the July 1952 military revolt was dominated by a sense of anger, grief and despair at the established political institutions and their inability to solve the country's pressing problems. This is evident in the intellectual production of the period, which was focused on social protest and demanded the total reform of Egyptian society.

Thus, between 1945 and 1950 Taha Husayn, departing from his earlier controversial cultural works, published several works which were critical of the established order and which dealt with social injustice, political corruption, and resistance to oppression and exploitation. These included *Jannat Al-Shawk* (1945), *Mir'at Al-Damir Al-Hadith* (1949), *Al-Mu'adhdhabun fi Al-Ard* (1949), which was banned in Egypt, and *Jannat Al-Hayawan* (1950).[93] Cachia points out that Husayn's

> "fretting over the stationary conditions of the masses is genuine, and there are signs of a swing to the left and an unprecedented concern with moral issues, as though his earlier faith in the inevitable success of simple but fundamental formulae-liberty, parliamentary democracy, natural evolution-had ended in disillusionment".[94]

Radical social and economic ideas were also expressed by members of the Western-educated elite such as the literary critic Muhammad Mandur, the philosopher Abd Al-Rahman Badawi, the economist Rashid Al-Barawi, the literary and cultural historian Louis Awad, and the folklorist Rushdi Salih, among others. Many of these intellectuals were Wafdists who had become disillusioned with the party as a result of the contradictions they saw in it. Many of them expressed their views in Mandur's *Al-Ba`th* and Rushdi Salih's *Al-Fajr Al-Jadid*, as well as in other journals which represented

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[92] Ibrahim, op.cit., p. 322.
[93] Pierre Cachia, *Taha Husayn: His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance*, London: 1956, pp. 64-65.
[94] Ibid., p. 66.

"Egyptian avantgarde radicalism in the forties".[95]

The nature of the Islamic alternative to the liberal nationalist system was also hotly debated among advocates of Islamic government. Sayyid Qutb's alienation from and anger at the established order for its failures to solve society's problems led him to write his *Al-'Adalah Al-Ijtima'iyah fi Al-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), 1949, in which he pressed for a solution to the dilemmas facing society that was based on an Islamic notion of social justice. His thesis was simple: Islam was a comprehensive system embracing every aspect of life. As such, it offered a solution to societal problems that was far superior to the materialistic systems of capitalism and communism. Two years later Qutb published his revolutionary *Ma'rakat Al-Islam wa-Al-Ra'smaliyah* (The Battle of Islam and Capitalism), 1951, where he attacked the liberal political order, the religious hierarchy, the miserable social conditions and feudal state of society, and called once again for an Islamic solution.

The most controversial work of the period by far, however, was that of Shaykh Khalid Muhammad Khalid's *Min Huna Nabda'* (1950). The debate surrounding his book was a replica of that which was provoked in 1925 by the publication of 'Abd Al-Raziq's work *Al-Islam wa-Usul Al-Hukm*. In his bitter attack against the *status quo* the 30-year old Azharite called for the purging of "priestcraft" from Islam, and charged that official faith often conspires with wealth against justice and mercy. He restated 'Abd Al-Raziq's basic argument that Islam has nothing to do with political and social order, and claimed that the prohibitions laid down by the Qur'an could very well be accommodated in a secular state. He went on to insist on the indispensability of secular national government and of socialism for reconstructing a healthy and prosperous society. He also advocated the further emancipation and education of women.

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[95] Vatikiotis, op.cit., pp. 341-342.

CHAPTER II

EMERGENCE OF THE STUDENT OF THE QUR'AN

1. Qutb's Literary Career, 1939-1947

Qutb's vigorous interest in literary criticism was evident in the dozens of articles which appeared in Cairo's leading literary reviews *Al-Risalah* and *Al-Thaqafah* in this period. These articles were collected in his work *Kutub wa-Shakhsiyat* (Books and Personalities) which was published in 1946.[1]

One critic, Muhammad Al-Nuwayhi, who was highly critical of Qutb's attempts to establish a theoretical basis for literary criticism, praises highly his talent for literary appreciation. He describes Qutb as a "man with pure artistic taste" who was thus instinctively able to convey to his readers the artistic enjoyment he derived from his analysis of a literary text.[2]

Qutb's career in literary criticism was highlighted by his work *Al-Naqd Al-Adabi: Usuluhu wa Manahijuhu* (Literary Criticism: Its Sources and Methods) which appeared in 1947. Al-Nuwayhi was extremely critical of this work,[3] but the critic Muhammad Yusuf Najm describes it as reflecting a fine taste *(dhawq murhaf)*, a deep original understanding *(fahm `amiq asil)*, and a comprehensive Arabic education *(wa-thaqafah 'Arabiyah shamilah)*.[4]

Qutb describes his critical method as comprehensive *(manhaj takamuli)*, that is, encompassing and utilizing all literary methods, including artistic, historical, and psychological analyses, when passing a comprehensive judgment on a

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[1] See, for example, *Al-Risalah*, no. 682 (29 July 1946), p. 847.

[2] Muhammad Al-Nuwayhi, *Thaqafat Al-Naqid Al-Adabi*, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1969,p. 62.

[3] Ibid., pp. 59-64.

[4] *Al-Adab Al-'Arabi fi Athar Al-Darisin*, Beirut, 1961, p. 62.

literary work.[5] Qutb, the literary critic, is described by Najm as a self-made critic of Al-'Aqqad's school, who, unlike most Arab literary critics, paved his own way in the field without the knowledge of a foreign language or first hand exposure to Western literary criticism. His exposure came through the Arabic translations of Western-educated writers such as Zaki Najib Mahmud, Muhammad 'Awad Muhammad, Muhammad Mandur, Mahmud Al-Ghul, and Nazmi Khalil.[6] It is worth mentioning that Qutb's exposure to Western literature also came through the translations of his mentor Al-'Aqqad and his younger brother Muhammad.[7]

As a literary critic Qutb figured prominently in the emergence of the novelist Najib Mahfuz from obscurity. According to Mahfuz, the first two critics to review his works in *Al-Risalah*, Sayyid Qutb and Anwar Al-Ma'adawi, deserve the credit for bringing him into the limelight.[8] Qutb's enthusiastic analysis of Mahfuz's work can be seen in his review of *Khan Al-Khalili* (1945), a novel about Egyptian society during World War II. Qutb said that the novel portrayed in depth and in a true, precise, simple manner a living picture *(surah hayyah)* of the air-raids, fears, mentality, and surrounding conditions of the war years. According to Qutb, this novel ought to be singled out in the annals of modern Egyptian literature because it marked a decisive step *(khatwah hasimah)* toward a national literature with both a pure Egyptian spirit and an international aura. Qutb concluded his review as follows: "I hope that these words will not excite the vanities of the young author whom I hope will be Egypt's writer of the long novel".[9]

[5] Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Naqd Al-Adabi: Usuluhu wa-Manahijuhu*, Cairo, 1947, pp. 247-248.

[6] *Al-Adab Al-`Arabi fi AtharAl-Darisin*, pp. 362-363.

[7] See, for example, Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Naqd Al-Adabi*, p. 56; and idem, "Ra'y fi Al-Shi`r," *Al-Kitab* (Cairo), Sana 3, no. 2 (February 1948), p. 255.

[8] See Fu'ad Duwarah, *'Asharat Udaba' Yatahaddathun*, Cairo, 1965, p. 280.

[9] Sayyid Qutb, "'Ala Hamish Al-Naqd: Khan Al-Khalili," *Al-Risalah*, no. 650 (17 December 1945), p. 1364; and Qutb, *Kutub wa-Shakhsiyat*, Beirut, 1974, pp. 159, 165.

In addition to his critical work, Qutb wrote short novels which included *Al-Madinah Al-Mashurah* (The Bewitched City) in 1946, fashioned after *A Thousand and One Nights*, and *Ashwak* (Thorns) in 1947. It is generally believed that *Ashwak*, which is dedicated to two lovers whose affair comes to a painful end, reflects Qutb's own love affair in the 1940s, a topic which will be discussed further. In addition, Qutb co-authored several educational manuals in the 1940s, including *Al-Qasas Al-Dini*, *Al-Jadid fi Al-Lughah Al-'Arabiya*, *Rawdat Al-Tifl*, and *Al-Jadid fi Al-Mahfuzat*.[10]

2. Qutb's Renewed Interest in the Qur'an

Qutb's vigorous interest in literary criticism in the 1930s and 1940s branched into an area of analysis hitherto unexamined in modern Arabic literature, namely the literary analysis of artistic imagery and portrayal in the Qur'an. In February and March 1939 Qutb's articles on this subject appeared in Cairo's leading cultural and scientific monthly review, *Al-Muqtataf*, where he pointed out, *inter alia*, the inimitability *(i`jaz)* of the Qur'anic literary style and called for a comprehensive study of the Qur'an as a literary text.

Qutb's interest in the Qur'an in 1939, albeit for literary purposes only, can be seen as the first major sign of the change that was to take place in his intellectual orientation and the beginning of his trek in search of an Islamic ideology. According to Qutb himself, the Qur'an, more than any other single factor, was instrumental in leading him out of the turbulence he experienced in his fruitless search for the infinite into a strong belief in the Islamic way of life.

Qutb's emergence as a serious student of the Qur'an was accompanied by his emergence as a moralist and as an anti-Western, anti-establishment intellectual. These mutually re-inforcing developments were, like the Qur'anic teachings,

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[10] For a listing of these and other works of Qutb, see *Dalil Al-Matbu`at Al-Misriyah, 1940-1956*, Cairo, 1975.

crucially significant in the makeup of Qutb's ideology in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

Qutb, the outspoken moralist, can be seen emerging publicly in 1940 in the many articles he wrote attacking the prevailing public morality of Egypt, including the part played by the entertainment sector of society in demoralizing the will of the people. He criticized the younger generation and their way of life, and also attacked what he considered to be the disgraceful behavior of the "aristocrats" who bathed on Alexandria's beaches, accusing them of being alien to the Egyptians and their culture.

Qutb's criticism of Western civilization, was already noticeable in the 1930s. By the mid-1940s, however, he had become very outspoken in his condemnation of such Western powers as France, Great Britain, the United States, and Holland. He attacked British and French imperialistic policies in the Arab world, and accused Western civilization of bankruptcy and the Western conscience of rottenness. He also criticized those Arabs who trusted in the West and who were fond of the Western way of life, warning them not to be complacent about the British in light of the latter's imperialistic and conspiracies against the Palestinian Arabs.

By the mid-1940s, Qutb, the long-time supporter of the Wafd Party in 1920s and 1930s, had become disillusioned with the prevailing political system. He accused Egyptian political parties, including the Wafd, of indifference to the social ills of Egyptian society and asserted that social justice in Egypt was nonexistent. He called for the reform of the programs of the existing political parties or the creation of new parties with a constructive mentality. He also directed his attacks against the privileged in society and against the accommodation of the British by Egyptian politicians, reminding his readers of Egypt's heroes of the near past, including Mustafa Kamil and Sa'd Zaghlul, who stood up for Egypt and its independence.

By the late 1940s Qutb was following an independent literary path, having gradually disassociated himself from Al-

'Aqqad and his school. There were, in addition, many signs that Qutb was becoming alienated from the secular literary establishment as a whole.

3. Qur'an of Childhood

Qutb's childhood memorization of the Qur'an did not give him a deep insight into the meaning and significance of the Book. However, certain verses did leave a deep impression on his imagination in the form of imagery or personal associations. For example, the imagery of a man praying at the edge of a cliff and on the verge of falling down form it was invoked whenever he read Qur'an 22:11 ('and among mankind is he who worshippeth Allah upon a narrow marge so that if good befalleth him he is content therewith, but if a trial befalleth him he falleth away utterly. He loseth both the world and the Hereafter').[11] Another strong impression was the image of a man breathing heavily with mouth wide-open and tongue hanging out, which came to him whenever he read Qur'an 7:175-176 ('recite unto them the tale of him to whom We gave Our revelations, but he sloughed them off, so Satan overtook him and he became of those who lead astray. Therefore his likeness is as the likeness of a dog; if thou attackest him he panteth with his tongue out, and if thou leavest him he panteth with his tongue out').[12]

Qutb says that the pleasant, simplified and exciting Qur'an of childhood (*Qur'an Al-Tufulah Al-'Adhib, Al-Muyassar, Al-Mushawwiq*) was transformed, into the difficult, complicated and broken Qur'an of youth (*Qur'an Al-Shabab Al-'Asir, Al-Mumazzaq*) as a result of reading Qur'anic commentaries while attending institutions of learning in Cairo.[13]

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[11] Qutb, *Al-Taswir Al-fanni fi Al-Qur'an*, Cairo, 1962, pp. 7-8. I utilized the following works in my quotation of Qur'anic verses: Muhammad M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an: Text and Explanatory Translation*, Mecca, 1977; and Muhammad Isma'il Ibrahim, *Mu'jam Al-Alfaz wa-Al-A'lam Al-Qur'aniyah*, 2nd edition, Cairo, 1968.

[12] Qutb, *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an*, p. 8.

[13] Ibid.

Furthermore, Qutb's secular-oriented life in Cairo in the 1920s and 1930s led to a diminishing of his Islamic beliefs and to extreme doubt about his faith.[14] Even so, Qutb admits that "intermittently he felt a secret desire to take comfort in the Qur'an." "These moments", Qutb says, "invigorated him like no other experience did and made him feel that he was indeed standing on firm grounds which had not been desecrated by mud."[15]

4. Literary Analysis of the Qur'an: The Beginning

By the late 1930s Qutb appears to have rediscovered his "beautiful and beloved Qur'an" *(Qur'ani Al-Jamil Al-Habib),* including its vivid and moving imagery. It occurred to him, as a result, to write about the imagery of the Qur'an from a purely artistic point of view.[16] At this stage Qutb was a firm believer in the separation of religion and literature. He held that if the Qur'an were temporarily stripped of its religious sanctity and set aside as a book of legislation and political order, one would find in it a literary work of art, beauty, peculiar charm and abundant imagination, all of which were integral to its 'artistic inimitability' *(Al-I'jaz Al-Fanni).*[17]

Qutb justifies his literary analysis of the Qur'an on the grounds that the nation, in his view, had reached a stage of development which permitted intellectual and psychological luxury. This was different from the stage of necessities in the infancy of the nation, when Muslims necessarily studied the Qur'an as a source of legislation for their daily lives.[18]

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[14] Abulhasan 'Ali Nadawi, *Mudhakkiral Sa'ih fi Al-Sharq Al-`Arabi,* 2nd revised edition, Beirut, 1975, p. 189.

[15] Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an,* vol. 1, 2nd edition, Cairo, 1953, p. 5.

[16] Qutb, *Al-Taswir Al-fanni fi Al-Qur'an,* op.cit., pp. 8,9.

[17] Qutb, "Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim," *Al-Muqtataf,* vol. 94, no. 2 (1 February 1939), pp. 206, 207.

[18] Ibid., p. 206.

In his first attempt at Qur'anic literary analysis Qutb focused on such artistic aspects as imagery, tales, dialogues, and expressions. He points out first the charm, narration and imagination to be found in Qur'anic imagery. He marvels, for example, at the simile of the unbeliever and the thirsty man who is deceived by a mirage in the desert; or the simile of the unbeliever and the man who is deceived by darkness at sea, as seen in Qur'an 24:39-40 ('As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one supposeth it to be water till he cometh into it and findeth it naught, and findeth, in the place thereof, Allah, Who payeth him his due, and Allah is swift at reckoning. Or as a darkness on a vast, abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon Layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it. And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light').[19]

Likewise, Qutb marvels at the Qur'anic art of story telling, with its artistic, psychological and philosophical dimensions. He cites the tale of Maryam (Virgin Mary) in Qur'an 19:16-34 which includes all these dimensions, and goes on to describe the dramatic developments of the story. He points to Maryam's dilemma upon being told by the Spirit of Allah that she is pregnant ('she said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste?'). Her labor pain, deep anxiety, and fear of the adverse reaction of those around her lead her to despair and to desire death ('Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!'). Her fears were in fact confirmed when she received a hostile reception upon returning home with her ('Oh sister of Aaron! thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot'). Only divine intervention saved her from the wrath of her people, when the child in the cradle suddenly began to speak ('Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet. And hath made me blessed wheresoever I

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[19] Ibid., p. 207.

may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms giving so long as I remain alive').[20]

Qutb writes in the most glowing terms about artistic dialogue in the Qur'an, saying that it transcends imagination. In illustration he cites several Qur'anic dialogues, including that between the dwellers of Heaven and Hell in Qur'an 7:44 ('And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the Fire: We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the Truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the Truth? They say: Yea, verily. And a crier in between them crieth: The curse of Allah is on evil-doers').[21]

Qutb then goes on to examine the artisitic expressions of the Qur'an, describing them as brief though paramount in precision and beauty. He cites Qur'an 82:18 ('And the morning when it breathes') *(wa-Al-Subh Idha Tanaffas)* as an example of a Qur'anic expression which invoks imageries of vitality and activity in a living creation.[22]

Qutb concludes his article with an attempt to place the artistic imagery of the Qur'an in one of the literary traditions of classicism, symbolism, realism, and romanticism. He suggests that Qur'anic imagery is akin to romanticism, terming it the 'light kind of romanticism' which is devoid of constraints and artificiality and which reflects Arab mentality and specifically forms of Arabic expression. For the Qur'an was addressed to the Arabs first and in Qutb's view, represents the highest stage of inimitability in Arab eloquence.[23]

In the five years following the publication of his preliminary articles on the artistic aspects of the Qur'an, Qutb maintained fluctuating literary interest in the subject but did not publish any new study. The more he read the Qur'an and

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[20] Ibid., pp. 209-211.

[21] Qutb, "Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim," *Al-Muqtataf*, vol. 94, no. 3 (1 March 1939), pp. 313-315.

[22] Ibid., pp. 315-317.

[23] Ibid., pp. 317-318.

realized its artistic inimitability, however, the more the idea
of writing an expanded study appealed to him.[24]

Qutb also began to feel at this time that Qur'anic portrayal
(Taswir) is not separable from the rest of the Qur'an, but
rather forms the basis of expression *(Qa`idat Al-Ta`bir)* for all
the Qur'anic purposes, save for the sections dealing with
legislation.[25] It was upon Qutb's discovery of this underlying
unity that he decided to resume his writing on Qur'anic im-
agery. In 1944 he published articles in Cairo's monthly re-
view *Al-Risalah* in which he called for the adoption of the
Qur'anic artistic method of portrayal in modern literature so
as to raise it to loftier horizons. Qutb also expressed aston-
ishment at both ancient and modern Arabic literature for
their failure to utilize the artistic method of the "First Book of
the Arabs".[26]

This and similar articles were highlighted by the appearance
of Qutb's two major works on the literary aspects of the
Qur'an, *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an* (Artistic Portrayal in
the Qur'an) and *Mashahid Al-Qiyamah fi Al-Qur'an* (Scenes of
Resurrection in the Qur'an) in Cairo in 1945 and 1947, re-
spectively. According to Qutb, his basic goal in these works
was to restore the Qur'an to our hearts in a way similar to
how the Arabs first received it and were charmed by it; to
present it in such a way as to rid it of the baggage of linguis-
tic, syntactical, juristic, historical and mythical commentar-
ies; and to bring out its artistic aspects and literary peculi-
arities, and in the process awaken the feelings to its beauty.[27]

Furthermore, Qutb says that he attempted to present
Qur'anic scenes as portrayed by the clear outward expres-
sion *(Zahir Al-Lafz Al-Wadih)*. He thus sought to avoid com-
plicating them with unnecessary interpretations and discus-
sions. Qutb adds that, in his own belief, the Arabs first re-

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[24] Qutb, *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an,* op.cit., p. 9.

[25] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[26] Qutb, "Al-Ma'ani wa-Al-Zilal", *Al-Risalah,* no. 581 (21 August 1944), pp. 690-693, and
no. 583 (4 September 1944), pp. 728-731.

[27] Qutb, *Mashahid Al-Qiyamah fi Al-Qur'an,* Cairo, 1966, p.9.

ceived the artistic beauty of the Qur'an in such a manner as to deepen their feelings and shake their souls, and that the later Qur'anic commentators and interpreters complicated this response.[28]

It should be noted that Qutb's interest in the Qur'an at this stage was by his own admission, purely artistic *(hadafi huna hadafun fanniyun khalisum mahid)*. In other words, he professed to be influenced only by his sense of being an independent artistic critic *(Bi-hasat Al-Naqid Al-Fanni Al-Mustaqil)*. If the excellence of art and the sanctity of religion happened to coincide, he added, it would be purely unintentional an would not influence his beliefs *(Fa-idha Iltaqat fi Al-Nihayah Bara'at Al-Fann bi-Qadasat Al-Din, fa-Tilka Natijah Lamm Aqsudu Ilayha wa-Lamm Ata'aththaru Biha)*.[29] Qutb's preoccupation with the purely artistic features of the Qur'an at this stage, according to 'Azm, was criticized by the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brothers, Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949), for ignoring the religious aspects of the Book.[30]

5. Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine in detail the content of *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an*. Therefore, only the highlights and pertinent material will be discussed. This work is considered to be the foundation of Qutb's Qur'anic studies and to have had a great influence on his Qur'anic commentary, *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*, which appeared in the 1950s and 1960s.[31]

Upon completing the writing of *Al-Taswir*, Qutb says he experienced the rebirth of the Qur'an within himself. He had already exprienced the Qur'an as being beautiful within

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[28] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[29] Ibid., pp. 12.

[30] Yusuf Al-'Azm, *Ra'id Al-Fikr Al-Islami Al-Mu'asir Al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb*, Damascus, Beirut, 1980, p. 247.

[31] Ibid., p. 246. One encounters numerous references to this work; for example, Qutb's commentary on the Qur'anic Surah "Al-Baqarah" in his Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an, vol. 1, Beirut, 1973, pp. 28, 46, 55, 65, 71, 80, 268, 290, 293.

himself, but the beauty had ben composed of fragmented parts. Now, by contrast, the Qur'an appeared to him to be one united sentence based on a 'special rule', with a wondrous coordination he had never dreamed possible.[32]

Qutb maintains throughout *Al-Taswir* that the Qur'an has a unified artistic method of expression *(Tariqah Muwahhadah fi Al-Ta'bir)* used for all purposes, including demonstration and argumentation.

Qutb introduces this main thesis by examining what he considers to be the charm of the Qur'an and its source. In doing so, he cites the story of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab whose decision to become Muslim was greatly influenced by the charm of the Qur'an.[33] Qutb sees the sources of this charm in the beautiful, effective, expressive and picturesque Qur'anic expressions found in the early Meccan chapters, which, he says, bewitched the pagans into accepting Islam.[34]

Qutb also devotes some attention to the historical development of Qur'anic study and interpretation. In his view, Qur'anic study in the form of exegesis was initiated by some companions of the Prophet and was expanded greatly by the end of second century of the Hijrah. However, instead of studying the artistic beauty and its harmony with the religious beauty, later commentators engulfed themselves deeply in the juristic, dialectical, grammatical, syntactical, historical and other aspects of the Qur'an.[35]

Those commentators who studied the inimitability of the Qur'an, Qutb says, did have the opportunity to examine its artistic method, but instead they occupied themselves in studies dealing with "utterance and meaning" *(Al-Lafz wa-Al-Ma'na)*, and their relationship to rhetoric. Only two scholars, 'Abd Al-Qahir Al-Jurjani and, to a lesser extent, Al-Zamakhshari, went beyond the confines of "utterance and meaning"

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[32] Qutb, *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni fi Al-Qur'an*, op.cit., p. 10.

[33] Ibid., pp. 12-14.

[34] Ibid., pp. 19, 21-22.

[35] Ibid., pp. 24-26

to show awareness of Qur'anic artistic imagery.[36] However, none dealt as Qutb himself does with the general characteristics which bring out the artistic merits of the Qur'an.[37]

Qutb then moves on to concentrate his discussion on Qur'anic artistic portrayal pointing out that portrayal is the favorite device of the Qur'anic style. In his view this portrayal is full of color, motion, and rhythm. Often description, dialogue, words, and expressions help to magnify imagery and make it lively and human.[38] As an example, of mental meanings (ma'ani dhihniyah) reproduced in sensual image, Qutb cites Qur'an 7:40, in which the impossibility of non-believers entering Heaven is vividly likened to the impossibility of a camel entering a needle's eye ('Lo! they who deny Our revelations and scorn them, for them the gates of Heaven will not be opened nor will they enter the Garden until the camel goeth through the needle's eye. Thus do We require the guilty').[39]

Qutb then elaborates on the methods which form the basis of Qur'anic portrayal, namely, 'sensual dramatization' (Al-Takhyil Al-Hissi) and 'magnification' (Tajsim). By the technique of 'sensual dramatization' the Qur'an imparts to solid objects and natural phenomena a life akin to that of humans.[40] A case in point is Qur'an 81:18 ('And the morning when it breathes').[41] Here a human quality, that is, breathing, is ascribed to the morning. 'Magnification' (Al-Tajsim), in Qutb's scheme, gives meanings and states, dealing with Ma'nawiyat (mores) magnified images and forms. The Qur'an applies this technique when it likens sins to loads (ahmal) that are carried on one's back, and when it describes the suffering of sinners as being thick (ghaliz) and the days of sinners as being heavy (thaqil).[42]

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[36] Ibid., pp. 26-30.

[37] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[38] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[39] Ibid., p. 36.

[40] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[41] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[42] Ibid., pp. 68-71.

Qutb points out that anthropomorphic Qur'anic expressions such as "The Hand of Allah is above their hands." "His Throne on the water", and "He sat on the throne" - expressions which have aroused heated dialectical theological debates in the past - are examples of dramatization and magnification used for the simple purpose of clarifying abstract meanings.[43]

Qutb also discusses the artistic symmetry *(Al-Tanasuq Al-Fanni)* of the Qur'anic portrayal, noting an underlying musical rhythm which performs a basic harmonizing task in Qur'anic rhetoric. This internal harmony stands out in shorter Qur'anic surahs and diminishes in longer ones. A typical instance is Qur'an 53:1-5:

> By the star when it setteth,
> *(Wa-Al-Najm Idha Hawa)*
> Your comrade erreth not, nor is deceived;
> *(ma Dalla Sahibukum wa-ma Ghawa)*
> Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire,
> *(wa-ma Yantiqu an Al-Hawa)*
> It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired,
> *(Inn Huwa illa wahyun yaha)*
> Which One of mighty powers hath taught him,
> *('Allamahu Shadidu Al-Quwa)*[44]

and Qur'an 79:1-59

> By those who drag forth to destruction,
> *(Wa-Al-Nazi'ati Gharqan)*
> By the meteors rushing,
> *(wa-Al-Nashitati Nashtan)*
> By the lone stars floating,
> *(wa-Al-Sabihati Sabhan)*
> By the angels hastening,
> *(fa-Al-Sabiqati Sabqan)*
> And those who govern the event,
> *(fa-Al-Mudabbirati Amran)*[45]

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[43] Ibid., pp. 73.
[44] Ibid., pp. 86-88.
[45] Ibid.

The difficulty of separating the artistic and religious aspects of the Qur'an is evident when Qutb examines the Qur'anic tale. Despite his declared intent to deal only with the literary aspects of the Qur'an, it is clear that Qutb gradually began to emphasize the religious rather than the artistic aspect. This was especially true when, in writing about the purposes of dramatic narrative in the Qur'an, he devoted much space to a discussion of purely religious purposes. His outline of the major purposes includes the following: The confirmation of the truth of the Revelation of Allah's message, the reaffirmation that true religion from Noah to Muhammad was from Allah, the reiteration that Unitarianism *(Al-Tawhid)* is the basis of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the assertions that the means utilized by the Prophets and their experiences with their people were the same in the different monotheistic religions and that the religions of Muhammad and Ibrahim were the same. Other purposes include the declarations that Allah supports and blesses his prophets and his sincere friends, that satan is the enemy of the children of Adam, and that Divine and human wisdom are far apart.[46]

Qutb also points out the subordination of the narrative to the religious message. This subordination is apparent in the repetition of parts of tales in different chapters of the Qur'an. The tale of the Prophet Musa, for example, appears in no less than twelve chapters.[47] This subordination is also manifested in the variety with which the tales in the Qur'an are treated. Sometimes a tale is presented from the beginning of the story, as in the tales of the births of Jesus, Mary, and Musa. Sometimes a tale is taken up at a later stage of the story, as in the tales of Yusuf, Ibrahim, Da'ud and Sulayman. Some tales are detailed like those of Yusuf, Ibrahim and Sulayman, while others are given only briefly, like those Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayab, Zakariya and Ayyub.[48] Finally, the tale's subordination can be seen in the frequent incorpora-

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[46] Ibid., pp. 120-128.

[47] Ibid., pp. 128-133.

[48] Ibid., pp. 134-139.

tion of religious directives as prologues or epilogues to them.[49]

In this second major literary-oriented Qur'anic work, *Mashahid Al-Qiyamah fi Al-Qur'an*, which appeared in 1947, Qutb applies the views articulated in *Al-Taswir* to the Qur'anic chapters and verses dealing with the scenes of Resurrection (*Al-Qiyamah*).[50] In a long introduction to this work Qutb surveys the development of the idea of the "other world" (*Al-'Alam Al-Akhar*) in human consciousness, beginning with the ancient Egyptians and continuing with the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Hindus, Jews, and Christians.[51]

In Qutb's view, the Qur'anic portrayal of the "other world" is unprecedented because of its deep impact on the mind, the comprehensiveness of its imagery and the purity of its conception.[52] He says that the idea of the "other world" in the Qur'an is as simple and clear as the Islamic system of belief itself. It deals with death, resurrection, happiness and suffering. Those who believe and do good deeds are bound for heaven and happiness, while those who do not are bound for hell and suffering.

Qutb finds in each resurrection scene a symmetry between the parts of the scene, the expressions used, and the underlying rhythm and music.[53] In the rest of the book, Qutb presents the Qur'anic verses which deal with the resurrection scenes and analyzes them according to the principles enunciated in *Al-Taswir*. Thus the scene of Resurrection in Qur'an 81:1-14 is given as follows:

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[49] Ibid., pp. 139-140.

[50] Qutb, *Mashahid al-qiyamah fi al-Qur'an*, op.cit., p. 38.

[51] Ibid., pp. 13-37.

[52] Ibid., pp. 37.

[53] Ibid., pp. 39-42.

When the sun is overthrown,
And when the stars fall,
And when the hills are moved,
And when the camels big with young are abandoned,
And when the wild beasts are herded together,
And when the seas rise,
And when souls are reunited,
And when the girl-child that was buried alive is asked,
For what sin she was slain.
And when the pages are laid open,
And when the sky is torn away,
And when hell is lighted,
And when the garden is brought nigh,
(Then) every soul will know what it had made ready.[54]

Qutb describes this scene as portraying a total overthrow of everything familiar and a comprehensive revolution of all existing entities. Participating in this overthrow and revolution are the heavenly bodies, the beasts, domesticated birds, human souls, etc. The opening scene is a calamitous movement which turns everything upside down, excites the calm and frightens the secure. The music and rhythm which underly the scene are breathlessly rapid, reflecting the calamity.[55]

6. Reasons for Qutb's Interest in the Qur'an

Renewed Interest in Islamics Among the Literati

Qutb's renewed interest in the Qur'an in 1939 and thereafter should be seen within the larger context of the renewed interest of liberal literati in Islamics in the 1930s and 1940s. This is the period which saw the proliferation of Islamic works, especially Islamic history and biography, on the Egyptian literary scene. In these works can be seen a search for ideals and values drawn from Arabic Islamic history and tradition, which was inspired by resentment against Western hegemony in Egypt and the Arab world

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[54] Ibid., pp. 57-58.
[55] Ibid., pp. 58

and a gradual loss of faith in the popular appeal of liberal nationalist parliamentary ideals.[56]

For example, the one-time bastion of secular liberal ideas and Pharaohnism, the weekly *Al-Siyasah* of Muhammad Husayn Haykal, changed its orientation during this period, adopting an Islamic tone and topics. Haykal himself wrote a biography of the Prophet (1935) and argued that "the Egyptian cultural soil was inhospitable to any but Muslim-inspired ideals and values".[57] Qutb's mentor, Al-'Aqqad, in 1942, likewise, wrote a biography of the Prophet, which was followed by similar works on the Caliph 'Umar (1942), the Caliph Abu Bakr (1943), the Prophet's wife 'A'ishah (1943), the Caliph 'Ali (1944) and 'Ali's son Al-Husayn (1944), among others. In fact, all the senior literati including Haykal, Taha Husayn, Al-'Aqqad, Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Ahmad Amin, concentrated their efforts on Islamic biographies and history.[58] Qutb, however, chose an independent path by concentrating on an area hitherto unexamined in modern Arabic literature, namely the literary analysis of the Qur'an.

Thus the literary atmosphere in Cairo was conducive for Islamic-oriented writings. The more prominent literati took the lead and the younger generation, including Qutb, followed.

Personal Reasons: The Death of Qutb's Mother

Qutb's study of the Qur'an was not merely an "intellectual and psychological luxury", as he termed the literary analyses he pursued in his first Qur'anic study, but was apparently a psychological and spiritual necessity. As mentioned earlier, Qutb admitted that during his secular life in Cairo in the 1930s and 1940s he felt persistent secret desire to take comfort in the Qur'an because it gave him the feeling of standing on firm ground. The Qur'an was a comforting refuge from the pain of the environment in which he lived.

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[56] Al-Ansari, op.cit., pp. 37-47.

[57] Ibid. ; Karim, op.cit., pp. 79-106 ; and Safran, op.cit., p. 209.

[58] See Karim, op.cit., pp. 109-135. Also see Chapter I in this study for further details on the return to the roots and the interests in Islamic subjects.

Qutb's unhappiness in Cairo was reflected in his poetry of the heart in the 1930s and it continued to manifest itself in his prose and verse of the 1940s when he described himself as that fugitive young man, a lover of the impossible, who seeks what he cannot find and is bored with all that he attains.[59]

The death of Qutb's mother Fatimah, in October 1940, was a major blow which partially explains Qutb's increased interest in the Qur'an at that period. Fatimah's influence on Qutb was enormous in instilling in him a deep sense of mission which was to remain with him until his execution in 1966. Upon her death he writes:

> "Mother who will narrate to me the tales of my childhood in which you portray me as if I were of a unique texture *(Nasij Farid)* which made me think that I was great and required to live up to this greatness?"[60]

He says further:

> "Mother... to whom do I ascend the step of life and who will celebrate when I am ascending... Maybe many will rejoice... but your celebration is unique because it is the rejoicing of the skillful cultivator who realizes the fruits of his cultivation and efforts."[61]

Fatimah's death was also devastating because Sayyid was not married and she had been a major source of emotional support. Since the death of his father (ca. 1933), she had also shared with him the responsibility of raising his brother Muhammad and his sisters Hamidah and Aminah. He writes again:

> "Only today have I felt the heavy burden... because as long as you lived I was strengthened by you. But now that you are gone I am alone and weak."[62]

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[59] *Al-Atyaf Al-Arba'ah*, Cairo, 1945, p. 6.

[60] Ibid., p. 167.

[61] Ibid., p. 168.

[62] Ibid., p. 165.

The impact of her death can be seen in *Al-Atyaf Al-Arba'ah* (The Four Phantoms), which was written by her children in 1945. In their joint dedication, Hamidah, Aminah, Muhammad and Sayyid write:

> "After we had lost our father and migrated from our home to Cairo we have lived like strangers. However, your death had left us alienated. We have become lost plants without roots and perplexed phantoms without a dwelling."[63]

Qutb describes himself as well as his brother and sisters as strangers without a mother.[64]

Personal Reasons: Shattered Love Affair

Another event which partially explains Qutb's increasing interest in the Qur'an was the unsuccessful love affair (around 1942 or 1943) which is depicted in his prose and verse. Following his mother's death it appears that Qutb sought to fill the void in his life through marriage, and consequently he fell in love and was engaged. However, problems developed which led to the breaking of the engagement. Deeply shattered, Qutb was never again seriously involved with a woman. It is generally believed that Qutb's novel *Ashwak* (Thorns), which appeared in Cairo in 1947, reflects this disastrous affair.[65] Qutb dedicates his work "to the one who plunged into the thorns with me, bled as I bled, became miserable as I became miserable, and went her own way as I went mine: both wounded after the battle..."[66]

The impact of this affair is evident in Qutb's prose and verse in the early 1940s.[67] His unhappiness is evident in his poem entitled "*Hilm Al-Hayah*" (The Dream of Life), in which he

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[63] Ibid., p. 3.

[64] Ibid., p. 33.

[65] Qutb, *Ashwak*, Cairo, n.d.

[66] Ibid., p. 3.

[67] See, for example, footnotes 68 to 71 below.

laments the lost dream which idealized his love and gave meaning to his life.[68]

In another poem, entitled "*Nida' Al-Kharif*" (The Call of Autumn), Qutb calls on his love to return to their love nest, because the days of their lives are running out without hope or reunion. The renewing of their love, Qutb says, will invigorate their lives.[69] Later he refers to his love as a "forbidden fruit" *(Al-Fakihah Al-Muharramah)* which leaves him suspended between heaven and earth. For he hates and loves life for her sake and runs aimlessly, only to return to seek life from her. He describes his idealized love as a myth, a child, a snake, a gazelle, a saint, a nun. He concludes by saying:

> "Oh Fate *(qadar)*; Why did you put her in my way and make her a forbidden fruit? I hear, Oh Fate, your severe and mocking judgement (Innani Asma'u Ayyuha Al-Qadar Hukmaka Al-Sarim Al-Sakhir)."[70]

A year later, in 1944, Qutb was still pondering his unhappiness and his shattered love. He says that he does not grieve the girl he loved, but the youngster within himself who was full of excitement and idealized love but who is no longer there.[71]

Personal Reasons: Qutb's Health

Another development which partially explains Qutb's renewed interest in the Qur'an at this time was his poor state of health. Although it cannot be proven that Qutb had suffered from poor health since early youth, there is evidence of ill health in his writings from September 1940.[72] In November 1945, Qutb reports that he was ill for four

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[68] *Al-Thaqafah*, Sana 5, no. 236 (6 July 1943), p. 24. This is a slightly revised version of a poem with the same title which appeared in *Al-Muqtataf*, vol. 102, no. 5 (1 May 1943), p. 460.

[69] Qutb, "Nida' Al-Kharif," *Al-Risalah*, no. 538 (25 October 1943), p. 449.

[70] Qutb, "Al-Fakihah Al-Muharramah," *Al-Risalah*, no. 541 (15 November 1943), pp. 912-913.

[71] Qutb, "Ma' nafsi...!," op.cit., *Al-Risalah*, no. 569 (29 May 1944), p. 449.

[72] *Al-Risalah*, no. 376 (16 September 1940), p. 1450.

months.[73] In July 1946, Qutb remarks sarcastically that he had consumed half of the medicine in Hulwan's pharmacy.[74] He was also reported hospitalized during his stay in the United States (1948-1950).[75] In January 1952, he was reported to have serious eyes problems. In the same month he was reported generally ill.[76]

It has been suggested that Qutb's health deteriorated in the aftermath of his parents' deaths. The attendant anxiety, responsibility for his brother and two sisters, and the frustrations of his career could well have contributed to the development of the stomach, lung and heart ailments which were to become more noticeable and serious in the 1950s and 1960s after having been exacerbated by his imprisonment between 1954 and 1964. It is certainly not unlikely that a man afflicted with sickness and other personal problems, without the comfort of a mother or wife, would turn to his religion for refuge. In the case of Qutb, it was the Qur'an that increasingly became his refuge.

7. Early Signs of Changes in Qutb's Orientation

Despite the fact that Qutb was stressing the purely artistic or literary goal of his Qur'anic studies, one should not underestimate the long-lasting spiritual effect of his deep submergence in the Qur'an, especially at a time when he was experiencing personal crisis and his society was passing through unprecedented turmoil resulting from the social, political, and economic dislocations of the World War II period, 1939-1945. In a conversation with the Indian Muslim scholar Abulhasan 'Ali Nadawi in 1951, Qutb acknowledged that his literary analysis of the Qur'an gradually led him to

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[73] *Al-Risalah*, no. 645 (12 November 1945), p. 1225.

[74] *Al-Risalah*, no. 681 (22 July 1946), p.796.

[75] Al-'Azm, op.cit., p. 207; and 'Abd Al-Fattah Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb Al-Shahid Al-Hayy*, Amman, 1981, pp. 135-136.

[76] *Al-Da'wah* (Cairo), Sana 1, no. 47 (8 January 1952), p. 3; and no. 48 (15 January 1952), p. 3.

take a deeper interest in its religious message, which eventually influenced him and guided him to faith.[77]

One can, therefore, observe in this period some changes in Qutb's attitude toward poetry and the infinite. By late 1943 he had begun to have doubts about poetry of the psychological states, that is, subjective poetry of the heart, which he had been composing and championing since the beginning of his literary career. Qutb still believed in it, seeing it as a specimen of the highest ideal of modern poetry, but now he saw it as being limited in its horizons *(Mahdud Al-Afaq)* and was not in itself being able to fulfil his need for the infinite.[78]

Qutb's continual but fruitless search for the infinite *(Al-Ghayr Mahdud, Al-Taliq)* finally comes to a triumphant conclusion:

> Indeed there is a sole consolation. There is the God *(Al-Ilah)* who has no beginning and no end and who is free from all restraints. Oh Mighty God... I love you because you are the only infinite *(Ghayr Al-Mahdud)* in this existence. I love you because you are the only hope for the human heart when it becomes confined within limits.[79]

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[77] Nadawi, op.cit., p. 189.

[78] Qutb, "Fi Al-Tayh," *Al-Risalah*, no. 544 (6 December 1943), p. 973.

[79] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

ALIENATION OF SAYYID QUTB
(1939-1947)

1. Emergence of the Moralist

The emergence of Qutb the stern moralist should not be seen merely as a development of the 1940s. Rather, moralism had been ingrained in him by his upbringing and environment. Qutb had been brought up in a rural environment which he refers to as "conservative and clean". As an adult, he maintains that he led a serious life which allowed no time for play. He also believed that poetry and art had preserved his imagination from pollution.[1] Qutb was always proud of his rural origin, holding the opinion that rural people were more authentic, with more fortitude and a purer conscience than the urban people of Cairo.[2]

On the other hand one should also note that, according to one source, Qutb did hold views in the 1930s which were considered immoral. Mahmud 'Abd Al-Halim, a member of the Muslim Brothers, writes that he read an article by Qutb in the late 1930s, which he does not document, in which Qutb was calling on people to strip themselves naked and live accordingly. 'Abd Al-Halim was so angered by this article that he wrote a rebuttal and sought the Supreme Guide Al-Banna's approval to publish it. Al-Banna's counseled against it, however, on the grounds that it would only give Qutb's ideas more prominence. By ignoring him, Al-Banna reasoned, Qutb's ideas would be forgotten. As a result 'Abd Al-Halim did not publish his rebuttal.[3] In the context of the many articles that Qutb wrote, his "bohemian" ideas, if they

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[1] Qutb, *Ashwak*, op.cit., p. 69.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Mahmud 'Abd Al-Halim, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun: Ahdath Sana'at Al-Tarikh, Ru'yah min Al-Dakhil*, vol. 1, Alexandria 1979, I, pp. 191-192.

indeed existed, should not be seen as integral to his thought. The article in question could well have been written out of frustration, or as an attention gathering ploy, rather than out of genuine belief.

None of Qutb's ethical views which were expressed in his prose and verse of the 1930s occupied as significant a part of his literary output or ideology in the 1930s as they did in the 1940s. This development should be seen in the light of the ravaging impact of World War II upon Egyptian society. Safran points out the following:

> The millions (sic) of foreign troops that passed through the major cities of Egypt helped bring about a complete erosion of public morality. The mass of well-paid, easy-spending, pleasure-seeking soldiers, themselves torn from their social roots and controls, spread a mood of "eat and drink for tomorrow we die", which... was extremely provoking to Egyptians. The sight of well-fed alien troops in the midst of widespread want and deprivation aroused the envy of the people, and their indulgence in the pursuit of sex and drink hurt the moral sensibilities of most Egyptians... Moreover, the generally arrogant behavior of the troops stirred their nationalist and xenophobic feelings.[4]

These developments helped foster and atmosphere which was seen by many, including Qutb, as contributing to the decay of public morality and institutions. The deep impact of these developments upon Qutb can be seen clearly in his later Islamic writings. For example, in *Ma'rakat Al-Islam wa-Al-Ra'smaliyah* (The Battle of Islam and Capitalism), Qutb reminds his readers of the treatment accorded the Egyptians by the Allied soldiers during World War II. He accuses the soldiers of crushing Egyptians with their cars like dogs and of trampling Egyptian dignity and honor. Qutb also recalls the soldiers' looks of disdain at the Egyptian police and army officers.[5]

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[4] Safran, op.cit., pp. 185.
[5] Qutb, *Ma'rakat Al-Islam wa-Al-Ra'smaliyah*, 2nd printing, Cairo 1952, pp. 38-39.

Qutb's Ethical Standards and Views of Singing

According to Qutb, the essence of ethics is not represented by the acts of those who avoid evil for fear of the suffering of the day of reckoning, or by the acts of those who avoid crime for fear of the penal code.[6] Rather its essence is represented by those who possess true manhood and its virtues, which include fortitude, courage in helping others, compassion, confidence with dignity, affection and responsibility. It is also represented by sound womanhood and its virtues, which include shyness, mercy, and sacrifice. It is represented, further, by virtues common to man and woman alike, namely, sensitivity of conscience, exaltedness of self, purity of feelings, and clean speech. Any attempt to destroy these virtues is, according to Qutb, an evil act which should be resisted because it entails the destruction of character and society.[7]

With these ethical standards as his guide Qutb began in 1940 to articulate publicly his criticism of what appeared to him to be moral decay in Egyptian society. He started by publicly criticizing what he termed the "sick singing" *(Al-Ghina' Al-Marid)* broadcasted on Egyptian radio. He asserts in his writings that such singing destroyed Egyptian social structure and personal character because it corrupted the virtues of man and woman.[8]

In his view these songs reflected popular taste *(Al-Dhawq Al-Baladi)* and hence lacked any trace of intellectual, ethical and social education. An educated listener, therefore, could not find anything in such music that met his higher standards and refined emotions.[9]

Earlier Qutb writes that these songs were more dangerous than any "fifth column". He calls them a poison running through the essence of the nation and suggests that severe

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[6] Qutb, "Al-Ghina' Al-Marid," *Al-Risalah*, no. 374 (2 September 1940), p. 1382.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 1383.

public pressure should be applied to discredit them.[10] He also suggests the institution of censorship of music and singing in the broadcasting service, clubs and record companies by a committee made up of educated people well versed in the arts and who possessed excellent taste. This committee would be empowered to prevent, if it deems it necessary, the broadcasting of songs, the production of records and tapes, and the showing of films. Qutb also calls for laws which would penalize those who sing forbidden songs.[11]

In addition, Qutb advocated forming groups to combat the "sick singing" which, in his view, destroyed Egypt's pride, manhood and femininity, excited its instincts, and anesthetized its nerves like narcotics. These groups would function like any other group combatting disease and narcotics. They would spread the message and resist the commercial influence of vested interests by way of newspapers and broadcasting, and would apply public pressure to discredit harmful songs in all clubs and societies.[12]

Qutb says that the type of singing he advocates would not necessarily entail ethical, social or nationalist themes, rather, he prefers songs with dignified humor and biting criticism, which portray refined human emotions and introduce the senses to the thrills of the universe, the secrets of the self, and the beauty of nature.[13] Qutb's public criticism of singing and songs was to become an integral part of his Islamic ideology in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.[14]

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[10] Qutb, "Al-Mutribun wa-Al-Mutribat," *Sahifat Dar Al-'Ulum*, Sana 7, no. 1 (July 1940).

[11] Qutb, "Al-Ghina' Al-Marid," op.cit., p. 1383.

[12] Qutb, "Firaq li-Mukafahat Al-Ghina' Al-Marid," *Al-Risalah*, no.395 (27 January 1941), p. 94.

[13] Qutb, "Al-Ghina' Al-Marid," op.cit., p. 1383.

[14] See *Al-Risalah*, no. 1003 (22 September 1952) pp. 1049-1050.

Campaign Against Public Bathers

Qutb was also highly critical of the behavior of public bathers on Alexandria's beaches. Commenting on some women clad in swim suits wandering aimlessly on the beaches, he writes that these "naked" women were cheap meat *(Lahm Rakhis):*

"Cheap. Many of these naked bodies lose even the value of the expensive meat. I do not doubt now that clothes are a product of Eve. For concealment and secrecy are the source of attractiveness and desire."[15]

He describes the life-style of those on the beaches as being permissive:

"Here quick friendships thrive: acquainting one with another begins at forenoon and everything is accomplished by night. Next morning all are dispersed and friendships are terminated as if nothing happened. Then they all begin looking for something new."[16]

He compares the parading of girls on the beaches to the parading of slave girls in the slave market. For both are exhibitions on which the eyes are fixed and from which sick thoughts creep. He points out, furthermore, that these girls' dignities are being usurped in these bleak days in the name of 'modernism'.[17]

Criticism of the Younger Generation

Qutb was also critical of the ethical standards and way of life of the younger generation.[18] He is critical, for example, of the younger generation's lack of interest in serious books. "Why should they read a serious book", Qutb says, "when they have cheap magazines and obscene films which flatter their

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[15] Qutb, "Min Laghwi Al-Sayf; Sarasir ...!," *Al-Risalah*, no. 683 (6 August 1946), p. 858.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Qutb, "Min Laghwi Al-Sayf: Suq Al-Raqiq," *Al-Risalah*, no. 685 (19 August 1946), p. 912.

[18] See *Al-Risalah*, no. 622 (4 June, 1945), pp. 579-581.

instincts and appeal to the more contemptible parts in them?"[19]

Qutb blames the mass media, including radio, films and the print medium for contributing to the deteriorating Egyptian moral standards. He calls sarcastically for the whip *(Al-Sut)* to correct the situation, and in the process shows some affinity with the Wahhabis' and the Saudis' strict observance of moral standards. He says:

> Over there in the Nejd, poets who flirt whith love poetry are whipped.
> Over here in Egypt they clap for those who guide boys and girls toward immorality *(Da'arah)* and train them on shamelessness *(Mujun)*...
> God have mercy on you oh Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab! and God favor you oh 'Abd Al-'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud! We need only one day and one night in Egypt to whip those fools in the broadcasting service, the cinema studios and in all Egyptian magazines ...[20]

2. Emergence of the Anti-Western Intellectual

Criticism of Western Civilization

Qutb calls the moral decay of society a *mihnah* (tribulation), an integral part of the tribulation of humanity that resulted from the adoption of the materialistic civilization of Europe. He says:

> How I hate and despise this European civilization and eulogize humanity which is being tricked by its luster, noise, and sensual enjoyment in which the soul suffocates and the conscience dies down *(yakhfut)*, while instincts and senses become intoxicated, quarrelsome and excited.[21]

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[19] Qutb, "Min Laghwi Al-Sayf: Suq Al-Raqiq," op.cit., p. 912.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 911.

Clearly, these views are a continuation of the criticism he
expressed in the 1930s, in which he warned his fellow coun-
trymen against continued blind imitation of those aspects of
Western civilization that were the cause of financial, politi-
cal, literary, and social crises which afflicted people around
the world.[22]

By the mid 1940s Qutb became fiercely anti-Western. In 1944
he attacked Western civilization and hailed its demise. In his
view the West has failed and it is now the turn of the East to
take over the leadership of the world and create by the
power of its spirituality a new civilization.[23] He also calls on
the Arabs not to trust the West, because the West has neither
"conscience" nor "honor". He says:

> "Before we trust European or American conscience we have
> to remember France and events in Syria and Lebanon...
> England and the abominable days of February 4 (1942), and
> Truman's support for the Zionists."[24]

And whereas Qutb's criticism in the 1930s was predomi-
nantly cultural in nature, his stand in the 1940s became in-
creasingly political, focusing his attacks on individual West-
ern countries, namely France, England and the United
States, in light of what he perceived as Western suppression
of Arab nationalist aspirations in Egypt and the Arab world.

Qutb's Attacks on France

Qutb focused his attack on France's suppression of the na-
tionalist movements in Syria, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.
The history of French presence in the East, he says, is
nothing but 'savage barbarism' and 'pools of blood'. The
Napoleonic invasion of Egypt and the bloody occupation of
Cairo, the 1925 bombardment of Damascus, the suppression
of the nationalists in Morocco, and French attempts to force

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[22] Qutb, "Al-'Alam Yajri !!," *Al-Risalah*, no. 17 (15 Sept. 1933), pp. 12-13.

[23] *Al-Thaqafah*, no. 272 (14 March 1944), pp. 21-22, as cited in Ibrahim, op.cit., p. 176.

[24] Qutb, "Al-Lughah Al-Wahidah Al-Lati Yafhamuha Al-Injiliz," *Al-Risalah*, no. 659 (18
February 1946), p. 184.

Christianity on Moroccan Muslims only attest to the true evil nature of France.[25]

Qutb also attacked the Egyptians who were glorifying France. He said those Egyptians who at one time lived in France were few. They were permitted by immoral France *(Faransa Al-Da'irah)* to satisfy their extreme, animalistic pleasures and to quench their sensual desires. When they returned to Egypt, he says, they found some remnants of tradition and some obstacles, and they did not like the so-called reactionary nature of the East. In the meantime, they continued to long for the "immoral" memory of France, its pleasures and desires.[26]

Qutb's Attacks on Britain

At the end of 1945, when the details of the February 4, 1942 incident, in which the British imposed a Wafdist cabinet on the King by force of arms,[27] became known to the public, Qutb reacted angrily. He accused the existing political parties of being *aqzam* (midgets).

> "Where are you, oh Mustafa Kamil? Where are you to teach them how to repel the shame that was committed against the nation on February 4, as you had repelled the oppression that gripped Egypt on the day of Denshawai (1906)."[28]

According to Qutb, following the Denshawai incident the British consul Lord Cromer was forced to leave his post. By contrast, the British ambassador Sir Miles Lampson, who played a leading role in the February 4 incident, remained his country's representative to the Egyptian court. The difference between Mustafa Kamil and the politicians, Qutb says, is the difference between a man who was not interested in governing and did not trust in anyone's conscience,

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[25] Qutb, "Hadhihi Hiya Faransa," *Al-Risalah*, no. 624 (18 June 1945), p. 632.

[26] Ibid.

[27] See chapter I in this study for further details.

[28] Qutb, "Ayna anta ya Mustafa Kamil," *Al-Risalah*, no. 1309 (3 December 1945), pp. 1309-1310.

and men who trusted and believed in British conscience and honor.[29]

Qutb attacks the myth of the so-called "political conscience" of Britain and those politicians who, in spite of past experiences, still believed in it. He says:

> Here the Zionist immigration is being allowed to go on, oh you who trust Britain's political conscience. What are you saying? Indeed, what are you doing? Diplomatic memos and declarations and replies to the declarations and memos.... In the meantime Zionist immigration continues.... Oh Arab Ummah, do not rely on politicians but on your self... Take matters into your hands again and address them in the only language that they know. Otherwise your soft diplomatic voice will be only an echo in a valley.[30]

The 'Day of Evacuation' *(Yawm Al-Jala')*, of 21 February 1946, which witnessed widespread national strikes and demonstrations by workers and students who were demanding Britain's evacuation and Egypt's total independence, resulted in bloody clashes which left 20 dead and 150 wounded. Commenting on the casualties, Qutb writes that blood is the down payment *('Arabun)* for freedom and that martyrdom is the price of dignity.[31] The innocent blood that was shed, Qutb says, refutes those leaders and politicians in Egypt and the Arab world who stood behind Britain in its difficulties (i.e. during the war-years) without securing a definite British pledge of evacuation. Instead, they trusted the honor of Britain's so-called political conscience. According to Qutb, a 48-hour Egyptian revolt to disrupt communications during the decisive battle of *Al-'Alamayn* (1942) would have been enough to change the result of the war. But Egypt did not revolt because it trusted Britain's conscience.[32]

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[29] Ibid., p. 1310.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Qutb, "Mantiq Al-Dima' Al-Bari'ah fi Yawm Al-Jala'," *Al-Risalah*, no. 661 (4 March 1946), p. 238.

[32] Ibid.

Qutb adds that the true intentions of the West were now apparent. They were apparent in Egypt in the February 4 incident and the bloodshed of the 'Day of Evacuation'. They were apparent in French suppression of the nationalists in Syria, in Truman's demands for the opening of Palestine to 100,000 Jews, and in Britain's suppression of the Muslims of Indonesia. The British, Americans, French and Dutch were waging war against Easterners in general and against Muslim countries in particular. Qutb concludes that belief in this Western threat must be engraved in the consciousness of all Easterners, whether Indian, Indonesian, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Hijazi, Najdi, Palestinian, Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan, or whoever.[33]

Qutb's Attacks on the United States

Qutb's Attacks on the United States became more pronounced in 1946 as a result of President Truman's policies supporting Jewish immigration to Palestine. At last the "conscience of the United States" has been uncovered, says Qutb. The Palestinian problem has shown that this `conscience' gambles with the fate and rights of humans in order to buy a few votes in the election.[34]

Americans, Qutb says, are no different than any other Westerners with rotten consciences (damir muta`affin). Their consciences are all derived from the same source, namely, the materialistic civilization that has no heart or conscience, and which hears nothing but the sounds of machines. He says:

> "How I hate and despise those Westerners! all without exception: the British, the French, the Dutch and now the Americans who were at one time trusted by many... And I do not hate or despise these alone. I hate and despise just as much those Egyptians and Arabs who continue to trust Western conscience..."[35]

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[33] Ibid., p. 239.
[34] Qutb, "Al-Damir Al-Amrikani...! wa-Qadiyat Filastin," *Al-Risalah* no. 694 (21 October 1946), p. 1155.
[35] Ibid.

3. Emergence of the Anti-Establishment Intellectual

Qutb's Call For Social Justice

By the mid-1940s Qutb, the long-time supporter of the Wafd and the Sa`dist parties, had become very disillusioned with the prevailing political system.

In mid-1945 he accuses the existing parties of being indifferent to the problem of social justice *(Al-'Adalah Al-Ijtima'iyah)*. According to Qutb, there was an absence of planned constructive policy geared toward the realization of social justice and the rejuvenation of Egyptian society. What was needed, Qutb says, were new parties with a constructive mentality and with comprehensive social programs for correcting the unequal distribution of wealth and promoting social justice in its educational policies.[36]

By the mid 1940s Qutb's concern with social justice had become paramount in his writings, including his autobiographical work *Tifl Min Al-Qaryah* which appeared in Cairo in 1946. Qutb vividly describes the wretched conditions of the migrant workers who used to toil on his family's land. These and similar childhood memories haunted him in his adult life in Cairo and gave him the feeling that justice did not reign the country. If there were just laws in the 'valley', according to Qutb, they would have taken him to prison instead of the many that the law considered thieves and criminals.[37] Two years later in (1948) the theme of social justice was to headline Qutb's Islamic ideology.

Qutb's Attacks on the Establishment

By September 1946, Qutb was attacking various sectors of the establishment. He became very critical of the privileged upper classes, whom he terms the "aristocrats", and whom he accuses of not speaking the language of the people, of

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[36] Qutb, "Ila Al-Ahzab Al-Misriyah: `Addilu Baramijakum aw-Insahibu Qabla Fawat Al-Awan," *Al-Risalah*, no. 627 (9 June 1945), pp. 723-724.

[37] Qutb, *Tifl min Al-Qaryah*, Beirut, Dar Al-Hikmah, n.d. pp. 185-186.

not even physically resembling the Egyptians and of being as imperialist as the British. He asserts that these privileged ones were "aristocrats" in name only, being heir to no noble descent or traditions. On the contrary, they were the children of slave girls and emancipated ones, a caste which served the (British) occupation so well.[38]

At about the same time, Qutb was expressing indignation at those sectors of the establishment which included writers, politicians, and the mass media. He attacked writers and journalists, the so-called "opinion leaders" and "spiritual fathers" of the people, whose pens and consciences were put at the disposal of politicians instead of the people.[39] He expresses outrage at those politicians who promised programs for social reform, intellectual revival, and the purification of the administrative apparatus of government only to renege on their promises upon assuming power.

He criticizes the pashas and the privileged of society, the "aristocrats", for exploiting the people and for their snobbish attitudes toward the fellahs and the masses. He also attacked the ordinary people (Abna' Al-Sha`ab) who, upon becoming part of the establishment, reneged on their support of free education.[40]

He expresses indignation at the radio station, which wasted the people's money on broadcasting to every home, whether people wanted it or not, material more appropriate for brothels, clubs and cinemas than for families. He also attacks the "immoral press", the so-called "successful press", because it appealed to animalistic instincts and did the same job as managers of brothels. In Qutb's view, this press was killing the fortitude, honor and strength of the people who, as a result, were not concerned with the nationalist cause or with independence.[41]

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[38] Qutb, "Min Laghwi Al-Sayf: Ha'ula' Al-Aristuqrat...," *Al-Risalah*, no. 687 (2 September 1946), pp. 961-962.

[39] Qutb, "Madaris lil-sakht...?!," *Al-Risalah*, no. 691 (30 September 1946), p. 1081.

[40] Ibid., p. 1082.

[41] Ibid.

4. Emergence of the Anti-Literary Establishment Intellectual

Qutb's Departure from the Orbit of Al-'Aqqad's

The tremendous influence of Al-'Aqqad on Sayyid Qutb in the 1930s is well known. Qutb was weary of such imitation of Al-'Aqqad as would, he felt, lead to the annihilation of his personality in that of Al-'Aqqad. He thus tried to chart an independent literary career.

Qutb's quest for the infinite and the world of spirits helped him to take an independent path in 1939 with his renewed interest in the Qur'an and its literary analysis. His fear of annihilation appears to have been finally overcome by 1944 when he declared that he had overcome that fear. He said that he could now envision the milestones *(ma'alim)* and horizons of his own path, even though he would continue to benefit from Al-'Aqqad and his expertise.[42]

Al-'Aqqad's reaction to Qutb's works on the Qur'an and literature, which began to appear in 1945, was muted, however. He did not write a single word in favor of or against Qutb's works. Al-'Aqqad's indifference toward one of his most dedicated and loyal students left Qutb greatly embittered for several years.[43] Undoubtedly, Al-'Aqqad's behavior also helped drive a wedge between the two and to speed Qutb's departure from Al-'Aqqad's orbit.

This development also coincided with Qutb's changing views of poetry which began to crystalize in 1946 and which culminated in his rejection in 1948 of Al-'Aqqad's vision of poetry.[44] At that time Qutb claimed that when Al-'Aqqad's school of poetry attempted practical application of this vi-

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[42] Qutb, "Khawatir Mutasawiqah fi Al-Naqd wa-Al-Adab wa-Al-Fann," *Al-Risalah*, no. 597 (11 December 1944), pp. 1087-1088.

[43] Qutb, "Ila Ustadhina Al-Duktur Ahmad Amin," *Al-Thaqafah*, no. 633 (10 September 1951) as cited in Muhammad Rajab Al-Bayyumi, "Sayyid Qutb bayna Al-`Aqqad wa-Al-Khuli," *Al-Thaqafah*, Sana 5, no. 53 (February 1978), pp. 54, 89.

[44] Qutb, "Ra'y fi Al-Shi`r bi-Munasabat Luzumiyat Mukhaymar," *Al-Kitab* (Cairo), Sana 3, no. 2 (February 1948), pp. 248-249.

sion it failed because its poetic energy was less than its poetical conception. As a result, Qutb said, its poetical product was lacking in warmth an was poetically incomplete.[45] In Qutb's view, Al-'Aqqad's school failed to differentiate between *Al-Fikrah* (idea) and *Al-Ihsas* (feeling) in poetry having preoccupied itself with the former at the expense of the latter. Feeling, according to Qutb, gives life to an idea and becomes an integral part of the poet and his poetry. Without it the poetical idea remains only an abstraction that does not touch the heart.[46]

As an illustration of poetry which is full of feelings Qutb cites the lyric poetry of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) of India.[47] A scholar and a student of Tagore, Humayun Kabir, describes Tagore's poetry as thusly:

> It is born out of an amalgam of the rich classical heritage of ancient India, the spacious way, of the Moghal court, the simple verities of the life of the common people of Bengal and the restless energy and intellectual vigour of modern Europe. He is an inheritor of all times and all cultures. It is this combination of many different strands and themes that gives to his poetry its resilience, universality and infinite appeal.[48]

Kabir, further describes Tagore's poetry as being a "fusion of feeling, imagery and music". Another important aspect of his poetry, Kabir says, is "the fusion of nature and man in an indissoluble unity... which remained one of the most characteristic traits of Tagore's poetry throughout his life".[49]

Egyptian's interest in Tagore's poetry had become evident by the late 1940s, when translations of his poems began to be studied by literati such as Qutb. Interest in Tagore continued in the 1950s, culminating in the centennial celebration of Tagore's birth, in 1961, with the appearance of two state-

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[45] Ibid., p. 248.

[46] Ibid., p. 248, 249.

[47] Ibid., pp. 254-257; and Qutb, *Al-Naqd Al-Adabi*, op.cit., pp. 16-18.

[48] See *One Hundred and One Poems*, Bombay and Calcutta, 1966, p. xxxii.

[49] Ibid., p. xxii.

sponsored anthologies: *Taghur fi Al-Dhikra Al-Mi'awiyah li-Mi-ladih* (Cairo, 1961) and *Taghur: Lamahat min Hayatihi wa-Fannih* (Cairo, 1961).

Qutb's Attacks on the Senior Literati

According to Qutb the war years drove a wedge between the senior *(Al-Shuyukh)* and junior *(Al-Shubban)* literati because of deep differences in their outlooks on the nation, society and humanity.[50] He accuses the senior literati of forsaking the trust that was given them by the nation, society, humanity and the younger generation. Instead of focusing on national problems during the war-years, the senior literati became, in the mass media, a tool of propaganda for the Allied cause, which resulted in their material enrichment.[51]

In the post-war period, Qutb says, the senior literati became a tool of partisan politics instead of devoting themselves to the national cause. Furthermore, instead of leading the call for social justice in a society whose development in Qutb's view had not yet transcended the feudal stage, some of the senior literati were either silent or reacted hysterically by equating "social justice" with "communism".[52]

Qutb accuses the majority of senior literati of being more concerned with their own material welfare and luxury than with the millions of hungry and naked Egyptians. Whereas, the pre-war era saw the literati express themselves in "clean" *(nazif)* literary or scientific press and books, the war years and after witnessed a reversal in which the literati lost their literary conscience and adopted an immoral life style.[53]

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[50] Qutb, "Bad' Al-Ma'rakah: Al-Damir Al-Adabi fi Misr, Shubban wa-Shuyukh," *Al-'Alam Al-'Arabi* (Cairo), Sana 1, no. 4 (July 1947), p. 52.

[51] Ibid., p. 53.

[52] Ibid., p. 53-54.

[53] Ibid., p. 54.

5.   The 1940s: An Age of Pessimism

Qutb's alienation from the literary and political establish-
ment undoubtedly was a contributing factor in his de-
cision to give up literature altogether. However, one should
remember that Qutb lived at a time when the younger gen-
eration of writers felt very much alienated from the political
status quo. This partially explains the phenomenon of "pes-
simism" which was common among the younger generation
of writers. Najib Mahfuz vividly describes the dilemma of
his generation when he points out that young writers in the
1940s were faced with a psychological crisis characterized by
extreme pessimism and the feeling that nothing in the world
was worthwhile.

There was a belief that every effort exerted in literature was
a waste for both the writer and society, and that effort should
instead be channeled into more fruitful work. There was also
a general agreement that writing and publishing were
frivolous *('abath)*. This was the same crisis, says Mahfuz,
which led young writers like 'Adil Kamil and Ahmad Zaki
Makhluf to give up writing permanently. According to
Mahfuz this phenomenon was a reflection of the prevailing
political crisis of the time.[54]

This decade of "pessimism" is another key to understanding
Qutb's decision to give up literature and to focus, instead, on
the propagation of Islamic way of life, the crux of the next
chapter.

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[54] Duwarah, op.cit., pp. 289-290.

THE EMERGENCE OF AN ISLAMICIST

1. The Emergence of Islamic Slogans

From all available data it appears that the article entitled "*Madaris lil-Sakht*" (Schools for Indignation), which appeared in late September 1946, was the first which Qutb wrote to articulate a Qur'anic ideology.[1] At this juncture he was working on his second literary oriented Qur'anic work *Mashahid Al-Qiyamah fi Al-Qur'an*, which was first published in 1947.

In "*Madaris lil-Sakht*" Qutb exresses indignation at Egyptian political and social conditions and disagreement with Egyptians who were hopeless and pathetic, resigning themselves to asking God to take care of their problems. In support of his argument Qutb quotes Qur'an 3:104, which has traditionally served as a motto of the Islamic movement, in which Allah calls on his people to be active in the spread of his message ('And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency').[2]

He also quotes Qur'an 5:79 to criticize those people who were indifferent ('They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Verily evil was that they used to do').[3] Further, in the same article Qutb employs Qur'anic phraseology: "They swallow fire into their bellies" *(Maya'kuluna fi Butunihim illa Al-Nar)* - to describe privileged Egyptians who were exploiting the people. This phraseology is derived from

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[1] *Al-Risalah*, no. 691 (30 September 1946), pp. 1081-1082.
[2] Ibid., p. 1081.
[3] Ibid.

Qur'an 4:10 ('Lo! Those who devour the wealth of orphans wrongfully, they do but swallow fire into their bellies, and they will be exposed to burning flame').[4]

In October 1946 Qutb wrote about the American conscience and the Palestine Problem. His criticism of American policies supporting large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine led him to angrily attack the "rotten" American conscience.[5] According to Qutb,

> "Many understood that it was different than European conscience. But *Allah* wanted - and may be this is for the best of the afflicted Arab nation - to uncover that materialistic conscience, conscience both of the machine that does not feel and of the merchant who is not pious and does not care about rights and justice, and who is shameless."[6]

His attacks on America included angry remarks about Western civilization in general. In the process he quotes a British cardinal, whom he calls an inaudible *(khafit)* human voice amidst the noise of machines. The cardinal was asking the world to return to God and His principles, which are based on charity and justice, so that freedom could become a reality resulting in peace and security for all.[7]

Qutb concludes his article by calling the Palestine Problem a problem for all Arabs and Easterners because it represents the struggle between the resurgent *(nahid)* East and the savage *(mutawahhish)* West, and between God's Shari'ah to man and the shari'ah of the wilderness to beasts.[8]

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Qutb, "Al-Damir Al-Amrikani...! wa-Qadiyat Filastin," p. 1155.
[6] Ibid., p. 1156
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p. 1157

2.   Qutb's Nationalist and Pan-Arabist Views

Q   utb's Islamic commitment   at this stage, aside from his
interest in the Qur'an, the quoting of Qur'anic verses and
the use of Islamic slogans, was not as yet crystallized. Indeed,
in much of his writing at the is time he does not appear as an
Islamic *da'iyah* but rather as an Egyptian nationalist as well
as a pan-Easterner or pan Arabist, from the British.

Thus, in   a February 1947 tirade against the British and their
sympathizers in Egypt, whom he calls slaves, Qutb calls on
all Egyptians to shout in unison: *"Ummuna Misr.* '*Ammuna
Al-Sharq. Abuna Al-Nil... Al-Mawt lil-Isti`mar wa-Al-Wayl lil-
Musta`mirin."* (Egypt is our Motherland. The East is our Un-
cle. The Nile is our Fatherland... Death for imperialism and
woe to the colonialists).[9]

Qutb the pan-Arabist can be seen in many articles he wrote
attacking French, British, and American policies towards the
Arabs, which were discussed earlier. His concern with the
liberation movements in the Arab world was apparent in his
active participation in the Convention of the Arab Maghrib
(Mu'tamar Al-Maghrib Al-'Arabi) which was held in Cairo,
15-22 February 1947 and which led to the creation of the Bu-
reau of the Arab Maghrib *(Maktab Al-Maghrib Al-'Arabi)* in
Cairo to coordinate nationalist activities in Morocco. Qutb
gave the closing address of the convention.[10]

Qutb's   pan-Arabism also figures prominently in the appear-
ance of the Cairene pan-Arab monthly *Al-'Alam Al-'Arabi*
(The Arab World) in April 1947 under his editorial leader-
ship. Qutb's tenure in this publication lasted until July of the
same year, when he resigned unexpectedly for undisclosed

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[9] Qutb, "Lughat Al-'Abid..!," *Al-Risalah,* no. 709 (3 February 1947), p. 136.
[10] M. Benaboud and J. Cagne, "Le Congress du Maghreb Arabe de 1947 et les Debuts du
Bureau du Maghreb Arab au Caire: L'Operation Ibn Abd Al-Karim," *Revue D'Histoire
Maghrebine* (Tunis), no. 25-26 (June 1982), p. 17 n. 2. The authors identify Qutb wrongly
as one of the leaders of the Muslim Brothers even though he did not join the Brothers until
1952.

reasons describing them only as private principles *(mabadi' khasah)*.[11]

The purpose of publishing the journal was, according to Qutb, to acquaint the Arab world, and he means here every place on earth where Arabic was spoken, with itself: its past, present and future; its potential, obstacles to its progress, and ways to overcome them. Qutb adds that the Arab world did fulfill its message to humanity at one time, but is now required to do it again because the Western world has failed in its message due to its bloodletting, lack of conscience and hedonism.[12]

Qutb does not however, clarify here what he means by "the message", even though one can discern that he means "Islam". He goes on to say that the Arab world must project power *(quwwah)* in every direction. This is the "power" that subdues matter, but does not surrender to it; utilizes the machine, but does not become subservient to it; and rises to new heights and strength in order to spread right guidance *(Al-Huda)*, light *(Al-Nur)*, and knowledge *(Al-'Irfan)* to all humanity, irrespective of race or color.[13]

3.   Qutb's Call for Spiritual Leadership

C oncrete religious ideas and symbolism began to emerge in Qutb's writing early in 1947. In January, very much alienated from the prevailing system, Qutb writes that the nation was in need of spiritual energy and leadership *(taqah wa-qiyadah ruhiyah)*. In his view political awakening will not last unless it is augmented by spiritual leadership similar to that of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani which fueled and gave momentum to three national revivals: the 'Urabi nationalist movement, Mustafa Kamil's resistance to the British and Sa'd Zaghlul's revolt for independence.[14]

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[11] See *Al-'Alam Al-'Arabi*, Sana 1, no. 5 (August 1947), p. 4.
[12] Qutb, "Ahdafuna wa-Baramijuna, *Al-'Alam Al-'Arabi*, Sana 1, no 1 (April 1947), p. 1.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Qutb, "Qiyadatuna Al-Ruhiyah," *Al-Risalah*, no. 705 (16 January 1947), p. 29.

The absence of this spiritual element, says Qutb, explains both the lowering standard of political life and the moral decay of individuals and groups in society. What is needed, Qutb adds, is a leadership that creates great personalities, as was created by Al-Afghani, and which orients individuals and groups from temporal to higher needs.[15]

Closely related to Qutb's view of the spiritual leadership of Al-Afghani was his vision of Muslim history. The greatest moment of Muslim history, according to Qutb, was the period of pristine Islam, namely that of the Prophet and the rightly-guided Caliphs, which Qutb refers to as "the first towering flow" *(Al-Madd Al-'Ali Al-Awwal)* which has never been equaled in human history. Strengthened by the great spiritual stock derived from the high ideals of Islam, the Muslims of that time overran the aging Persian and Byzatine empires, reaching China to the east and the Atlantic to the west, not for imperialistic purposes but for the spread of the "High Idea" and to liberate people from despotism, exploitation, and errors, restoring their human dignity and giving them equality.[16]

The first setback of the true spirit of Islam, according to Qutb, was at the hands of Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan, 'Amr Ibn Al-'As and his brothers (the Umayyads), who restored tribalism and used means to justify ends.[17] Since their time there has been an ebb and flow of Islamic spirit, but it would never again achieve the intensity of the "first towering flow".

The most recent resurgence of the spirit of Islam, Qutb says, came at the hands of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani at a time when the Muslim world had reached spiritual and moral decline, weakness and bankruptcy.[18] Qutb's view of Muslim history at this point in his life (January 1947) was similar to views expressed by Muslim reformers including the Muslim

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., p. 28
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p. 29

Brothers.[19] Two years later these same views of Qutb were reiterated in an expanded version in his work on social justice in Islam.

4. Qutb's Attitude Toward the Islamic Groups

Commenting on groups that were involved in the call to Islam *(Jama'at Tad'u Da'awat Islamiyah)*, Qutb says that they were spiritually weak, depleted, quiescent and not strong enough to revive the sunken and decayed generation.[20] Does Qutb include the Muslim Brothers in his wholesale condemnation of Islamic groups? He certainly does not single them out as an exception to criticism. At this time Qutb was an independent thinker not associated with any political or religious groups, with the exception of his brief association October 1947 to April 1948 with Muhammad Hilmi Al-Miniyawi, a founding member of the Society of Muslim Brothers and owner of Dar Al-Kitab Al-'Arabi press in Cairo, who helped Qutb and other Egyptian intellectuals publish and print the weekly journal *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* (Modern Thought), which will be discussed shortly.[21]

According to Heyworth-Dunne, Qutb and his colleagues at *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* "were approached several times by representatives of the Ikhwan, on the instructions of Hassan Al-Banna with a view to being won over on the grounds that their work was exactly what the Ikhwan wanted", but Qutb refused their solicitations.[22] At this stage Qutb did not believe that any Islamic group, fulfilled his own vision of the spiritual leadership and energy necessary to rekindle life in Egyptian society.[23]

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[19] Mitchell, op.cit., pp. 209-211.

[20] Ibid.

[21] J. Heyworth-Dunne, *Religious and Political Trends in Modern Egypt*, p. 97 n. 63; Al-Khalidi, op.cit, pp. 118, 135; Al-'Azm, op.cit, pp. 227.

[22] Ibid., p. 57

[23] Qutb's association with the Muslim Brothers began to emerge following his return from the United States in 1950.

5.   Qutb's Commitment to Islam
and Social Justice

Al-Fikr Al-Jadid, January - March 1948

It appears that by the beginning of Fall 1947 Qutb's interest
in Islam was becoming deeper than the mere articulation
of Islamic slogans. In October 1947 Sayyid Qutb and seven
other Egyptian intellectuals (Sadiq Ibrahim 'Arjun, Muham-
mad Al-Ghazali, Fayid Al-'Amrusi, 'Imad Al-Din 'Abd Al-
Hamid, Muhammad Qutb, Najib Mahfuz, 'Abd Al-Mun'im
Shumays, and 'Abd Al-Hamid Juda Al-Sahhar) began to set
up journal entitled *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid*.[24] The journal was offi-
cially registered in the name of Muhammad Hilmi Al-Mi-
niyawi because Qutb and his colleagues, as public employ-
ees, were forbidden by law to be publishers. Qutb, however,
was the chief editor who directed the journal's policies. In
doing so he claimed he was independent of any Egyptian
party or group.[25]

Only twelve issues of this illustrated, 36-page weekly ap-
peared (between January and March 1948). Publication came
to a halt partly as a result of the restrictions imposed by the
martial law which accompanied Egypt's entry into the 1948
Palestine War.[26] In addition, Qutb claimed that the journal
had met with a great deal of opposition from capitalists,
government authorities, ultraconservative religious figures
and communists.[27] Heyworth-Dunne says also that when
Qutb and his colleagues refused to join the Ikhwan, *Al-Fikr
Al-Jadid* was boycotted.[28]

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[24] .Heyworth-Dunne, op.cit, p. 97 n. 63; and *Majallat Al-Fikr Al-Jadid*, a 3-page hand-
written memo, believed by this researcher, as a result of hand writing analysis, to have
been written by Sayyid Qutb. This memo was found with clippings dealing with events
leading to the dissolution of the Muslim Brothers which are part of the University of
Michigan's J. Heyworth-Dunne acquisition (Henceforth referred to as Qutb's Memo).
[25] Qutb's Memo, pp. 2, 3.
[26] Ibid., p. 3; and J. Heyworth-Dunne, p. 57.
[27] Qutb's Memo, p. 3.
[28] J. Heyworth-Dunne, p. 57.

The major factor, that led to the appearance of *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* was, according to Qutb, the deteriorating social condition of the country which was causing the spread of communist ideas among the educated and the workers. *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* was an attempt by educated Egyptians to present alternative solutions to the problems of society. Qutb and his colleagues felt they saw a need for social justice to be based on the comprehensive Islamic way of life. They believed that Islam was the only system which could stand against the communist current, the reason being that Islam offered social justice which was spiritually superior to that offered by communism.[29]

The group also believed that Islam must be understood correctly and its principles applied in a modern spirit *(ruh 'asriyah)*. If, instead, Islam was understood with a rigid mentality, it would not realize its goals in society. This new interpretation of Islam, however, must also agree with Islam as it was understood by the Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, if it were to solve societal problems in a practical and realistic manner, and in true accord both with the spirit of Islam and the contemporary human situation.[30]

Al-Fikr Al-Jadid, therefore, came into being as a result of this group's determination to spread their ideas and offer practical Islamic solutions to the problems of the modern age. according to Heyworth-Dunn, the journal

> "promised to be one of the most interesting experiments of modern times, as it offered some real contributions by suggesting methods which could be employed for the solution of some of the acute social problems facing the Egyptians today".[31]

Problems addressed by the journal included individual ownership and the distribution of wealth in Egypt, relations

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[29] Qutb's Memo, p. 1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] J. Heyworth-Dunne, p. 57.

between land-owners and tenants and peasants, and relations between employers and employees.[32]

Uppermost in the minds of Qutb and his colleagues in their agitation for social justice was a desire to articulate the views of the inchoate ranks of the underprivileged masses who lived amidst inequities in a society dominated by the big landowning ruling classes.[33] Qutb's role in *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* is described by Heyworth-Dunne as follows:

> He and his agents collected a number of detailed reports on the living conditions of their compatriots and published these with photographs. He has examined the extreme poverty of four or five million fellahin and has described their way of life to the Egyptians. His courageous approach in this journal puts him in the forefront of those who are advocating a system whereby large estates should be reasonably diminished in size, and the land distributed amongst the completely landless, in order to eliminate destitution. He also advocates legislation regulating the relations between capital and labor, so that workers can get a fairer deal. He believes in encouraging the system of co-operative societies.[34]

Qutb's 1948 agitation for social justice in the pages of *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid* caused much uproar among vested interest groups in the country, including the royal palace. Probably more than any other single factor, the displeasure of the palace quickened the pace of the demise of the weekly upon the institution of martial law on 13 May 1948. According to partisan sources the palace had become very impatient with Qutb and had ordered the Prime Minister, Mahmud Fahmi Al-Nuqrashi, to arrest him. But Al-Nuqrashi, an associate of Qutb in the Wafd and Sa'dist parties, managed to salvage the situation by ordering Qutb's superior at the Ministry of Education to send him abroad on an educational mission. And so in the Fall of 1948, Qutb left Egypt for the United

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[32] Qutb's Memo, p. 2.

[33] See, for example, Safran, op.cit., pp. 194-199.

[34] J. Heyworth-Dunne, p. 97 n. 63.

States to study English and the American educational cur-
ricula.[35]

6.   Social Justice in Islam

Qutb's agitation for social justice did not end with the
demise of *Al-Fikr Al-Jadid*. On the contrary, he began
writing his first major Islamic work dealing with social jus-
tice *Al-'Adalah Al-Ijtima'iyah fi Al-Islam* (Social Justice in Is-
lam)[36] completing it before his departure for the United
States. He entrusted the final draft of the work to his brother
Muhammad and left the country around September 1948. In
April 1949 the book was published, but it was immediately
confiscated due to the controversial content of its dedication
page.[37]

It is said that the government censors had believed Qutb to
be dedicating his book to the Muslim Brothers, then an out-
lawed organization. Qutb writes in his dedication:

> "To the youngsters whom I see in my fantasy coming to re-
> store this religion anew like when it first began... fighting for
> the cause of Allah by killing and by getting killed, believing
> in the bottom of their hearts that the glory belongs to Allah,
> to his Prophet and to the believers... To those youngsters
> whom I do not doubt for a moment will be revived by the
> strong spirit of Islam ...in the very near future."[38]

The book was allowed to go on sale only after the dedication
was deleted. It should, however, be emphasized that Qutb
did not in fact dedicate his book to the Muslim Brothers. At
this stage Qutb was still independent.[39] The wording of the
dedication to the 1951 and subsequent editions of the book
was changed, however, to reflect Qutb's later close associa-

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[35] See, Al-Khalidi, op.cit., pp. 118, 125-126; and Al-'Azm, op.cit., pp. 206-207.

[36] Cairoi: Lajnat Al-Nashr lil-Jami'iyin, 1949.

[37] Al-Khalidi, op.cit., p. 237.

[38] Quoted from Al-'Azm, op.cit., p. 154; and see Al-Khalidi, op.cit., p. 135.

[39] See, Al-Khalidi, op.cit., p. 237.

tion with the Muslim Brothers. Thus his words in the first edition - "To the youngsters whom I see in my fantasy coming to restore this religion anew..."- were changed in later editions to read "to the youngsters whom I used to see in my fantasy coming but have found them in real life existing..."[40]

Those using Qutb's *Al-'Adalah*, should, therefore, keep in mind the many editions in which the book was published and the changes that were made in its editions. This is important because the first edition and its English translation represents Qutb's pre-Muslim Brother thought, which is not, of course, always the same as his later thought. For example, a new chapter was added to the 1964 Cairo edition to reflect Qutb's Islamic thought in the aftermath of his ten-year imprisonment (1954-1964).[41]

The appearance of Qutb's work on Islamic social justice in 1949 was hailed as landmark by the various Islamic groups in Egypt and the Arab world. It was also judged significant by the Western world. Shortly after its publication the Committee on Near Eastern Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies entrusted the Arabist John B. Hardie with the task of translating the 1949 edition. His translation appeared in 1953 under the title *Social Justice in Islam*.

It should be pointed out that the deep interest in the Qur'an which manifests itself in Qutb's articles and books between 1939 and 1947 is very much apparent in *Al-'Adalah*. He uses at least 284 verses from the Qur'an to support his ideas thus making the Qur'an his major source. Unlike his earlier works, however, where Qur'anic verses were utilized to illustrate artistic and literary beauty in the Qur'an, Qur'anic verses were now used to articulate various aspects of Islamic social justice and his unhappiness with the existing conditions in Egypt.

[40] Quoted from Al-'Azm, op.cit., pp. 154-155.
[41] Al-Khalidi, op.cit., p. 237.

The articulation of Qur'anic ideology in his thought at this early stage of his Islamic career is significant. Henceforth and without exception all Qutb's Islamic writings are grounded in and justified by quotations from the Qur'an. In his call for the establishment of an Islamic way of life, the Qur'an is used as an unequivocal guide which is ordained by *Allah*. This guidance is all-encompassing and not limited to human or spiritual activities. In Qutb's writings in the late 1950s and 1960s, especially in the revised portions of his Qur'anic commentary and his controversial work *Ma'alim*, which, *inter alia*, led to his execution, quotations from the Qur'an, in addition, assume crucial role because they validate and justify as well Islamic revolution against the *Jahili* way of life on earth.[42]

Further, Qutb's emergence in 1948 as a champion of the Islamic way and his total alienation from the *status quo* should be seen within the context of the general public outrage at Egyptian and Arab performance in the disastrous Palestine War. The Egyptian government decision to intervene in May 1948 gave it "some short-term relief from the ceaseless round of strikes and riots, and for a time a rigid censorship was able to conceal the disastrous course of the war".[43] Censorship, however, could not hide the utter defeat of the Arab forces. There were also scandals over inferior army equipments and "king and government were blamed for treacherously letting down the army in which there developed an intense feeling of shame... and the ground was immensely fertile for the growth of a resistance movement".[44]

Qutb's Controversial Thought

It should be pointed out that one finds in *Al-'Adalah* the seeds of Qutb's controversial thought of the 1960s. For example when discussing the Islamic political system Qutb asserts that obedience on the part of the ruled is "derived

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[42] See, for example, Qutb, *Ma'alim fi Al-Tariq*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 9-19. For a recent study of Qutb's revolutionary thought, see Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification of an Islamic revolution: the View of Sayyid Qutb," *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Winter 1983), pp. 14-29.

[43] Richmond, op.cit., p. 214.

[44] Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1981*, London, 1982, pp. 28-29.

from obedience to Allah and the Messenger". The ruler, on the other hand, "is to be obeyed only by virtue of holding his position through the law of Allah and His Messenger... If he departs from the law, he is no longer entitled to obedience, and his orders need no longer be obeyed."[45] Qutb's arguments as well as his other controversial thought would lead the Nasser regime in 1965-1966, to accuse Qutb of being a Kharijite, in reference to early Islamic dissident groups who disavowed 'Ali's army at the Battle of Siffin demanding, *inter alia*, that obedience to the ruler was conditioned by the latter's observance of the laws of Allah.[46]

In his *Ma'alim* (1964) Qutb writes that Islam knows only two types of society, the Islamic and the *Jahili*. In the first society Islam is applied fully while in the second it is not.[47] Although in his work on social justice he does not use the term *Al-Jahili*, Qutb does charge Egyptian society with being un-Islamic. He says:

> Islamic society today is not Islamic in any true sense (Laysa Islamiyan bi-Halin min Al-Ahwal). We have already quoted a verse from the Qur'an which cannot in any way be honestly applied today: "Whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed is an unbeliever." In our modern society we do not judge by what Allah has revealed; the basis of our economic life is usury; our laws permit rather that punish oppression; the poor tax is not obligatory, and is not spent in the requisite ways. We permit the extravagance and the luxury which Islam prohibits; we allow the starvation and the destitution of which the Messenger once said: "Whatever people anywhere allow a man to go hungry, they are outside the protection of Allah, the Blessed and the Exalted."[48]

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[45] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, tr. John B. Hardie, New York, 1980, pp. 15-16.

[46] See Ahmad 'Abbas Salih, "Al-Ta'assub wa-Al-Khiyanah Nash'at Al-Khawarij," *Al-Katib*, Cairo, Sana 6, no. 62 (May 1966), pp. 29-37. Indeed, it is not an uncommon practice in the Arab world to accuse dissident groups of being *Khawarij*. Thus in 1948 and 1954 crackdown on the Muslim Brothers the Egyptian government accused them of being *Khawarij*. See Mitchell, op.cit., p. 320, n. 63.

[47] Qutb, *Ma'alim fi Al-Tariq*, op.cit., pp. 105-106.

[48] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, op.cit., pp. 227-228.

7. Qutb's Two-Year Stay in the United States, 1948-1950

Qutb's Negative Reaction to American Society

1 n Fall 1948 Qutb left Egypt to study English and educational curricula in the United States. He studied for the next two years at Wilson's Teacher College (Washington, DC), Greeley College (Colorado) and Standford University (California), and visited a number of large American cities. His writings from the United States, which appeared in the Cairene reviews *Al-Risalah* and *Al-Kitab* in 1949 and 1950, expressed a negative reaction to Western civilization and shed further light on his attitude toward life.

Thus, in a letter to Tawfiq Al-Hakim, written from Washington in May 1949, he describes America as a huge, ridiculous "workshop" which they call "the New World". Americans lack one thing, he says which is of no value to them: the spirit *(Al-Ruh)*.[49]

From Denver Qutb writes that during his first year in the "workshop" of "the New World" (when he moved from New York to Washington to Denver) he did not see, except in rare moments, a human face or a look which radiated the meaning of humanity. Instead, Qutb says, he found harried crowds *(jumu' rakidah)* resembling an excited herd *(qati'ha'ij)* which knew only lust and money.[50]

He describes love *(Al-Hubb)* in America as merely a body that lusts after another body or hungry animal that craves another animal, with no time for spiritual longings, high aspirations or even the flirtation *(Al-Ghazal)*, which normally precedes "the final step". He adds that nature had bestowed on America many blessings, including natural and human

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[49] Qutb, "Ila Al-Ustadh Tawfiq Al-Hakim," *Al-Risalah*, no. 827 (9 May 1949), p. 823.
[50] Qutb, "Hama'im New York!!!," *Al-Kitab*, Sana 4, no. 10 (December 1949), p. 666.

beauty. But no one understood or felt this beauty except as animals and beasts.[51]

These and other of Qutb's negative impressions of the United States and the American way of life during his stay appeared in a series of articles entitled *"Amrika Al-Lati Ra'ayt: fi Mizan Al-Qiyyam Al-Insaniyah"*, (America that I have seen: In the Scale of Human Values) published in the review *Al-Risalah* upon his return to Egypt. They appeared also in a work published in 1962 during his imprisonment, namely, *Al-Islam wa-Mushkilat Al-Hadarah* (Islam and the Problem of Civilization).[52]

Qutb's criticism of American foreign policy, including the Marshall Plan and American involvement in the Korean War - both of which coincided with his stay in the United States - are also very prominent in his book *Al-Salam Al-'Alami wa-Al-Islam* (Islam and Universal Peace), especially in the last chapter entitled *"Wa-Al-An"* (And Now). This chapter, according to Al-'Azm, was deleted by government censors from editions appearing after 1954.[53]

Qutb's Changing Attitude Toward Literature and Writing

Qutb's stay in the United States, therefore, basically reinforced his earlier belief that the Islamic way of life was man's only valid salvation from the abyss of Godless capitalism. During his stay in America, in addition, Qutb began giving more serious thought to the abandonment of his literary career and to concentrate, instead, on one that would be movement oriented. Thus in a letter dated 6 March 1950 he writes his friend, the literary critic Anwar Al-Ma'adawi:

> You are looking forward to seeing me return in order that I take my place in literary criticism! I am afraid to tell you that this will not happen. It would be better if a new literary critic were to emerge; for I am planning to devote the rest of my

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[51] Ibid., p. 667.
[52] Cairo, 1962.
[53] Al-'Azm, op.cit., p. 210.

life to a comprehensive social program *(barnamij ijtima'i ka-mil)* that will involve the lives and efforts of many...[54]

Qutb's stay in America, furthermore, appears to have strengthened his conviction that writing is not worthy unless it has practical application. The articulation of an idea is not enough by itself; it must have deep conviction behind it, and be expressed in action. Thus, in explaining why he rarely wrote during his stay in the United States, Qutb says that he desired to achieve something more worthy than mere writing. He adds that "we in Egypt and the East have talked more than we should, and it is time to do something else beside talking..."[55] The "more worthy" goal of his life, Qutb explains, was the realization of dreams, ideals and principles. For the dichotomy between the dreams which are portrayed in literature and poetry, and the harsh realities of society has become so great.[56]

Qutb writes from Colorado Springs that an idea *(Al-Fikrah)* does not live in the soul of individuals and generations unless it becomes a system of belief *('Aqidah)*. It is only then that the idea becomes believable and the person who believes in it comes to embody this conviction. The warmth of faith belongs to the one who gives life to ideas and opens the windows of souls and hearts to them. This is why Qutb says, the words of the prophets and saints live, and the words of philosophers and thinkers have died.[57]

According to partisan sources, it was also in America that Qutb's attitude toward the Islamic movement in Egypt began to change following the assassination of Hassan Al-Banna (February 1949). It is said in these accounts that when Qutb was in America he noticed great jubilation among Americans at the news of Al-Banna's death. It was only then that Qutb realized the threat Al-Banna had posed to the

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[54] This letter is cited in full in Al-'Azm, op.cit., pp. 153-154.

[55] Qutb, "Fi Al-Adab wa-Al-Hayah," *Al-Kitab*, Sana 6, no. 4 (Apritl 1951), p. 3.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Qutb, "Adwa' min Ba'id," *Al-Kitab*, Sana 5, no. 2 (February 1950), p. 145.

West, and he regretted not getting in closer contact with
him.[58]

It is also reported that, upon his return to Egypt in August
1950, a delegation comprising some of the younger members
of the Muslim Brothers was waiting to welcome Qutb at the
Port of Alexandria. This unexpectedly warm reception left a
deep impression on him and henceforth cordial relations
were to develop between Qutb and these young men.[59]

8. Qutb's Return to Egypt and Resumption of Agitation (1950-1951)

S ayyid Qutb's stay in the United States, 1948-1950, basi-
cally reinforced his negative view of the United States
and Western civilization, and strengthened further deep
conviction that the Islamic way of life was mankind's only
salvation. After his return to Egypt and for most of 1950-51,
Qutb struck an independent path in his work calling people
to Islam and agitation against the conditions existing in the
country. This period in Egypt's history is characterized by
Richmond as follows:

> It was a period of intense frustration for the Egyptian peo-
> ple, and was marked by cynical corruption on the part of the
> King and the ruling class. Financial and sexual scandal
> touching the king became the staple of Cairo gossip. Stories
> of faulty weapons supplied to the army in Palestine under
> contracts which had been profitable to the king and his crea-
> tures were widely circulated. So were stories of the rigging
> of the Alexandria cotton market for the profit of Wafdist
> Ministers. Against a background of rising cost of living and a
> shortage of basic foodstuffs, these stories brought steadily
> nearer the end of the regime.[60]

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[58] See, for example, Isma'il Al-Shatti, "Ma' Al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb," *Al-Mujtama'*
(Kuwayt), no. 215 (27 August 1974), p. 17; Al-Khalidi, op.cit., pp. 135-136; and Al-'Azm,
op.cit., p. 207.

[59] Al-Shatti, op.cit., p. 17.

[60] Richmond, op.cit., p. 215.

Qutb wrote books and articles which appeared in Cairo's leading publications, including *Al-Risalah,* and in publications connected with the Muslim Brothers, especially the *Al-Da'wah* of Salih Al-'Ashmawi, a prominent member of the Brothers' Executive Council *(Maktab Al-Irshad).* Qutb's agitation and outspoken criticism of the Egyptian established order and attacks on the West in the 1940s and early 1950s, according to Al-'Azm, led some Egyptian writers to dub him the "Mirabeau of the Egyptian revolution of 1952",[61] in reference to Comte de Mirabeau (1747-1791), the great orator of the French Revolution who was instrumental in arousing the masses against feudalism and tyranny.

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[61] Al-'Azm, op.cit., pp. 158, 159.

CONCLUSION

It was pointed out earlier that a simplistic, unsubstantiated explanation like that offered by Muhammad Tawfiq Barakat who suggests that Qutb's change of attitude resulted from listening to one of Hassan al-Banna's speeches which had a "magic" effect on him does not warrant any consideration. It fails to take into account the various forces which have worked to shape Qutb's personality and outlook, for example, the state of Egyptian life and society in the first half of this century, Qutb's upbringing and religious training and his personal disappointments in life.

With these and other possible influences in mind this study set out to examine Qutb's milieu, namely the state of Egyptian political and intellectual life and society in the fifty years preceding the 23 July military revolution. The findings indicate clearly that Qutb was a product of a society which had been going through major political and cultural dislocation at a time when Egypt's transition from a traditional society to a modern one was taking place.

By the mid 1930s, however, there was a widespread reaction in Egypt against rampant Westernization and the failure of the liberal national establishment to achieve the independence of the Nile valley and a solution to society's pressing problems. This reaction ranged from the proliferation of Muslim clubs and societies, the articulation of anti-Western views, the promotion of pan-Eastern ideas and an increased interest in Islamics among liberal literati. Qutb's writings reflected the "East vs. West" theme. In addition, in 1939, Qutb began to take a serious interest in the Qur'an, albeit for literary purposes.

World War II and the economic, political and social dislocations it caused further alienated one-time adherents of liberal nationalist ideals like Qutb. The war's impact on Qutb cannot be over emphasized. Its adverse effects are very much reflected in Qutb's writing, as it was this period, 1939-1945, that many drastic changes began to take place in

Qutb's outlook. Likewise, during the seven-year period preceding the July 1952 military revolt the country was dominated by a sense of anger, grief and despair at the established order which was only exacerbated by the Egyptian defeat in the 1948 Palestine war. This state of mind is reflected in the intellectual activity of the time, including that of Qutb. During this period Qutb became totally alienated from the establishment and, as a result, he chose to forsake literature permanently for the Islamic *da'wah*.

Another factor of great significance in Qutb's change of outlook was his upbringing. His early life in Musha was crucial, since it was at this stage that Qutb mastered the traditional culture, that is, Arabic and the memorization of the Qur'an. Moreover, traditional Islamic values were firmly implanted in his total conception. This early experience according to Qutb, came back later to haunt him, eventually leading him back to Islam form his uncertain secular-oriented world. The impact of traditional life on the mind of Qutb the *adib* is reflected in the large space he devotes in his childhood biography to his Islamic upbringing, the customs and manners of the villagers, and popular religious practices.

When Qutb moved to Cairo in his teens, he came to experience life in a modern and urban social structure very different from the rural setting in which he grew up. As a result, he became a product of two conflicting worlds, traditional and modern, with two outlooks. It is thus very important to realize that when one deals with the question of Qutb's transformation from secularist *adib* to an Islamic *da'iyah*, one must not assume that Qutb possessed at one time a vigorous rationalist spirit which he later abandoned. Qutb's earliest literary works, especially his poetry, clearly indicate subjective and spiritual orientation. He attributes much of this spiritualism to his early upbringing.

When Qutb became interested in the Qur'an and its artistic aspects beginning in 1939, the more "traditional" component of his outlook began to reassert itself gradually, even though his "modern" outlook continued to exert itself prominently

as seen in his work on social justice in Islam, where he calls for the outright adoption of Western technology irregardless of the consequences. It can also be seen (in the same work) in his call for Muslims not to be afraid of using any man-made social legislation and systems, as long as they do not conflict with the principles of Islam.

Qutb's interest in the Qur'an was not merely an "intellectual and psychological luxury" as he termed the literary analysis of the sacred Book, but was apparently a psychological and spiritual necessity. The Qur'an was a comforting refuge from the pain of the environment in which he lived. His unhappiness in Cairo was very much evident in his poetry and prose works in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, the death of Qutb's mother, his shattered love affair and his poor health in the 1940s together with his alienation from the status quo, prompted him to turn increasingly toward his religion for his personal needs and for answers to his nation's ills.

Qutb's emergence as a student of the Qur'an and his articulation of Qur'anic ideology beginning in 1946 is significant. henceforth all Qutb's Islamic writings were to be grounded in and justified by quotations from the Qur'an. These quotations assume a crucial role in the 1960s when Qutb, in the revised portions of his Qur'anic commentary and in his controversial *Ma'alim*, validates and justifies Islamic revolution against the *Jahili* way of life on Qur'anic grounds.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that this study represents only an outline of the milestones of Qutb's intellectual career 1939-1950. It remains for this author and others to examine in more detail each of the stages of Qutb's career.

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