

In Defence of Sayyid Qutb Against the Charge of Communism

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A Man Hanged by Socialists and Accused of Socialism

In the early hours of 29 August 1966, the Egyptian state hanged a sixty year old man who had memorised the Quran as a village boy, who had finished his tafsir of the Book of Allah inside a prison cell, whose death sentence was passed in his absence because the wounds of torture kept him from attending the final session of his own trial.[1] The regime that hanged him was ruled through a single legal party carrying the word socialist in its very name, the Arab Socialist Union, which was set up as the only permitted political organisation after Nasser had nationalised every private bank, every insurance company and fifty shipping companies in 1961.[2] [3] Six decades later a slideshow passes from phone to phone among Muslims, claiming that this same man, the shahid Sayyid Qutb, may Allah have mercy on him, carried Marxist communism inside his thought, that he described Islam as a mixture of Christianity and communism, and that he gave the wealth of the individual to the collective in the way Marx taught.

Each of these charges falls apart the moment Qutb (رحمه الله)'s sentences are read in their own Arabic, placed beside the rest of his writing and weighed against the Quran, the Sunnah and the principles by which the scholars of Ahl al Sunnah have always judged the words of a Muslim. Every passage the slides rely on comes from two books of his early Islamic period, books he revised or set aside in the years that followed, while his mature writing condemns communism in the plainest language he ever used. Qutb (رحمه الله) had slips of expression, which the scholars who defended him admitted openly, yet the accusation of communism remains a false accusation, and whoever spreads it takes a share in an injustice that began in a prison in Cairo.

Terms and Definitions

Some terms have to be settled first, since most of the confusion in these slides comes from blurring them.

Shahid (الشهيد, al shahid). A Muslim who is killed for the sake of Allah. Ahl al Sunnah do not declare with certainty that a specific person is a shahid in the sight of Allah, because the Prophet ﷺ taught: "If one of you must praise his companion, let him say: I consider so and so to be such, and Allah is his Reckoner, and I do not declare anyone pure before Allah."[4] Whenever this article calls Sayyid Qutb (رحمه الله) a shahid, the word

[1] Yeşil, Seyyid Kutub'un Siyasi Düşüncesinin Teolojik Temelleri, pp. 4 to 11
[2] "Egypt: Nasser and Arab Socialism," Country Studies: https://country-studies.com/egypt/nasser-and-arab-socialism.html
[3] Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Arab Socialist Union": https://britannica.com/topic/Arab-Socialist-Union-political-party-Egypt
[4] Sahih Muslim 3000

carries exactly that meaning, so we consider him a shahid while Allah alone is his Reckoner.

Communism (الشيوعية, al shuyuiyyah). The doctrine of Marx and Engels, whose own manifesto states that "the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property," and that "Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality."[5]

Socialism (الاشتراكية, al ishtirakiyyah). The wider family of ideologies that place property and the distribution of income under the control of society or the state, which Marxists treat as the stage that comes before full communism.[6]

Taraju and ruju (التراجع والرجوع, al taraju wa al ruju). The abandonment by a scholar of a position he once held, whether he states it openly, removes the position from his books, writes the opposite view in its place or instructs that a work containing it should no longer be relied upon.

The Principles by Which a Muslim's Words Are Judged

Much of this dispute is in reality a dispute about method, so the standards have to be laid down before the slides are answered.

A man is judged by his final position

The Shariah refuses to measure a person by his beginning. The Prophet ﷺ said:

> *"and deeds are only judged by their endings."*[7]

When Amr ibn al As came to give his pledge while still afraid of what he had done before, the Prophet ﷺ said to him:

> *"Do you not know that Islam destroys what came before it, that hijrah destroys what came before it, and that Hajj destroys what came before it?"*[8]

Allah also reminded the Companions themselves of their own past when He ordered them to be careful before passing judgment on a man.

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[5] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), chapter 2, Marxists Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm

[6] Yeşil, pp. 57 to 59

[7] Sahih al Bukhari 6607

[8] Sahih Muslim 121

كَذَٰلِكَ كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا

> *"So were you yourselves before, then Allah conferred His favour upon you, so verify."*[9]

Ibn Taymiyyah built a clear rule on this. Speaking of the Prophet Yunus عليه السلام, he said:

> *"The weight is given to the perfection of the ending over what took place at the beginning, and deeds are judged by their final states. Allah the Exalted created man and brought him out of his mother's womb knowing nothing, then He taught him and moved him from a state of deficiency to a state of perfection, so it is not permissible to measure the worth of a person by what came from him before the state of perfection; the weight lies with the state of his perfection."*[10]

A few pages later he gave the example that settles the matter:

> *"Umar ibn al Khattab and Khalid ibn al Walid, may Allah be pleased with them, were among the harshest of people against Islam, and when they became Muslim they went ahead of those who had preceded them into Islam, and some of those who preceded them were below them in iman and righteous deeds... This and other examples show that the weight lies with the perfection of the end over the deficiency of the beginning."*[11]

Ibn al Qayyim reported from his teacher on the same subject:

> *"I heard Shaykh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, relate this disagreement, then he said: The correct view is that among the repentant are some who do not return to their former rank, some who return to it, and some who return to a higher one, so that the person becomes better than he was before the sin."*[12]

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[9] Surah al Nisa 4:94

[10] Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu al Fatawa, 10/299 and 10/303 to 304, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0750AH/master/data/0728IbnTaymiyya/0728IbnTaymiyya.MajmucFatawa/0728IbnTaymiyya.MajmucFatawa.Shamela0007289-ara1 and the same saying listed with reference 10/304 at https://kalemtayeb.com/hekam/item/107685

[11] Ibid

[12] Ibn al Qayyim, Madarij al Salikin, 1/301 to 302 and 3/481, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0775AH/master/data/0751IbnQayyimJaw

The last edition of a book governs the earlier ones

A narrower principle follows from the first and decides much of this controversy. When an author revises a book, criticism has to address the revised text, since the later edition records what he finally held. Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd stated this rule in the very letter he wrote about the book that gathered the accusations against Qutb (رحمه الله):

> ***"The obligation, according to the principles of criticism and scholarly trustworthiness, is to direct the criticism, if there is any, at the text of the last edition of every book, because the amendments in it abrogate what is in the one before it!"***

He gave an example from the scholars of the past:

> ***"For example, the book al Ruh by Ibn al Qayyim, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on him, when some of them saw in it what they saw, they said: Perhaps it is from the beginning of his life!"***[13]

The unclear is read in the light of the clear

Allah described those who chase the ambiguous verses of His Book while leaving the clear ones, the scholars drew from this a rule for reading the words of any speaker. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

> *"It is obligatory that the speech of a speaker be explained by his other speech, that his words be taken from here and there, that one know what he habitually means and intends by an expression when he uses it, and that one know the meanings he is known to have intended in another place."*

He continued that if a person's words are carried against the meaning he is known to intend,

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ziyya/0751IbnQayyimJawziyya.MadarijSalikin/0751IbnQayyimJawziyya.MadarijSalikin.Shamela0008370-ara1 and the first passage quoted with reference 1/301 in "Sab Masail fi al Tawbah," Alukah: https://www.alukah.net/social/1/153267/

[13] Letter of Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (d. 1429 AH) on the book Adwa Islamiyyah ala Aqidat Sayyid Qutb wa Fikrih, dated 20/1/1414 AH, reproduced in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/423 to 430, al Maktabah al Shamilah: https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1119 (the letter continues on the following pages up to https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1126)

> *"by making his speech contradictory and leaving the reading that fits the rest of his speech, that is a distortion of his speech from its places, a change of his intentions and a lie against him."*[14]

Ibn al Qayyim, while defending Shaykh al Islam al Harawi against those who read some of his expressions as the doctrine of union with the Divine, said:

> *"One and the same word is said by two people; one of them intends by it the greatest falsehood and the other intends by it pure truth, and the judgment goes by the way of the speaker, his life, his doctrine, what he calls to and what he debates for."*[15]

A Muslim's words are carried on their best possible meaning

The Hanafi jurists stated this rule with a firmness found in few other places. Ibn Abidin, quoting al Bahr al Raiq of Ibn Nujaym in abridged form, wrote in Radd al Muhtar:

> *"In al Fatawa al Sughra: Kufr is a grave matter, so I do not make a believer a kafir whenever I find a narration that he does not become a kafir. And in al Khulasah and elsewhere: If in a question there are aspects that require takfir and a single aspect that prevents it, the mufti must incline to the aspect that prevents takfir, out of thinking well of the Muslim... What has been established is that no Muslim is ruled a kafir if it is possible to carry his speech on a good meaning, or if there is disagreement over his kufr, even through a weak narration."*[16]

Communism is a doctrine that abolishes all religion by its own admission, so calling a Muslim a carrier of communist doctrine comes very close to calling him a kafir. If the jurists demanded this much caution before the gravest verdict, the same good opinion is owed to every sentence of a Muslim that can be carried on a sound meaning.

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[14] Ibn Taymiyyah, al Jawab al Sahih li man Baddala Din al Masih, 4/44, 5/79 and 6/22, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0750AH/master/data/0728IbnTaymiyya/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih.Shamela0000170-ara1

[15] Ibn al Qayyim, Madarij al Salikin, 1/301 to 302 and 3/481, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0775AH/master/data/0751IbnQayyimJawziyya/0751IbnQayyimJawziyya.MadarijSalikin/0751IbnQayyimJawziyya.MadarijSalikin.Shamela0008370-ara1 and the first passage quoted with reference 1/301 in "Sab Masail fi al Tawbah," Alukah: https://www.alukah.net/social/1/153267/

[16] Ibn Abidin, Radd al Muhtar ala al Durr al Mukhtar, Kitab al Jihad, Bab al Murtadd, 4/224, quoting al Bahr al Raiq of Ibn Nujaym, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/1275AH/master/data/1252IbnCabidinDimashqi/1252IbnCabidinDimashqi.RaddMukhtar/1252IbnCabidinDimashqi.RaddMukhtar.Shamela0021613-ara1

Justice toward the one you disagree with

Allah commanded justice even towards people one dislikes.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُونُوا۟ قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا۟ ۚ ٱعْدِلُوا۟ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

> *"O you who believe, stand firm for Allah as witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people lead you to be unjust. Be just, that is nearer to taqwa."*[17]

Imam al Dhahabi described the danger of the opposite method when he defended Muhammad ibn Nasr al Marwazi over some of his statements about iman. He said:

> *"If every time an imam erred in his ijtihad in individual issues, with an error for which he is forgiven, we rose against him, declared him an innovator and boycotted him, then neither Ibn Nasr nor Ibn Mandah would remain safe with us, nor anyone greater than them. Allah is the One who guides creation to the truth, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. We seek refuge with Allah from desires and harshness."*[18]

The Periods of His Writing

These principles only work once it is clear which books belong to which stage of the man's life. The academic study of his thought divides his writing into three periods.[19] The first runs from his youth to the second half of the 1940s and consists of poetry, stories, novels and literary criticism. The second, roughly from 1945 to 1955, is described as the period of transition toward his maturity, in which he turned to the Quran and wrote al **Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah fi al Islam** in 1949, Marakat al Islam wa al Rasmaliyyah in 1952 and Dirasat Islamiyyah in 1953. The third, from about 1955 until his death, is the period of maturity, in which he completed Fi Zilal al Quran in prison in 1959, wrote Khasais al Tasawwur al Islami in 1962 and finally Maalim fi al Tariq in 1964.[20]

Every passage quoted in the slides comes from the two books of the second period. Bakr Abu Zayd reminded the author of the indictment of this fact, writing that "***the book al Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah is the first thing he wrote on Islamic subjects,***" and he complained:

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[17] Surah al Maidah 5:8
[18] Al Dhahabi, Siyar Alam al Nubala, 14/40, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0750AH/master/data/0748Dhahabi/0748Dhahabi.SiyarAclamNubala/0748Dhahabi.SiyarAclamNubala.Sham30K0010906-ara1
[19] Yeşil, pp. 13 to 16
[20] Yeşil, pp. 10 to 11 and 16 to 17

> *"I saw that the quotations from the books of Sayyid, may Allah have mercy on him, were taken from earlier printings, such as al Zilal and al Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah, while you know that they have later, revised printings!"*[21]

Qutb (رحمه الله) kept revising al Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah across six editions up to 1964, William Shepard, who translated the final edition, described the editions by saying that *"each edition shows changes from the preceding one and these changes move in a consistent direction,"* a direction his research identifies as Qutb (رحمه الله)'s steady movement toward the Islamic outlook of his last years.[22]

A further report, transmitted by the Saudi judge Abd Allah ibn Aqil al Aqil, who knew Qutb (رحمه الله) personally, states that Qutb sent word to his brothers that among all his writings **he relied on six books only: Hadha al Din, al Mustaqbal li Hadha al Din, al Islam wa Mushkilat al Hadarah, Khasais al Tasawwur al Islami wa Muqawwimatuh, the revised second edition of Fi Zilal al Quran and Maalim fi al Tariq. The same report adds that he used to say that if Allah gave him a longer life he would review the rest, because he had already revised a number of the ideas in them. The report was published in the Kuwaiti magazine al Mujtama, issue 112, page 22, in August 1972**.

The Slides Answered One by One

The claim of fifteen years of doubt and the company he kept

The slides open with his past. They say that despite an Islamic upbringing he spent around fifteen years in doubt about the foundations of Islam, that he studied the materialist philosophies of the West, that he was a member of the secular Wafd party for a time, and that he stayed close to the writer Abbas Mahmud al Aqqad until the late 1940s. Parts of this biography are true, and a fair reply gains nothing by denying them, even though the slides give no source for the figure of fifteen years. Qutb (رحمه الله)

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[21] Letter of Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (d. 1429 AH) on the book Adwa Islamiyyah ala Aqidat Sayyid Qutb wa Fikrih, dated 20/1/1414 AH, reproduced in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/423 to 430, al Maktabah al Shamilah: https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1119 (the letter continues on the following pages up to https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1126)

[22] William E. Shepard, Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. x, as quoted in Tanja Fuchs, Sayyid Qutb: Vom säkularen Muslim und arabischen Nationalisten zum Islamisten, Occasional Paper 6b, Institut für Afrikanistik, Universität Wien, 2006, p. 4: https://afrika.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_afrika/Forschung/Occasional_Papers/paper_06b_fuchs.pdf

himself called those years of his life a period of jahiliyyah,[23] and he later condemned the literary works he had published during the 1940s as contrary to Islam.[24]

What the slides leave out is the direction in which the story moved. The same academic record shows that from 1939 Qutb (رحمه الله) turned to the Quran for his literary research, and that this work began to pull him away from the Westernised literary circle around him and from al Aqqad himself. In 1942 he left the Wafd, and in 1945 he ended every party affiliation he had.[25] The label "existentialist" that the slides attach to al Aqqad is also a strange one for a writer best known for his Abqariyyat series on the Prophet ﷺ and the great Companions and for a book whose title is simply Allah.[26] Whatever one thinks of al Aqqad, the closeness of a young literary student to his teacher is a weak basis for judging the creed of the same man decades later, after he had completed the Zilal and walked to the gallows.

The rule of the final position, set out above, decides the rest. Umar and Khalid once fought the Prophet ﷺ himself, yet the ummah has never judged them by those years. If the Companions are measured by their endings, then a man whose ending was a rope around his neck, because he refused to write a single word against **la ilaha illa Allah**, is owed the same fairness. Bakr Abu Zayd described that ending in his letter:

> *"The man was a literary critic, then he turned to the service of Islam through the mighty Quran and the honoured Sunnah, and he devoted his pen, his time and his blood to its path, so the tyrants of his age choked on it... He held firm to his position for the sake of Allah the Exalted and bared his neck."*

In the same passage he records the words with which Qutb (رحمه الله) refused when he was asked to write a retraction:

> *"A finger that I raise for the testimony of faith will never write a word that contradicts it."*[27]

The claim that Marxism never left him

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[23] Yeşil, p. 15

[24] "Sayyid Qutb," Wikipedia (on his later rejection of his 1940s literary works, and on Nasser's offers of office which he refused): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayyid_Qutb

[25] Yeşil, pp. 6 to 7

[26] "Abbas el Akkad," Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbas_el-Akkad

[27] Letter of Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (d. 1429 AH) on the book Adwa Islamiyyah ala Aqidat Sayyid Qutb wa Fikrih, dated 20/1/1414 AH, reproduced in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/423 to 430, al Maktabah al Shamilah: https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1119 (the letter continues on the following pages up to https://shamela.ws/book/145333/1126)

The second slide says that the "*Marxist Communist nurturing*" of his youth never left Qutb (رحمه الله), that it shaped his thought when he began writing about Islam in the late 1940s, and that whenever he criticised capitalism he had nothing to fall back on except Marxism. This is the heart of the accusation, so it deserves the most careful answer.

There is a grain of truth in it that honesty requires us to state. The academic study of his life records **that in his early period,** moved by the poverty of a people ruled by a king under British occupation, Qutb (رحمه الله) defended socialism as a partial carrier of social justice, as many Egyptian patriots did at that time, and the same study adds that he did so **before he had properly studied it.**[28] The same study then records what happened when he did study it. During his two years in the United States he examined socialism, communism and capitalism in detail, identified in each of them the elements that enslave human beings in different ways, and came home in 1950 as one of the serious critics of the Western systems.[29] A man who sympathised with a slogan before examining it, and turned against it once he had examined it, has followed exactly the path of growth that the scholars quoted above describe.

What his mature writing says about communism

The decisive evidence is found in his mature writing, from a period in which the same study lists Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al Qayyim among the sources he drew on,[30] and it is impossible to read that writing while believing that Marxism stayed inside him. In his introduction to Surah al Anam in the Zilal, a passage he later carried into Maalim fi al Tariq, Qutb (رحمه الله) asked why the Prophet ﷺ did not begin his call with a programme of class struggle, and he answered:

> "*It was within the power of Muhammad ﷺ to raise it as a social banner, to stir it up as a war against the class of the nobles, and to launch it as a call aimed at adjusting conditions and returning the wealth of the rich to the poor!*"

He explained that such a call would have split Arab society into two camps, and then said:

> "*But Allah, glorified is He, the All Knowing, the All Wise, did not direct him to this direction,*" *because* "*social justice must spring forth in society from a comprehensive creedal conception.*"[31]

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[28] Yeşil, p. 14
[29] Yeşil, pp. 8 and 15
[30] Yeşil, p. 17
[31] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, introduction to Surah al Anam: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura6-aya1.html

Class war with the redistribution of the wealth of the rich to the poor is the programme of Marx, which Qutb (رحمه الله) declared in plain words to be a path Allah turned His Messenger ﷺ away from.

His commentary on the supplication of the believers in Surah al Hashr is even sharper.

وَالَّذِينَ جَآءُو مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَٰنِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَٰنِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِى قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا

> *"And those who came after them say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and put no rancour in our hearts towards those who believe."*[32]

Qutb (رحمه الله) said that the beauty of this picture appears in full when it is set beside

> *"the image of despicable rancour and base destruction which communism represents and preaches in the gospel of Karl Marx; the image of the rancour that festers in the chests and gnaws at the conscience, against the classes, against the past generations of humanity, against its present nations that do not embrace despicable class hatred, and against iman and the believers of every nation and every religion!"*[33]

Describing the Communist Manifesto as the gospel of rancour is an odd thing for a secret Marxist to do.

In his commentary on the last ayah of Surah Hud he placed communism among the forms of modern jahiliyyah:

> *"Some of it takes the form of atheism towards Allah, glorified is He, and denial of His existence, so it is a jahiliyyah of belief and conception, like the jahiliyyah of the communists."*

He then explained that the people of the West who fled from capitalism into collective systems only exchanged one master for another:

> *"They replaced submission to the class of the capitalists with submission to the class of the paupers! Or they replaced submission to the owners of capital and companies with submission to the state that owns wealth alongside power, so it becomes more dangerous than the class of the capitalists!"*[34]

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[32] Surah al Hashr 59:10
[33] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, Surah al Hashr 10: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura59-aya10.html
[34] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, Surah Hud 123: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura11-aya123.html

The academic study of his thought draws the same conclusion from these and other passages, noting that Qutb (رحمه الله) regarded **socialism as more dangerous than capitalism, attacked Marxism for its class hatred**, for reducing man to his animal needs and for its war on the family, and objected to presenting Islam in the dress of socialism or democracy, which he called passing fashions unfit to carry an everlasting deen.[35]

His critique of capitalism came from the Quran

The claim that he had "*no recourse except Marxism*" whenever he criticised capitalism also fails when his actual critique is examined. His objection to capitalism rested on riba, on the hoarding of wealth and on the Quranic rule that wealth must not circulate among the rich alone.[36] In his commentary on that rule he wrote:

> "*Individual ownership is recognised in this theory, but it is limited by this rule, the rule that wealth must not become something that circulates among the rich, held back from circulating among the poor.*"

He then concluded:

> "*Hence the Islamic system is a system that permits individual ownership, yet it is not the capitalist system, just as the capitalist system was not taken from it, for the capitalist system can never stand at all without riba.*"[37]

Riba was forbidden in Madinah nearly twelve centuries before Marx was born, so a critique of capitalism built on the prohibition of riba owes nothing to him.

His mature thought was formed in battle against socialism

His life confirms what his pen wrote. **The regime of the Free Officers offered him any position he wanted in government yet he refused every offer.**[38] When that regime, which the academic study describes as a strong follower and implementer of socialism, demanded that the Muslim Brotherhood dissolve itself into its own organisation, Qutb (رحمه الله) took the side of the Brotherhood and formally joined it in February 1953.[39]

Shaykh Yusuf al Qaradawi (رحمه الله), who knew that generation closely, explained that the sharpest stage of Qutb's thought was born precisely out of his confrontation with the socialism of the regime and the rise of the communists. He wrote:

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[35] Yeşil, pp. 59 to 62
[36] Yeşil, pp. 14 to 15 and 64
[37] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, Surah al Hashr 7: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura59-aya7.html
[38] "Sayyid Qutb," Wikipedia (on his later rejection of his 1940s literary works, and on Nasser's offers of office which he refused): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayyid_Qutb
[39] Yeşil, p. 9

> *"I say: this revolutionary, rejecting thought took shape inside the prison, especially after Egypt and its leader Abd al Nasir announced the necessity of the socialist transformation and the inevitability of the socialist solution, and the Charter was issued which some called the Quran of the revolution! And after the Egyptian Soviet rapprochement, the reconciliation with the communists, their leap upon the organs of media, culture, literature and thought, and their attempt to change the historic Islamic face of Egypt,* ***there Sayyid Qutb (رحمه الله) saw that kufr had removed its veil.***"[40]

Most of the thirteen years that followed his joining were spent in the prisons of that regime, they ended on the gallows of that same socialist state. Allah described the only real reason why tyrants take revenge on the believers:

> وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ
>
> *"And they resented them for nothing except that they believed in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy."*[41]

The sentence about Christianity and communism

The third and fourth slides form the core of the visual campaign. They quote a sentence from Marakat al Islam wa al Rasmaliyyah, page 61, translating it as saying that Islam is "*a unique, constructive and positivist aqidah which has been moulded and shaped from Christianity and Communism together.*" They then open Lane's Lexicon to show that the verb means to mould, to forge or to fabricate, concluding that Qutb (رحمه الله) made Islam a "*medley, compound and alloy*" of Christianity and communism. The sentence in the original reads:

> ولا بد للإسلام أن يحكم لأنه العقيدة الوحيدة الإيجابية الإنشائية التي تصوغ من المسيحية والشيوعية معا مزيجا كاملا يتضمن أهدافهما جميعا ويزيد عليهما التوازن والتناسق والاعتدال

The whole charge rests on one grammatical error in the translation. The verb تصوغ (tasugh) is an active verb in the present tense, and its subject is العقيدة (al aqidah), the creed of Islam, which is described in the relative clause "*the creed that fashions.*" The passive form would be تُصاغ (tusagh), "*is fashioned*," and that form does not appear anywhere in the sentence. The translation in the slides turned the active verb into a passive one by writing "*which has been moulded*," and with that single change the maker became the thing made. Lane's Lexicon, the very authority the slides appeal to, gives the example "*He cast the gold so as to make of it ornaments*," and in that picture the

[40] Yusuf al Qaradawi, "Sayyid Qutb, al Mufakkir al Islami Shahid al Dawah wa al Tarbiyah wa al Thaqafah wa al Fikr": https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/2186
[41] Surah al Buruj 85:8

goldsmith shapes the gold while nobody imagines that the goldsmith is made of gold.[42] The meaning of forging and fabricating that the slides add to the list belongs to a different use of the verb, where its object is a lie, while Mukhtar al Sihah of al Razi, quoted on the same page, notes that the expression *"so and so fashions lies"* is a metaphor.[43] In Qutb's sentence the object is *"a complete blend that contains all of their aims,"* so the faithful translation runs as follows:

Islam must rule, because it is the only positive and constructive creed that forms, out of Christianity and communism together, a complete whole containing all of their aims, adding to them balance, harmony and moderation.

Read in its own grammar the sentence makes a claim of superiority. It begins with *"Islam must rule,"* and its argument is that every aim the followers of Christianity and communism say they are seeking, whether the spiritual purity that the first speaks about or the social equity that the second promises, is already fulfilled in Islam in a more complete form, together with a balance that both of them lack.

How the scholars spoke of Islam gathering the good of earlier laws

The Quran itself describes its relationship to what came before it in these terms.

وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَٰبِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ

> *"And We have sent down to you the Book in truth, confirming what was before it of the Scripture and as a guardian over it."*[44]

Ibn Kathir said about this ayah:

> *"Allah made this mighty Book, which He sent down as the last of the books and their seal, the most comprehensive of them, the greatest and the most precise, since He gathered in it the beauties of what came before it and added to it perfections found in no other."*

He also said:

> *"The name al Muhaymin includes all of this, for it is trustee, witness and judge over every book before it."*[45]

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[42] E. W. Lane, Arabic English Lexicon, root صوغ, with the entries of Lisan al Arab and Mukhtar al Sihah on the same page: https://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com/%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%BA/
[43] Ibid
[44] Surah al Maidah 5:48
[45] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al Quran al Azim, Surah al Maidah 48: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura5-aya48.html

Ibn Taymiyyah went further and used the very language of combining. He said:

> *"The law of the Torah is dominated by severity, the law of the Injil is dominated by gentleness, and the law of the Quran is balanced, combining this and that, as Allah the Exalted said: And thus We have made you a middle nation."*[46]

In another place he said that the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ

> *"is more complete than the two groups of the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, and more just, and the beauties of what is in the Torah and what is in the Injil have been gathered for them."*[47]

Anyone who applied the method of the slides to these passages could announce that Ibn Taymiyyah made Islam an alloy of Judaism and Christianity, blended from the severity of one and the softness of the other. No student of knowledge would accept such a reading of Ibn Taymiyyah, because his meaning is obvious: Islam holds every good thing the earlier laws contained and rises above them. Qutb (رحمه الله) is owed the same fairness.

What Qutb says about Islam, Christianity and communism in Social Justice

The same book from which the slides took their trustee passages also contains a paragraph in which Qutb (رحمه الله) sets Islam, Christianity and communism side by side and explains where they part. In the Turkish translation it reads, in my English rendering:

> *"Corrupted Christianity looks at man only from the side of his spiritual desires and keeps his material wants under pressure in order to set those desires free, while communism looks at man only from the side of his material needs and weighs mankind, even the whole universe, only in material terms. Islam sees man's spiritual longings and his sensual wants as one inseparable whole, and accepts that his moral needs and his material needs cannot be torn apart from each other. Islam looks at the universe and at life with this broad view in which there is no break and no division. The parting of the ways between Islam and Christianity and communism is here. This parting comes from the fact that Islam is entirely the*

[46] Ibn Taymiyyah, al Jawab al Sahih li man Baddala Din al Masih, 4/44, 5/79 and 6/22, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0750AH/master/data/0728IbnTaymiyya/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih.Shamela0000170-ara1

[47] Ibid

> *order of Allah, that Christianity was altered by human hands, and that communism is nothing but a product of human fancy."*[48]

This paragraph answers the whole accusation from the pen of the same author and in the same book. Communism is called a product of human fancy, which places it outside the order of Allah, and the line between it and Islam is named as a parting of the ways. When the slides ask the reader to believe that this man made Islam an alloy of communism, they have to hide the page on which he says that the two have different origins and different views of man. It also shows how the sentence of Marakat al Islam wa al Rasmaliyyah should be read. A man who says that Islam gathers the aims of the earlier systems and adds balance to them, and who says in the same period that those systems stand on altered or invented foundations while Islam stands on the order of Allah, is speaking about the completeness of the sharia and the weakness of its rivals, and nothing in his words describes a mixture with a communist ingredient.

Fairness also requires admitting what is weak in the sentence. Communism is an atheist doctrine made by men, while the Injil was a revealed Book before it was corrupted, so placing the two side by side in a single sentence was a loose literary choice that a careful scholar would have avoided. This is precisely the kind of thing Bakr Abu Zayd had in mind when he wrote about Qutb:

> *"I found in his books much good, radiant iman, clear truth and an exposing dissection of the plans of the enemies against Islam, alongside slips in some of his passages and a looseness in his expressions which I wish he had never uttered, and many of them are cancelled out by his own correct statement in another place."*[49]

Marakat al Islam wa al Rasmaliyyah belongs to the transitional period described above, published before Qutb (رحمه الله) joined the Brotherhood and years before he completed the Zilal and wrote Maalim fi al Tariq,[50] and **in those later works he condemned the presentation of Islam in the dress of socialism or democracy.**[51]

The rules laid down earlier settle the matter. By the rule of Ibn al Qayyim, if a communist wrote that Islam takes from Christianity and communism, his meaning would be that Islam borrows from them. When the same words come from a man who called the Communist Manifesto a gospel of rancour, who listed communism under the jahiliyyah of atheism and who went to his death for **la ilaha illa Allah**, the only honest

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[48] Seyyid Kutub, Islam'da Sosyal Adalet (Turkish translation of al Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah fi al Islam by M. Beşir Eryarsoy), Arslan Yayınları, Istanbul, 2nd printing, December 1982, p. 43

[49] Bakr Abu Zayd, in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/429

[50] Yeşil, pp. 9 to 11

[51] Yeşil, p. 62

reading is the one his grammar already gives, which is that Islam stands above them both. By the rule of the Hanafi jurists, a sentence that can be carried on a sound meaning must be carried on it, and this sentence does not even need a strained reading, since its plain grammar already gives the sound one.

The comparison with the Communist Manifesto

The fifth slide defines communism as the confiscation of private property by the state and quotes Marx and Engels saying that capital "*is a social power*" which, once "*converted into common property*," loses "*its class character*." The aim is to prepare the reader to see the same idea in Qutb. The trouble is that the definition the slides chose is the very definition that clears him. If communism is the abolition of private property, as the Manifesto itself sums up its whole theory,[52] then the man who wrote that "*the right of individual ownership is a clear fundamental right in the Islamic system*", and who repeated in the Zilal that "*the Islamic system is a system that permits individual ownership*",[53] holds the opposite of communism on the point that communism itself calls its centre. The Manifesto also announces that communism abolishes all religion and the family,[54] while Qutb built his entire theory of wealth on the ownership of Allah and condemned socialism for its destruction of the family.[55]

What the slides have actually found is one shared premise, namely that wealth has a social dimension and that society has a claim on it. Sharing a premise with an enemy of Islam proves nothing, because the premise was taught by the Quran more than a thousand years before Marx.

> وَفِىٓ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ
>
> *"And in their wealth there is a right for the one who asks and the one who is deprived."*[56]

Marx and the Quran both say that the poor have a claim, yet the Quran is the one that said it first. The question is what each builds on that premise, and here the two roads

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[52] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), chapter 2, Marxists Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm

[53] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, Surah al Hashr 7: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura59-aya7.html

[54] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), chapter 2, Marxists Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm

[55] Yeşil, p. 61

[56] Surah al Dhariyat 51:19

separate completely, since Marx ends with the abolition of property and of God while Qutb (رحمه الله) ends with property held as a trust from God and bound by His law.

The doctrine of the trustee in Social Justice

The sixth and seventh slides quote two passages from al Adalah al Ijtimaiyyah fi al Islam. In the first, Qutb says that the first principle Islam affirms alongside the right of individual ownership is that the individual most closely resembles a trustee of this wealth on behalf of the community, that his possession of it is a function more than an ownership, that wealth in general is originally a right of the community, and that the community holds it as a successor on behalf of Allah, besides whom there is no owner. In the second he summarises that the original rule is that wealth belongs to the community in its generality, that individual ownership is a function with conditions and restrictions, that some wealth is common and nobody has the right to own it, and that a portion of wealth is a right returned to the community so that it can give it to the groups that need it. The slides present these passages as plain Marxism. Each of them, taken one by one, is plain Quran and Sunnah.

The individual as a trustee of the wealth of Allah

The idea that the individual is a trustee and that the true owner is Allah comes straight from the ayah already mentioned.

> ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُم مُّسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ
>
> *"Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend from that over which He has made you successors."*[57]

Al Qurtubi said about it:

> *"This is proof that the origin of ownership belongs to Allah, glorified is He, and that the servant has nothing in it except the disposal that pleases Allah, so He rewards him for that with Paradise."*

He also reported from al Hasan:

> *"Successors over it, through your inheriting it from those who were before you."*[58]

Ibn Kathir explained the same words as meaning

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[57] Surah al Hadid 57:7

[58] Al Qurtubi, al Jami li Ahkam al Quran, Surah al Hadid 7: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura57-aya7.html

> *"from what is with you by way of a loan, for it was in the hands of those before you and then it came to you."*[59]

Allah even calls the wealth that is in the hands of the believers His own wealth.

> وَءَاتُوهُم مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِىٓ ءَاتَىٰكُمْ

> *"And give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you."*[60]

When al Qurtubi says the servant has "*nothing in it except the disposal that pleases Allah*," he is saying the same thing Qutb meant by calling possession "*a function more than an ownership*." In his mature commentary on the same ayah Qutb explained it in words that leave no room for Marx:

> *"They do not spend from their own selves. They only spend from what Allah has made them successors over from His dominion... He is the One who made the children of Adam as a whole successors over something of His dominion."*[61]

The phrase "*the children of Adam as a whole*" is the exact meaning of his earlier statement that the community holds the wealth as a successor on behalf of Allah.

Possession as a function bound by conditions

The statement that individual possession is a function with conditions and restrictions is a description of the fiqh of property that every Muslim already knows. Zakat is taken from it whether the owner likes it or not, riba is forbidden in it, hoarding is threatened with the Fire,[62] and a person who lacks sound judgment is placed under hajr and kept away from his own wealth. Allah addressed the guardians of such people with these words.

> وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ أَمْوَٰلَكُمُ الَّتِى جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَٰمًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

> *"And do not give the foolish your wealth, which Allah has made a means of support for you; provide for them from it, clothe them and speak to them with kind words."*[63]

In the explanation that al Qurtubi follows, the wealth in this ayah belongs to the foolish themselves, yet Allah calls it "*your wealth*," addressing the whole community. Al Qurtubi

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[59] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al Quran al Azim, Surah al Hadid 7: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura57-aya7.html
[60] Surah al Nur 24:33
[61] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, Surah al Hadid 7: https://quran-tafsir.net/qotb/sura57-aya7.html
[62] Surah al Tawbah 9:34 to 35
[63] Surah al Nisa 4:5

gave two explanations for this. The first is that the wealth is in the guardians' hands and they manage it, and the second is:

> *"He attributed it to them because it is of the same kind as their wealth, for wealth has been made shared among creation, moving from hand to hand and from owner to owner."*[64]

An owner who loses the right to manage his own property because he misuses it holds that property as a function bound by conditions, which is all Qutb said.

Wealth in its generality as a right of the community

The principle that wealth in its generality is a right of the community is the meaning of one of the clearest economic rules in the Quran, the rule that Qutb himself commented on in the Zilal.

> كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَآءِ مِنكُمْ

> *"So that it does not become something that circulates only among the rich among you."*[65]

Al Tabari explained it as

> *"so that this fay does not become a dulah that the rich among you pass around between themselves,"*

and he defined the dulah as

> *"the name of the thing that is passed around itself."*[66]

Allah directed public wealth to the needy in society precisely so that it would keep serving the whole community.

Wealth that no individual may own

The statement that some wealth is common and nobody may own it is almost word for word a hadith. The Prophet ﷺ said:

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[64] Al Qurtubi, al Jami li Ahkam al Quran, Surah al Nisa 5: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura4-aya5.html
[65] Surah al Hashr 59:7
[66] Al Tabari, Jami al Bayan, Surah al Hashr 7: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura59-aya7.html

> *"The Muslims are partners in three things: in pasture, in water and in fire."*[67]

He also said:

> *"There is no protected land except for Allah and His Messenger,"*

The narration adds that he set aside al Naqi as a protected pasture while Umar later protected al Sharaf and al Rabadhah for the camels of zakat.[68] Shared resources and public land that no individual may claim are part of the Sunnah, and a reader who calls them communism is accusing the Sunnah.

The share that returns to those in need

The last statement, that a portion of wealth is a right that returns to the community so that it can give it to those in need, is supported by texts stronger than anything Qutb wrote. Abu Said al Khudri narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

> *"Whoever has a spare mount, let him give it to one who has no mount, and whoever has surplus provisions, let him give them to one who has no provisions."*

Abu Said added:

> *"He mentioned of the kinds of wealth what he mentioned, until we saw that none of us had any right to a surplus."*[69]

Imam Ibn Hazm brought this hadith in al Muhalla and said:

> *"This is the consensus of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, which Abu Said reports, and we hold everything that is in this report."*

Before it he had laid down the ruling:

> *"It is obligatory upon the rich of every land to take care of their poor, and the ruler compels them to do so if the zakat does not suffice them, nor the rest of the wealth of the Muslims. They are provided with the food they cannot do without, with clothing for winter and summer likewise, and with a dwelling that shelters them from the rain, the summer heat, the sun and the eyes of passersby."*

He then reported from Umar ibn al Khattab:

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[67] Sunan Abi Dawud 3477
[68] Sahih al Bukhari 2370
[69] Sahih Muslim 1728

> *"If I could go back in my affair to what has passed, I would take the surplus wealth of the rich and distribute it among the poor of the Muhajirin,"*

and said about its chain:

> *"This chain is of the utmost authenticity and majesty."*[70]

The Prophet ﷺ himself praised a tribe for putting their provisions together and sharing them equally:

> *"When the Ashariyyin run short of food on a military expedition, or the food of their families in Madinah runs low, they gather everything they have in one cloth and then divide it among themselves equally in one vessel. They are from me and I am from them."*[71]

The conclusion is unavoidable. If the five points of these two slides make Qutb a communist, then the same charge falls on Abu Said, on Umar, on Ibn Hazm and on the Ashariyyin whom the Prophet ﷺ called his own. No Muslim will say that. It is also worth noticing that the slides quote these passages from a Dar al Shuruq printing of 1995. If, as is likely, that printing carries the final text, then Qutb kept these lines through all his revisions of the book, which means he saw nothing communist in them, and he was right, because they contain nothing communist.

The disclaimer that was called a contradiction

The eighth, ninth and tenth slides deal with the sentence in which Qutb himself shuts the door on the communist reading. He wrote:

> *"I do not affirm this principle in order to affirm a communism of wealth, for the right of individual ownership is a clear fundamental right in the Islamic system. My reason for affirming it is the precise and useful meaning it contains in forming a true idea of the nature of individual ownership, its restriction by this general principle in the view of Islam towards wealth, and its complete difference from the capitalist theory of individual ownership."*

He then explained the purpose in clearer language, saying that the individual's awareness that he is merely a functionary over the wealth in his hands, whose origin belongs to the community, makes him accept the obligations the system places on him,

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[70] Ibn Hazm, al Muhalla bi al Athar, 4/281 to 283, masalah 725, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0475AH/master/data/0456IbnHazm/0456IbnHazm.MuhallaBiAthar/0456IbnHazm.MuhallaBiAthar.Shamela0000767-ara1.completed

[71] Sahih al Bukhari 2486

while the community's awareness of its original right makes it bolder in imposing obligations and setting limits "*without overstepping the rules of the Islamic system which we have pointed to.*" The slides call this a contradiction and compare it to a Jahmi who says he does not hold the speech of Allah to be created while holding that the Quran in our hands is created.

Two levels of ownership

A contradiction only exists when two opposite judgments fall on one subject from one and the same angle. Qutb's two statements fall on two different levels. The first concerns the origin of wealth, which belongs to Allah, who has entrusted it to mankind as a whole, and from that origin come the rights of the community in zakat, in shared resources and in the needs of the poor.

The second concerns the legal title of the individual, which is real, protected and inheritable inside the limits of the Shariah. Al Qurtubi placed both levels in one sentence when he said that the origin of ownership belongs to Allah while the servant has the disposal that pleases Him.[72] No one has ever accused him of contradicting himself. The Quran itself does the same, since in one place it forbids the believers from consuming each other's wealth unjustly and protects what each person earns,[73] while in another it says that there is a right in their wealth for the beggar and the deprived.[74]

Why the Jahmi comparison fails

The comparison with the Jahmi also collapses on its own terms. The Jahmi position joins two statements about one and the same object, the Quran, which is exactly why the slides chose it as their example of a contradiction. Qutb's statements are about two different objects, the ultimate origin of wealth and the legal right of the individual, so the analogy compares a real contradiction with a plain distinction. The limit Qutb set on the community, "*without overstepping the rules of the Islamic system*," is also the language of a man who places the community under the Shariah, whereas communism abolishes the Shariah together with every other religion and places the community under the party.

When a speaker explicitly denies the very meaning his opponent wants to pin on him, the rule of Ibn Taymiyyah applies with full force: **forcing his words into a contradiction when they can be read in harmony "*is a distortion of his speech from its places, a change***

[72] Al Qurtubi, al Jami li Ahkam al Quran, Surah al Hadid 7: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura57-aya7.html
[73] Surah al Nisa 4:29 and 4:32
[74] Surah al Dhariyat 51:19

of his intentions and a lie against him."[75] Judging a man by the first book he wrote on Islam, while ignoring the tafsir he completed at the end of his life, is the reverse of the rule that deeds are judged by their endings.

The method behind the slides

A translation that turns an active verb into a passive one, a definition of communism that the accused man explicitly rejects, an early book preferred over a late tafsir and a disclaimer recast as a contradiction cannot be called the justice that Allah commanded in Surah al Maidah. When the book that collected the accusations against Qutb was sent to Bakr Abu Zayd for review before printing, he wrote:

"I looked and found that this book lacks the principles of scholarly research: scholarly impartiality, the method of criticism, trustworthiness in transmission and knowledge, and refusal to suppress the truth."

He advised that it should not be printed,

> *"because of the severe prejudice it contains, and the strong training of the youth of the ummah in attacking the scholars."*[76]

The slides under review are a small example of that same training.

What the Scholars Said About Him

Campaigns like these slides present their verdict as the verdict of the scholars of the Sunnah. The record shows otherwise, and it is presented here with the criticisms of those scholars left intact.

Bakr Abu Zayd

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd, whose letter has been quoted throughout this article, closed it with the instruction that sums up the whole position of the people of fairness:

> *"So the duty upon everyone is to supplicate for his forgiveness, to benefit from his knowledge, to clarify what we have verified to be his error, and that his error does not require depriving ourselves of his knowledge, nor abandoning his books!"*

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[75] Ibn Taymiyyah, al Jawab al Sahih li man Baddala Din al Masih, 4/44, 5/79 and 6/22, Shamela text in the OpenITI corpus: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/OpenITI/0750AH/master/data/0728IbnTaymiyya/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih/0728IbnTaymiyya.JawabSahih.Shamela0000170-ara1

[76] Bakr Abu Zayd, in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/424 and 430

He supported this with the example of the scholars of the past, pointing out how Shaykh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah defended al Harawi and al Jilani "*despite the grave errors they had*," and how Ibn al Qayyim "*excuses him in the strongest terms*" in his commentary on the book of al Harawi.[77]

Muhammad Nasir al Din al Albani

Al Albani was no member of any Islamic movement and criticised Qutb openly, which gives his testimony particular weight. He said: "*Our opinion is that the man was not a scholar.*" He went on:

> "*But the reality is that in prison he progressed a lot and wrote some pieces which are as though they are written by the pen of a Salafi and not from him*," *adding*: "*I believe that prison nurtures some souls and awakens some conscience.*"

He held that Qutb "*should be answered/refuted, this is obligatory*," and in the same answer he said that "*it is enough that he is a Muslim, and that he was an Islamic author*," that "*he was killed in the way of his call to Islaam and that the ones who killed him, they are the enemies of Islaam.*"[78] In another sitting he said that near the end of his life,

> "*when he was in prison, a strong inclination to the Salafi methodology became apparent from him*",[79]

In another that

> "*he has statements which have light on them, which have knowledge coming from them.*"[80]

He also said:

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[77] Bakr Abu Zayd, in Fadl Hasan Abbas, al Tafsir wa al Mufassirun fi al Asr al Hadith, 2/429 to 430

[78] Al Albani, al Huda wa al Nur 814, translated in "Al Albaani asked about Sayyid Qutb 16: He was not a Scholar," The Albaani Site: https://thealbaani.site/2012/02/08/al-albaani-asked-about-sayyid-qutb-16-he-was-not-a-scholar/

[79] Al Albani, al Huda wa al Nur 188, translated in "Al Albaani asked about Sayyid Qutb 13: Salafiyyah is not a Mere Claim," The Albaani Site: https://thealbaani.site/2012/01/27/al-albaani-asked-about-sayyid-qutb-13-salafiyyah-is-not-a-mere-claim/

[80] Al Albani, translated in "Al Albaani asked about Sayyid Qutb 8: Young Minds Busy with the Wrong Stuff," The Albaani Site: https://thealbaani.site/2012/01/12/al-albaani-asked-about-sayyid-qutb-8-young-minds-busy-with-the-wrong-stuff/

> *...The man [i.e., Qutb] has a book called Social Justice in Islaam which has no value. But Milestones has some topics that are extremely valuable.*[81]

A scholar who says a man must be refuted on his errors, while stating that he was killed for his call by the enemies of Islam, shows the exact balance the slides have abandoned.

We recommend brothers to read Al-Albani's conversating with Yemeni youth: https://thealbaani.site/2012/01/12/al-albaani-asked-about-sayyid-qutb-8-young-minds-busy-with-the-wrong-stuff/

Muhammad ibn Salih al Uthaymin

Shaykh Ibn Uthaymin was asked what position a Muslim should take toward Sayyid Qutb. He answered that the discussion and dispute should be "*over the Islamic Ruling*," with every statement weighed as true or false whoever said it, and he continued:

> "*Sayyid Qutb is not infallible from mistakes. Similarly those scholars who are greater than him, they are not infallible, and those who are much less than the scholars are not infallible.*"

He said that it is not fitting for us, "*indeed it is not permissible for us, to make the axis of dispute and contention*" a particular man, he warned that when people take sides over a person, "*the person who is against him will attribute to him something he did not say.*" He ended with words every user of these slides should remember:

> "*Sayyid Qutb has gone from the World of Actions to the World of Recompense, Allah will be his judge.*"[82]

Yusuf al Qaradawi

Shaykh al Qaradawi, who criticised some of Qutb's later positions in the same article, wrote:

> "*Truly Sayyid Qutb is one of the great men of our ummah in our modern and contemporary history. He is a great Muslim... He is a great man of letters, if we measure greatness by creativity in literature and literary criticism... He is a great caller, if we measure greatness by the strength of influence in dawah and*

[81] Ibid

[82] Muhammad ibn Salih al Uthaymin, "Advice regarding dealing with differences about individuals," madeenah.com: https://madeenah.com/?p=1173

> *guidance... He is a great scholar and thinker, who has his influence in knowledge and thought."*[83]

Their assessments differ in warmth and in the severity of their criticism. None of them calls him a communist, none of them expels him from Ahl al Sunnah, and several of them openly reject the campaign that the slides belong to.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

> *"The best jihad is a word of justice before a tyrant ruler."*[84]

He also said:

> *"The master of the martyrs is Hamzah ibn Abd al Muttalib, and a man who stood up to a tyrant ruler, commanded him and forbade him, so he killed him."*[85]

We hope that Sayyid Qutb is among them, Allah is his Reckoner.

The Unity of the Ummah

Unity is an obligation

Alongside the slander of one man, the campaign against Sayyid Qutb has split young Muslims into camps that spend their energy on screenshots against each other, while the tyrants who killed him and their successors are left in peace. Allah made the unity of this ummah an obligation and its division a sin:

> وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

> *"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. Remember the favour of Allah upon you when you were enemies and He joined your hearts, so by His favour you became brothers."*[86]

> وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

[83] Yusuf al Qaradawi, "Sayyid Qutb, al Mufakkir al Islami Shahid al Dawah wa al Tarbiyah wa al Thaqafah wa al Fikr": https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/2186
[84] Sunan Abi Dawud 4344
[85] Sahih al Targhib 2308
[86] Surah Al Imran 3:103

> *"And do not be like those who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. For those there is a great punishment."*[87]

A command to hold together, paired with a threat of great punishment for those who divide, leaves no doubt that unity is a duty. Allah also showed what division costs the ummah in this world:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَٰزَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۖ وَاصْبِرُوٓا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّٰبِرِينَ

> *"And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another, for then you will lose courage and your strength will depart, and be patient. Indeed Allah is with the patient."*[88]

The unity of the Ummah has a political form, and its name is the Khilafah

A command to be one body needs a body to be one in. The Shariah named that body the Khilafah or the Imamah, Imam al Mawardi defined it in the opening lines of his book on the rules of government:

> *The Imamah is set up to succeed prophethood in guarding the religion and managing the affairs of this world, and contracting it to the one who carries it out in the Ummah is obligatory by consensus, even though al Asamm stood apart from them. [46]*

Al Nawawi, who wrote the commentary on Sahih Muslim, repeated the same consensus and then answered the two groups who disagreed:

> *They agreed that it is obligatory upon the Muslims to appoint a caliph, and that this obligation comes from the Shariah and not from the intellect.*[89]

Two scholars living more than two centuries apart, al Mawardi in Baghdad under the Abbasids and al Nawawi in Damascus in the age of the Mamluks, wrote the same sentence about the same duty, which shows that the Ummah never understood its unity as a feeling of the heart without a ruling authority behind it.

The Prophet ﷺ taught how his community would be governed after him:

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[87] Surah Al Imran 3:105
[88] Surah al Anfal 8:46
[89] Al Nawawi, al Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim, Kitab al Imarah, Bab al Istikhlaf wa Tarkih, Shamela vol. 12, p. 204

> *"The Israelis used to be ruled and guided by prophets: Whenever a prophet died, another would take over his place."*

Then he said:

> *"There will be no prophet after me, but there will be Caliphs who will increase in number."*[90]

The sentence places the Khilafah in the position that prophets held among the Children of Israel, as the way the affairs of a community are run after the age of prophecy has closed. He also warned about the state of a Muslim who stays without any bond of allegiance. The one who withdraws from obedience *"will find no argument (in his defence)"* when he stands before Allah on the Day of Judgment, and the one

> *"Who dies without having bound himself by an oath of allegiance (to an Amir) will die the death of one belonging to the days of Jahillyya."*[91]

The warning presupposes an Imam to whom the oath is given. When no such Imam exists, the Ummah is left with a duty that nobody is carrying out.

Allah tied this duty to a promise:

وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَمَا ٱسْتَخْلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ ٱلَّذِى ٱرْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِى لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِى شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَٰسِقُونَ

> *"Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession upon the earth", and the verse closes with the condition: "they worship Me, not associating anything with Me."*[92]

Sayyid Qutb read the verse as a promise made to the whole Ummah. He wrote:

> "ذلك وعد الله للذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات من أمة محمد ﷺ أن يستخلفهم في الأرض",

which means that this is the promise of Allah to those of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ who believed and did righteous deeds, that He will make them successors in the earth. In the same commentary he added:

> *The promise of Allah is stored for every member of this Ummah who stands on the condition until the Day of Resurrection.*[93]

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[90] Sahih al Bukhari 3455
[91] Sahih Muslim 1851a
[92] Surah al Nur 24:55
[93] Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zilal al Quran, on Surah al Nur 24:55

The man who is accused of communism therefore read the verse of succession as a promise to the whole Ummah, tied to the condition of worshipping Allah alone, and still waiting for those who meet that condition. The scholars called the political form of this succession the Khilafah, and it was his call to the rule of Allah on earth that took him to the gallows.

This also explains why the unity commanded in Surah Al Imran cannot stay a matter of speeches. A rope that all the Muslims hold together needs a hand that holds it for them, and al Mawardi named that hand as the one who guards the religion and manages the affairs of this world in succession to the Prophet ﷺ. The nation states that cut the Ummah into flags and passports are the opposite of what the verses command, and the Muslim who is told to accept them as the final shape of his community is being asked to give up a ruling of the Shariah on which the scholars of every century agreed.

What we should do for it

The first duty is knowledge, to learn that the Khilafah is a ruling of the Shariah with its evidences, and to call it by its name without shame and without confusing it with the kingdoms and republics that followed it. The second duty is to work for it with the call and with patience, as a task of the whole Ummah that no single group may claim for itself, and to remember that al Mawardi spoke of a contract made by those in the Ummah who are qualified to make it. The third duty is to guard the brotherhood while this work continues, because Allah warned that dispute makes the strength of the Ummah depart (8:46). An Ummah that eats its own scholars has already lost what it is seeking. The fourth duty is dua, that Allah fulfils His promise of succession to this Ummah and gathers it again under one Imam.

Wa'Allāhu Aʿlam

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