In The Shade of God's Sovereignty:

The Anti-Modern Political Theology of Sayyid Qutb in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In The Shade of God's Sovereignty: The Anti-Modern Political Theology of Sayyid Qutb in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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This thesis is a study of the Egyptian radical Islamist thinker Sayyid Qutb's (1906-1966) concept of God's Sovereignty in a comparative and cross-cultural perspective. Thus, this dissertation employs a methodological mix of comparative hermeneutics, discourse analysis and a diagonal, lens comparison in order to provide a more capacious understanding of Sayyid Qutb as the first political theologian of God's Sovereignty in the Sunni Islamic space. Moreover, it argues that Sayyid Qutb's critical discourse is not an irrational, knee-jerk repudiation of modernity, but a seminal example of an Islamist antitheses political theology that meets the major ideological driving forces of western political modernity on their own terrain. Qutb analyzes and ultimately rejects all major ideologies of modernity: Socialism, Communism, Nationalism, Capitalism and Liberal-Democracy via a set of essential dichotomies: *Jahiliyah* (non-Islam) versus *Nizam al-Islam* (the "order" or "system" of Islam) and *Hakimiyat-Allah* (divine sovereignty) versus *Taghut* (human tyranny). These crucial antitheses are central for Qutb's political theology, serving as cornerstones of his radical political hermeneutics and as driving forces of his discursive and rhetorical strategies.

This study aims to expand the perspective on Qutb's Islamist radical critique of modernity by placing it in a family resemblance model. Therefore, it compares Qutb's master concept of God's Sovereignty and the dichotomies listed above, within and across the religious divide with commensurable constructions produced by other anti-modern political theologians. At the level of *endogenous* comparison, this dissertation focuses on the Pakistani Islamist *Ab*u *al*-Aʿla Mawdudi (1903–1979), while at the level of *exogenous* comparison, the counterparts are two important anti-modern, antitheses political theologians: the Catholic counter-revolutionary Juan *Donoso Cortés* (1809–1853) and the Protestant political theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). The study demonstrates that despite cultural, historical and religious differences, Qutb's political theology of God's Sovereignty shares significant conceptual affinities and a

critical vision with Mawdudi, *Cortés and* Kuyper. This common ground proves that Qutb's political theology is not an endemic product of the Islamist space or a narrow expression of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, but an essential dimension of a more complex configuration that uses political theology as a conceptually disciplined critique of modernity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Objectives and Hypotheses

The Egyptian writer and activist Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn Shadhili (1906-1966) is widely regarded as one of the most influential theorists of Sunni Islamic radical discourse. Sayyid Qutb, as he is commonly known, remains highly influential in the construction of radical Islamic *ethe*, to which he contributed both key concepts and an ontological model. This study aims to produce a contextualized, hermeneutically informed understanding of Qutb's discursive order within and beyond the paradigm of Islamic fundamentalism. This is done by integrating the Qutbian model into a broader cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary framework. Qutb's vision will be approached from a novel point of view, as an antithetical political theology of resistance engaged in a complex dialogical relationship with axiological, political and religious modernity.

By focusing on Sayyid Qutb as a political theologian and comparing his perspective with those of counterparts from both the Catholic and Protestant worlds, this research also aims to contribute to the currently underdeveloped fields of comparative hermeneutics and cross-cultural comparative political theology. By subjecting Qutb's oeuvre to a thematically focused analysis that is at once interdisciplinary and controlled, our study speaks as well to the sub-disciplinary fields of Islamic studies, comparative religious fundamentalism and discourse analysis.

The primary working hypothesis of the work is that a focus on internal, textual dimensions instead of external sociological, political and economic concerns can serve to capture the impact and legacy of Sayyid Qutb, and indeed Sunni radical Islamism overall. More precisely, Qutb's perspective is to be examined as a hermeneutically produced, religiously meaningful and canonically justified critical discursive order. This discursive order was developed in dialogical response to a political modernity perceived to be oppressive and hegemonic. Qutb's discourse, moreover, is embedded in an antithesis-based political theology of "faith in action" that aims to actively shape politics, culture and religion. The study approaches Sayyid Qutb's work as the first radical political theology developed in modern Muslim space.

My second working hypothesis is that the structure and meaning of Sayyid Qutb's discursive order become clearer when integrated in a comparative framework. Thus, we will compare the Qutbian critique of modernity (which I believe to be central to his project) in both its discursive and ideological dimensions with commensurable constructs from inside and outside the Islamic

episteme. At the level of *endogenous* comparison, we will focus on the Pakistani Islamist thinker Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi (1903–1979). At the level of *exogenous* comparison, we will focus on the Spanish Catholic counter-revolutionary political theologian Juan Donoso Cortés (1809–1853), as well as the Protestant political theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).[1] We will finally see that the comparison not only throws light on Qutb's work (along with that of Mawdudi), but also the thought of these European figures. Qutb's vision of sovereignty presents an extreme type that is useful and perhaps even essential for evaluating a particular tradition of political theology. This reevaluation is necessary because political theology is a pluralistic concept with a variable geometry and a problematic pedigree. When all the theoretical chips are down, political theology is a specific type of reflection on the political that is informed and structured in a significant degree by theological concepts. Having said that, in the western thought, where political theology was created as a specific domain placed at the intersection of political theory, dogmatic theology and political philosophy, it encompassed at least two distinct traditions.

The new political theology, created post Vatican II elaborated by Johan Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, Charles Davis and Liberation Theologians sees itself as a corrective theology directed against excess of a modernity without restraint.[2] It does however accept the fundamental premise of modernity, namely the autonomy of the political. Its perspective on modernity and secularization ranges from critical reluctance (Liberation theology) to a full synthesis: as in the secularization theology of Harvey Cox and Friedrich Gogarten). This political theology is pluralistic and participatory and it is political just because it is essentially public. It does not carry

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[1] I also considered liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (b. 1928) and Leonardo Boff (b. 1938), who articulated a praxis-focused theologico-political critique of modernity organized around the concept of social justice and carrying an emancipatory and salvific message. These figures have the apparent advantage of living in the same period. There are, however, important differences with Qutb's political theology that make this comparison less heuristically fruitful. Liberation theologians are primarily professional theologians and academics and their political theology is essentially a corrective designed to function within the theological, ecclesiastical and pastoral space of the Church. Qutb, Mawdudi, Cortés and even Kuyper were not academic but political theologians, fully engaged in militant political action that created ideologies designed not to correct but radically change the status quo through a radical political theology. Despite the presence of the concept of the kingdom of God expressed mainly in eschatological terms, God's Sovereignty as a concrete, all-encompassing structuring force of the world is not central to liberation theology. Finally, Liberation theologians value modern social sciences and Marxist theory as essential tools for understanding the praxis. Qutb and his counterparts radically reject any form of epistemological hybridity as pollution. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Essential Writings*, ed. James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), Zoe Bennett, "'Action is The Life of All': The Praxis-Based Epistemology of Liberation Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 39-54.

[2] I borrowed this expression from Eric Voegelin. See Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 188

a praxis-changing political agenda, but aims to re-enchant the world that came of age by ethical and pastoral instruments within the general mission of the church. Lastly it is dialogical and open towards philosophy, social sciences (from Karl Marx to Jurgen Habermas and Frankfurt school) and it aims to purify political theology of its authoritarian past, while remaining open towards accommodating non-western perspectives.

There is however, another older, current in modern political theology represented by Joseph de Maistre, Louis Bonald, Donoso Cortes, Abraham Kuper, Carl Schmitt, and as we shall see during this dissertation, Sayyid Qutb. This is an unflinchingly anti-modern foundationalist political theology of God sovereignty that carries a totalist, militant and praxis oriented political vision. It aims to re-enchant the world in clear and distinct political terms. It does not quietly accept the pillars of political modernity. So it often rejects the autonomy of the political expressed by Hugo Grotius's classic thesis that the natural laws governing sovereignty can be known *etsy deus non daretur* (even if god does not exist). It also contests the post Westfalian paradigm of *cuius region, ilius religio* that makes the state an independent entity from God sovereignty and conceptualizes politics as a *sui generis reality*, thus exiling religion to the space of private devotion. This tradition in political theology places God's sovereignty at its center as a living, functional reality structuring a worldview that is incommensurable with a secularized world. Its representatives are fundamentally hostile towards what they see as the fetishization of instrumental reason and the idolatry of man-made formulas of sovereignty. This political theology is not scholastic, dogmatic and theoretical but sees itself as praxical, ideological and realistic. It produces no irenic and conciliatory discourses but fiery, antagonistic, essentialist diatribes. It remains anti-speculative and verges often on virulent anti- intellectualism. Its perspective is theocentric but not theocratic, anti-thesis driven and radically isolationist refusing any collaboration with philosophical models and social sciences. Despite their strong reaction against modernity qua secularization and their hostility towards the primacy of instrumental reason, their main figures criticize this modernity from within, using modern concepts and rhetorical strategies and they are very apt in employing modern mass media in disseminating their message. They also accept technological modernity as an ethos-lacking, free-floating signifier that can be captured and used within their politico-theological worldview. This dissertation will argue that within this rogue tradition of political theology, Sayyid Qutb can find a good ideological home and the suitable intellectual family.

In order to avoid uncontrolled comparison, the research will be restricted to a number of crucial antitheses extracted from Quṭb's work. We understand these antinomic constructions to be meta-concepts that are cornerstones of Qutb's political theology, key terms of his hermeneutics and axes of his discursive and rhetorical strategies. These essential dichotomies are compared within and across the politico-religious divide with commensurable constructions produced by the other theologically oriented critics of modernity named above. The antinomies selected are: *Jahiliyah* (non-Islam) versus *Nizam al-Islam* (the "order" or "system" of Islam) and *Hakimiyat-Allah* (divine sovereignty)[3] versus *Taghut* (human tyranny). We will focus on these paradigmatic binomials as fundamental categories embedded in a discursive field, enabling a cross-cultural comparison between different political theologies across the religious divide.

At this point, my use of the word "modernity" should be clarified. I do not myself offer a definition of the philosophically, politically and culturally puzzling phenomenon that is modernity. This is because my aim is not to discuss "modernity" from my perspective as an inhabitant of twenty-first century North America. My concern is rather to let the political theologians to whom the dissertation is devoted express their own understandings of what they consider modernity in their own voices. This may be generally described as an anti-religious hegemon revolving around man-made sovereignty. I use "modernity" and "political modernity" only as convenient terms to refer to this force as conceived by the political theologians in their different contexts. It should be also emphasized that with the exception of Abraham Kuyper who employs the Dutch word "*der Modernismus"* to refer specifically to the modern current in Protestant Theology, our political theologians do not specifically employ the term "modernity", much less provide an analytical definition for it. The most obvious reason for this is that this term was not really available to them in their time.[4] Their political theology is critical and polemical rather than carefully systematic and

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[3] This dissertation will employ from now on the shortened version of the *Hakimiyat-Allah,* namely *Hakimiyyah*.

[4] The words: modernism, *der Modernismus*, *modernismo*, and *modernité* were in circulation, but applied in the realm of arts and literature in an opposite relation to the classics (as in the famous *Querelle des anciens et des modernes).* Despite appearing in the Oxford Dictionary as early as 1635, describing the condition of being modern in character or style, the word "modernity" in a non-aesthetic sense is much more recent. In the Oxford Dictionary, modernity defined as the "intellectual tendency or social perspective characterized by a departure from or repudiation of traditional ideas, doctrines, and cultural values in favor of contemporary or radical values and beliefs (chiefly those of scientific rationalism and liberalism)" appears only at the beginning of the twentieth century. In French, the term *modernité* firstly used by Balzac in 1823 as describing the current time, appears again around 1850, as a transplant from English in Gaultier's description of modern art and it gets its full definition as "the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent'' in Baudelaire's 1864 essay "The Painter of Modern Life". For a genealogy of the term *modernité* see Christophe

analytical, they are rather preoccupied to combat what they perceive political modernity to be and essentially opposing it to their integral religious order.

1.2 Methodology

The present study is not only comparative, but also cross-disciplinary. One of its claims in regard to theory is that methodological pluralism is required to understand the interplay between the ideological, political, religious, journalistic and exegetical languages through which Qutb articulates his anti-modern political theology. The study thus applies the methods of discourse analysis and hermeneutics, each of which will now be considered in turn.

1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Starting from Theun Van Dijk's re-conceptualization of racism[5] and Ruth Wodak's "discourse-historical" approach,[6] which analyzes modern Antisemitism as a combination of a discursive process and discursive practice, we will focus on Qutb's radical critique of modernity as a coherent and seductive discursive formation.[7] We will thus analyze Qutbian radicalism as a cluster of communicative/discursive events derived from a particular world-view and serving as an instrument for re-shaping reality. This comparative approach to radical Islamist discourse consequently involves creative comparison of second-order configurations of meaning, rather than juxtaposition of essentialized religions or ideologies. Deriving our approach from Wodak's model

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Longbois-Canil, *De moderne à modernité - Les généalogies d'un concept*. (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 2015.) It goes beyond aesthetics only at the turn of the century especially with the works of Georg Simmel. In Spanish, the term *modernidad* in a non-aesthetic sense entered dictionaries around 1920-1930, and it is the same for the Dutch *Moderniteit*. I am not sure when the term *'asriya* (which describes both modernity and modernism) entered the dictionaries, but Qutb, in any case, programmatically employs the word *Jahiliya* instead. I might add that using the actual term "modernity" is not very important in either critiquing or defending what we today call political modernity, or modernity in general. The Enlightenment philosophers who basically created the Western understanding of modernity did not employ the term "*modernité*" as such.

[5] Theun A. Van Dijk argues that racism is a specific discursive order that is enacted, legitimated and reproduced by elites through talk and text. See Van Dijk, *Discourse, Racism and Ideology* (La Laguna: RCEI Ediciones, 1996); Van Dijk, *Discourse and Racism in Spain and Latin America* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2008); and especially Van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (London: Sage, 1993).

[6] Countering Van Dijk's focus on elites, Wodak and Reisigl argue that racism and Antisemitism cannot be fully grasped as discursive orders unless a multicausal, mutual interaction model is used, taking into account the full complexity of these discursive configurations. See: Ruth Wodak and Michael Reisigl, eds., *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[7] In this regard, Hans G. Kippenberg and Jeppe Sinding Jensen's pragmatic-discursive turn in the study of religion can also be identified as a significant model. See Hans G. Kippenberg, *Neue Ansätze in der Religionswissenschaft* (München: Kösel, 1983) and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, *The Study of Religion in a New Key: Theoretical and Philosophical Soundings in the Comparative and General Study of Religion* (Aarhus, DK: Aarhus University Press, 2003).

of historical discourse analysis, which remains at heart a hermeneutic and interpretive method despite the emphasis on multi-causality,[8] we will maintain throughout this study the distinction between *discourse* as a complex structure of meaning and *text* as an instrumentalization and actualization of a discursive order.

Consequently, we will compare discursive orders across the religious divide as creative forces that destroy and construct categories of: race, nation, power, religion, sovereignty, hegemony, and resistance, and which ultimately validate political and social action. Since the figures examined are not only political theologians and creators of ideology, but also prominent exponents of political-religious movements, the link between hermeneutics, ideology and praxis is also a constant focus of this work. Qutb's discourse and the discourses of those I compare him with reinvent or re-discover religious concepts, integrate them in a novel lexicon, and finally radically challenge the hegemony of the dominant languages of their times.

Using Qutb's discourse as a prototype, we will see how the antitheses named above are organized in similar patterns in the work of other figures. Here we will employ Calvin McGee's notion of ideographs.[9] Ideographs, according to McGee, are "high order abstractions" that function as guides, reasons and justifications for collective beliefs and behavioral patterns. Ideographs are the cornerstones of ideological discursive constructions. The third chapter analyzes Qutb's and Mawdudi's critiques of liberalism, democracy, socialism, capitalism, and nationalism, the chief ideologies of modernity, in terms of ideographs. Chapters four and five go on to compare Qutb with two seminal Christian anti-modern political theologians in the same terms. The ultimate objective is to understand how exegesis is transformed into a hermeneutics of text and action—how discourse structures praxis-oriented political theology. Through comparison with Islamic and non-Islamic counterparts, we seek to identify and analyze both the singularity of Qutbian political theology and the stable core it shares with other radical religious critics of modernity.

1.3.1 Comparative hermeneutics

The comparative hermeneutics employed in this study is both sensitive to context and

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[8] As seen in Stefan Titscher, Michael Meyer, and Ruth Wodak, eds., *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2000); Judith Baxter, *Positioning Gender in Discourse: A Feminist Methodology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[9] M.C. McGee, "The 'ideograph': A link between rhetoric and ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no.1 (1980): 1-16.

attentive to difference as well as similarity. Here we draw on Jonathan Z. Smith's perspective on comparative exegesis and theology as methods designed to compare "strategies through which the exegete seeks to interpret and translate his received tradition to his contemporaries."[10] Different from Smith, however, we focus on specific themes and a tighter selection of core texts and seminal authors. This approach is more manageable than a comparison of entire religious traditions. The study does, however retain as a compass J.Z. Smith's idea of comparative hermeneutics as a properly analogical, creative heuristic device that places together specific relations, aspects, and processes instead of essentialized, stable objects. The proper object of comparison according to Smith is not meta-concepts such as religion, Islam, and so on, but rather the relations of individuals and groups with their traditions. Thus in the present study, we compare the manner in which the various figures interpret sacred texts, rather than the texts or figures themselves.

The research also employs a family resemblance model in order to discipline and control the particular and general and local and cross-cultural. Qutb's work is first compared with Mawdudi's perspective as the closest intellectual relative, and then with Abraham Kuyper and Juan Donoso Cortés's critiques as further removed members of the conceptual "family." Though the members of this presumptive family of political theologians do not stand in the same religious or ideological matrix, they share common elements of a worldview and a conceptual lexicon used to dialogue with modernity.

Last but not least, this project is not a dialogic comparison in which we craft "imaginary conversations between major thinkers" such as Mencius and Aquinas or Derrida and Ibn Arabi.[11] Though it is comparative and draws on a variety of methods, the focus and central pursuit is always Sayyid Qutb's political theology of God's Sovereignty contained in a coherent critique of the ideological expressions of political modernity.

1.3.2 Cross-Cultural, Comparative Political Theology

The central proposition of this study is that Qutb is the first Islamist political theologian to focus overwhelmingly on God's Sovereignty. Application of the term political theology to Islamic

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[10] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 52.

[11] Lee H. Yearly, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) and Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn 'Arabi* (London: Routledge, 2009).

thought may seem suspect. Political theology has, after all, become entangled with Christianity. It is no doubt for this reason that the term has been little used in relation to Islam (though it appears in a 1935 article by Julian Oberman titled "Political Theology in Early Islam").[12]

Addressing this situation, the last two chapters of the study place Qutb in a comparison that can be termed exogenous, by introducing as *comparans* two important anti-modern political theologians from the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Since Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper do not share the same religious and geopolitical contexts, a comparative perspective is crucial.

The status of comparison as a methodology in the fields of literature, law and politics has been fairly stable. Religionists, however, have only recently started to free themselves from a systemic distrust of comparison, caused by an undisciplined and sometimes abusive application of comparison by the once dominant paradigm of "comparative religion," which profoundly influenced religious studies from its inception through the 1980.[13]

This development began with the post-modern and post-colonial turn in the study of religion, which brought about a paradigm shift spearheaded by systematic deconstruction of both the epistemic validity and ethics of comparison. Comparison was portrayed as the bearer of all the malign features of a failed paradigm: epistemic colonialism and imperialism, acontextual and ahistorical essentialism, covert theologism, logocentrism and veiled Christian exclusivism.[14]

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[12] Julian Oberman, "Political Theology in Early Islam," *Publication of the American Oriental Society Offprint Series* no. 6 (1952): 128-162.

[13] From Cornelius Tiele and Chantepie de la Saussaye at the end of the ninteenth century to Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade in the mid-twentieth century, the morphological comparison was presented as the sole methodological instrument of a phenomenology of religion aiming at a systematic understanding of religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon. Thus, comparison was seen as providing access to a putatively unique and irreducible universal essence of religion. For a diachronic account of the role played by comparison in the theory of religious studies, see Eric J. Sharpe's definitive study: *Comparative Religion*: *A History* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1994).

[14] For Tomoko Masuzawa, the end result of comparative method was the discipline of Comparative Religion, which created and perpetuated an exclusivistic model of world religions based on a narcissistic vision on Christianity as the only genuine universalistic religion. Thus, the main function of comparison was to "obscure, to hierarchize and to exclude." See Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). In the same vein, David Chidester argues that, in the South African context the discipline of comparative religion emerged not from an emancipatory Enlightenment but a violent history of colonial conquest and domination. Thus, the interpretative and explanatory strategies of comparative religions are not value free or analytically pure, but forged in the frontier wars of colonialism. The three types of comparative religion, frontier, imperial and Apartheid, produced "a rhetoric of control and a discourse of otherness that reinforced the colonial containment." See David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996). See also Purushottama Bilimoria, "A Subaltern/Postcolonial Critique of the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," in *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion,* eds., Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew B. Irvine (London: Springer, 2009);

According to Barbara Holdrege, morphological comparative analysis, the master model for religious studies for more than a century, suffered the following shortcomings:

1. Systematically ignoring differences while focusing on common features and structural similarities, with a view to generating artificial "universal categories."

2. Neglecting the diachronic dimension in its search for continuities, and thus lifting religious phenomena out of history and treating them as frozen, eternal structures.

3. Paying insufficient attention to the textual, historical, cultural, and social contexts from which so-called "phenomena" emerge and ignore the challenges presented by praxis in favor of a *sui generis* understanding of religion.[15]

We will not discuss here the lengthy and often sharp debates about the comparative study of religion. The exchange evolved into an attack and defence of the very term "religion," seen by some as a universal signifier enabling cross-cultural analysis and by others as a historically and culturally Western-bound term, impossible to translate into the lexicon of other traditions without epistemic violence.[16] It is the revised perspective on comparison that emerged out of this methodological trench war that is relevant for this study.

Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[15] See Barbara Holdrege, "What's Beyond the Post? Comparative Analysis as Critical Method" in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age,* eds. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 77-91.

[16] For a radical critique of the term "religion" see (among others): Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Russell McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers*: *Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001); Timothey Fitzgerald*, The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*: *Myths*, *Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*. For a defense of the epistemic validity of the term religion, see Ivan Strenski, *Religion in Relation*: *Method*, *Application and Moral Location* (Colombia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993) and Ivan Strenski *Why Politics Can't Be Freed from Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); William E. Paden, *Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press 2003); Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York*,* Columbia University Press, 2010); Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Thing*s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

1.3.3 New Comparativism

The new comparativism[17] takes the challenge of post-modernism and post-colonialism very seriously. It aims to reconnect the comparative study of religion with other disciplinary fields that unapologetically employ systematic comparison.

The Scandinavian school of religious studies represented by Jeppe Sindig Jensen, Jan G. Platvoet, Arie L. Molendijk and Hendrik Johan Adriaanse is an outstanding example. The Scandinavian school generated a theoretical model connecting the systematic study of religion with the discursive turn in the social sciences, in which comparison that takes account of context becomes the chief source of general but non-essentialized concepts.[18] For these scholars, normativity is inevitable and benign in the study of religion. As for all social sciences, generalizations are indispensable analytical instruments, and comparison is legitimate because of the intrinsic comparability of discursive orders. According to Jensen, comparison of socio-cultural phenomena is remarkably similar to translation, with the same conditions governing both. Thus, comparison is aimed at identifying various degrees of commensurability, focusing on both similarities and differences.[19]

In the North American context, the new comparativism addresses the challenge posed by postmodern and postcolonial rejection of comparison through a constructive and self-reflective reformulation of the scientific tradition of comparativism. In the works of William Paden, Robert Cummings Neville, Ivan Strenski, Martin Riesenbrodt, Barbara Holdredge, and Wendy Doniger among others, the new comparativism begins by acknowledging the inevitability of comparison in the social sciences. The anti-theoretical bias of postmodernism, it is asserted, cannot represent the future of the scientific study of religion. Instead, a model of cross-cultural analysis based on a contextualized, controlled and historically situated comparative method is called upon to provide

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[17] The term "new comparativism"—as opposed to the classical comparativism—was used for the first time in a Midwest regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion, which took place in the spring of 1994, and was further elaborated during the annual meeting of the AAR Religion in the fall of 1994. William E. Paden's paper titled "Elements of a New Comparativism" provided the theoretical impetus for a long and passionate discussion around comparison in the modern study of religion. See Luther H. Martin, ed., "The New Comparativism in the Study of Religion: A Symposium" *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 no.1 (1996): 1-49.

[18] Jensen, *The Study of Religion in a New Key*; Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk, eds., *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion*: *Contexts*, *Concepts and Contests* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). See also Hent de Vries, *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) and Michael Stausberg, ed., *Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion* (New York, Routledge, 2009).

[19] Thus, comparison can be employed in both quantitative, data-based research (as it is the case in comparative politics) and in qualitative, exploratory and interpretative research (like comparative literature or comparative law).

a "thick description"[20] of religious phenomena. A full-fledged, self-reflective comparative method is capable, it is claimed, of generating a set of heuristic comparative categories and instruments of further discovery. The disciplinary isolation of the study of religion will thus be overcome by use of interdisciplinary frameworks.

In the end, as Martin Riesenbrodt argues, postmodernism misses its mark when it makes comparison impossible. Shutting out comparison leads to "the senseless and inaccurate view that all cultures are incomparably 'different' but that their 'difference' cannot be expressed in language"; it leads, in other words, to regression into cultural tribalism and a sterile epistemology of reified difference.[21] The new comparative frame avoids the pitfalls of both sides by "neither ignoring resemblances nor simplistically collapsing them into superficial sameness," as Paden puts it in his seminal article, "Elements of a New Comparativism." New comparativism is careful to "neither ignore differences nor magnify them out of proportion to the human, cross-cultural commonalities of structure and function which run thorough them," so that "the study of religion becomes an exercise in understanding what recurs, what is different, and why."[22]

The comparative framework employed in the last two chapters of this study therefore represents a methodological mix, derived from multiple theoretical models, that regards comparison as an analytical instrument that is not only epistemologically valid but also cognitively warranted and heuristically necessary. The model employed in this dissertation is anchored in this new comparativism. The exogenous element in particular is congruent with Jonathan Z. Smith's perspective on comparison as "a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge... an active, at times even a playful enterprise of deconstruction and reconstruction which, kaleidoscope like, gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relationship between his or her theoretical interests and data stipulated as exemplary."[23] According to Smith, comparativism, when properly applied, focuses on comparing relations and aspects and not things in themselves. Similarity and difference are not givens. They are not even assumed as starting

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[20] See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Enquiry,* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985).

[21] Martin Riesebrodt, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 16

[22] William E. Paden, "Elements of a New Comparativism," in *A Magic Still Dwells,* eds., Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 190.

[23] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 50-53. It should be noted here that Smith is one of the most systematic and persuasive critiques of the hegemonic tradition of morphological comparison in the study of religion. He defines this analytical direction as a tradition based on a reified sameness and on ahistorical taxonomical obsession.

hypotheses. They rather fully emerge at the end of a complex process that accommodates the essential tension between the same and the different, as for instance in Smith's comparison between Euripides' *The Bacchae* and the 1978 mass suicide at Jonestown[24] in which he reduces the previously unknown and inexplicable phenomenon of mass suicide to an established explanatory category.

1.3.4 Lens Comparison

"Lens comparison" is selected as a working subcategory from the larger model of new comparativism. Lens comparison avoids the ahistorical and non-contextualist mode of morphological comparison in which historical and cultural contexts are discarded as epiphenomenal dead weight in the quest for the pure essence of religious phenomena.[25] Lens comparison begins with an effort to fully comprehend the *comparans* in the specific contexts in which they are created and manifested, while avoiding the isolationism generated by a restrictive contextualism that hampers attempts to employ cross-cultural categories. By taking into account the interplay between similarity and difference, the lens model provides a more capacious understanding, forged around "a re-contextualization of the phenomena under examination in light of one another."[26]

Thus when we compare Sayyid Qutb with Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper, we never claim that the differences between the historical, cultural, religious and political contexts of mid-nineteenth century Spain, late nineteenth century Netherlands and mid-twentieth century Egypt are unimportant. We do not assume or suggest that the visions of Qutb, Cortés and Kuyper are perfectly congruent. We do, however, argue that Qutb's Islamist political theology (a previously little explored dimension of his work) can be successfully compared to non-Islamic examples of anti-modern political theology. In this context, the master concept of God's Sovereignty—which is fully shared by the four political theologians discussed here—will serve as a methodological lens through which the Qutbian critique of modernity is recast in a novel context

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[24] Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Devil and Mr. Jones," in *Imagining Religion*.

[25] "Much as a microscope offers new insights even into specimens that can be seen with the naked eye, the religious tradition being brought for the purpose of comparison serves to provide a new perspective on the tradition being examined, to raise new questions or offer new possible ways of understanding the target tradition." David M. Freidenreich, *Comparisons Compared: A Methodological Survey of Comparisons of Religion from 'A Magic Dwells' to A Magic Still Dwells," Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 16 no.1 (2004): 92.

[26] Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider*: *Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 45

outside the Islamic and Egyptian frameworks.

1.3.5 Diagonal Comparison

The "diagonal comparison" sketched by David M. Freidenreich[27] is also relevant to our perspective. For Freidenreich, comparison, which is an indispensable instrument of analysis, can be classified as synchronic, diachronic, or diagonal. In a synchronic comparison, the *comparans* shares the same "horizontal" temporal-historical context. Diachronic comparison, on the other hand, focuses on a "vertical" perspective, placing the terms of comparison in a genealogical model. Finally, diagonal comparison employs a broader context encompassing normative discourse produced in different religious communities and different historical times. The diagonal perspective is frankly trans-contextualist and ahistorical, such that texts produced in different milieux and intellectual traditions are used to illuminate each other.[28] Freidenreich emphasizes that diagonal comparisons are not to be regarded as substitutes for horizontal or vertical comparisons. The diagonal comparison is rather a heuristic strategy capable of producing epistemologically fruitful hypothesis about the target. Such hypotheses "can then be tested within the framework of that source's historical or traditional milieu by means of horizontal or vertical comparisons."[29]

We will end this section by briefly citing an example of diagonal comparison that may throw light on the one employed in this dissertation. Roxanne Euben, in her work *Journey to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*, compares Ibn Batutta with Herodotus; Rifah al-Tahtawi with Alexis de Tocqueville and Montesquieu with Saida Salme. The figures she treats are separated by great historical and cultural distances, but they are nevertheless compared diagonally via the notion of travel in search of knowledge (in Arabic, *al-rihlah fi talab al-'ilm*). Euben's goal—which is parallel to ours—is to escape the "parochial mapping of Western answers to fixed questions posed by a pantheon of (almost exclusively) Euro-American philosophers."[30] While not denying the importance of context and difference, Euben argues that more generous, participative and non-isolationist accounts of the figures she has chosen can be

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[27] See David M. Freidenreich, "Contextualizing Bread: An Analysis of Talmudic Discourse in Light of Christian and Islamic Counterparts," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no.2 (2012): 411–33.

[28] The diagonal comparison is in essence a more capacious type of lens comparison.

[29] See Freidenreich, "Contextualizing Bread." In this study Freidenreich argues that bread is a concept shared by all three monotheistic traditions, which can serve as the driving notion for a diagonal comparison. In the present work, the master-concept of God's Sovereignty plays the same role.

[30] Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). Here God's Sovereignty represents the equivalent of *al-rihlah fi talab al-'ilm*.

produced by understanding the underlying common human experience of spatial dislocation and cultural defamiliarization.

Comparing Juan Donoso Cortés, Abraham Kuyper and Sayyid Qutb via the category of anti-modern political theology—more precisely, through a set of shared antitheses focused on God's Sovereignty—will follow the same provocative path traced by Roxanne Euben and David M. Freidenreich. The ultimate objective is to create a novel set of hypotheses that enlarges our understanding of the Qutbian critique of modernity in particular, and Sunni radical political theology in general.

1.3.6 Comparative Political Theory

The developing field of comparative political theory also shapes the comparative perspective of this dissertation. Fred Dallmayr describes comparative political theory as dialogical, hermeneutical and relying on mutual interpretation. Comparative political theory also programmatically departs from the paradigm of "formal theory," which imposes a general, universal "form" on diverse phenomena, thereby reducing all possible visions to a normative meta-philosophy and effectively perpetuating the universalist claims of the European Enlightenment.[31] Finally, comparative political theory is focused on cross-cultural analysis that embraces epistemological and philosophical pluralism without degenerating into either relativism or an apology for incommensurability.[32]

Comparative political theory is particularly interesting for our research because it helps to provide a criterion for selecting the terms of comparison in relation to religion and politics. The differences between *comparans* must be both relevant and conducive to comparison. In relation to religion, comparative political theory is chiefly interested, as Andrew F. March says, in the nexus between political thought and religious doctrine. "Religious thought" March writes, "helps us set boundaries (however porous) between traditions of thought" without the problem of "patronizing non-Western thinkers by treating them as important or interesting merely because of their cultural identity or because of the fact that they were once colonized by Europeans." [33]

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[31] Fred Dallmayr, "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 2 no.2 (June 2004): 249. See also: Anthony Parel and Ronald C. Keith, eds., *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies Under the Upas Tree* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992) and Fred Dallmayr, ed., *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory* (Boston: Lexington Books, 1999).
[32] See Parel and Keith, *Comparative Political Philosophy*.
[33] Andrew F. March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *The Review of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 556.

Selection of the comparative terms is crucial for the epistemic stability of the comparative approach. The differences between *comparans* must be both relevant and conducive to comparison. March addresses this concern by stating that the primary criterion for selection of relevant comparative terms is their orthodoxy or their centrality for their respective contexts. They must, he says, either be "authoritative themselves for adherents of that tradition, or they must represent a particularly good synthesis, elaboration, or statement of the value-conflict in question."[34]

The selection in this dissertation of Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper as Sayyid Qutb's *comparans* follows March's criteria. Cortés and Kuyper represent two very important thinkers of the Western tradition of anti-modern political theology. Their works are essential for nineteenth-century Catholic and Calvinist critique of modernity. Like Sayyid Quṭb and Mawdudi, they are far from being idiosyncratic, irrational or "backward" apologists and thus of little use for a sophisticated understanding of modernity.

1.3.7 Comparative Political Theology

Political theology in general and comparative political theology in particular can be defined as the specific texts of political theory, informed or structured in a significant degree by theological concepts and notions and pointing to "the ever-changing relationships between political community and religious order, in short, between *Herrschaft* (power or authority) and *Heil* (salvation)."[35] This open-ended definition accommodates both the methodological pluralism and reading across traditions needed in a comparative method.[36]

In order to avoid misreading the term comparative political theology, we need to clarify both its *genus proximus* and *differentia specifica*. Comparative political theology is a neither a

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Jan Assmann, *Herrschaft und Hei: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2000), 90. See also Glen Moots, *Politics Reformed*: *The Anglo-American Legacy of Covenant Theology* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2010) for a Vogelinian perspective, and Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

[36] The Berkley Center's Future of Political Theologies at Georgetown University has as a primary objective to "project maps and analyzes historic and contemporary understandings of political engagement across Christianity, Judaism, and Islam." This multidisciplinary academic project is focusing on political theologies beyond its theoretical dimension as religious beliefs and principles that ground political action within contemporary geo-political struggles. See http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/future-of-political-theologies and Michael Jon Kessler, ed., *Political Theology for a Plural Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Our research can be seen as congruent with this theoretic programme.

subset of "old comparative theology" nor a variation of the new comparative theology.[37] Old or traditional comparative theology has its roots in patrology and is intrinsically the domain of apologetics. Designed to safeguard orthodoxy from internal and external threats, it was structured at three levels: *demonstratio religiosa*, directed at atheism, *demonstratio christiana,* aimed at religious rivals, and *demonstratio catholica*, focused on other Christian churches and denominations. There is a comparative opening towards religious and ideological alterity, but the basic presupposition is the absolute superiority of Christianity as the only standard of verity. This exclusivist, classificatory position generated a substantial body of work—especially in the nineteenth century—that shaped the official perspective of Catholicism and Protestantism until the radical overhaul of Vatican II.[38]

As recent critics have observed, traditional comparative theology justified the superiority of Christianity over other religions.[39] Tomoko Masuzawa has argued that comparative theology, while creating the seemingly progressive concept of world religions, actually legitimized colonialism and missionary expansion.[40] Consequently, this paradigm progressively disappeared from intellectual space under the impact of post-colonialism and secularization of academia. Comparative political theology—which is the perspective we are employing—on the other hand, holds no apologetic or dogmatic positions and betrays no trace of Christian exclusivism. Christian and non-Christian expressions of political theology share the same analytical status, and there is no taxonomical drive behind the comparative approach.

Lastly, it is important to clarify the difference between new comparative theology and comparative political theology. New comparative theology is a post-Vatican II school of thought,[41] which ventures outside the dogma of *extra ecclesia nulla salus* to correct the excesses of the

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[37] The distinction between the Old Comparative Theology and the New Comparative Theology is systematically discussed in Paul Hedges, "The Old and New Comparative Theologies: Discourses on Religion, the Theology of Religions, Orientalism and the Boundaries of Traditions," *Religions* 3, no. 4 (2012): 1120–1137.

[38] See Ulrich Winkler, "What is Comparative Theology?" In *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe: Between Texts and People*, eds. David Cheetham, Ulrich Winkler, Oddbjørn Leirvik and Judith Gruber (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 231-264.

[39] See the discussion of James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology* (1871); and, F. D. Maurice's *Religions of the World and their Relations with Christianity* (1847) by Tomoko Masuzawa in *The Invention of World Religions.* See also: Hugh Nicholson, *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[40] For a critique of Masuzawa's position see Hedges, "The Old and New Comparative Theologies."

[41] Despite being rather recent, new comparative theology has its roots in the liberal theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher. See Keith Ward, *Concepts of God: Images of the Divine in Five Religious Traditions,* (London*:* Oneworld Publications, 1998); Keith Ward, *By Faith and Reason: The Essential Keith Ward* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publications, 2012).

traditional model through a progressive perspective which takes into account: religious pluralism and the need for mutual interpretation and alterity. [42] Represented by noted theologians and religious scholars such as Michael von Brück, David Tracy, Keith Ward, Robert C. Neville and especially Francis X. Clooney, new comparative theology shapes the perspectives of a significant part of modern systematic theology.[43] It has to be said that the new comparative theology remains at its core a denominational, emic enterprise, functioning from within the field of systematic theology.

Despite communalities between new comparative theology and comparative political theology, the latter cannot be considered a variant of the former. Comparative political theology maintains a clearly non-denominational, etic perspective, placed firmly in the general field of social sciences. It is conducive to cross-disciplinary approaches and includes a strong focus on the substantive connection between religious and political concepts.

This dissertation belongs to the emergent pluralistic, cross-disciplinary paradigm of new comparativism and aims as such to augment our understanding of contemporary political theology by placing Sayyid Qutb as a seminal Sunni Islamic political theologian in a capacious and nuanced comparative perspective.

1.3.8 Outline of the study

The structure of the present work reflects its methodological pluralism. The first chapter reviews the theoretical models previously used to analyze Sayyid Qutb's works. Consideration of political theology is conspicuously absent from these.

Chapter two provides a *Sitz im Leben* in which the motif of intellectual and religious conversion plays an important role.

The third chapter applies comparative hermeneutics to bring together the radical exegeses

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[42] In "What is Comparative Theology?" Winkler defines new comparative theology as "an anti-apologetic programme against the self aggrandizing and self immunization of one's own faith, directed against the degradation of other religions through a hermeneutic of suspicion, which one can study in the exemplary early Christian *Adversus Judaeos* writings, and against the isolation is rhetoric of uniqueness, ignorance and blindness" (260).

[43] Francis X. Clooney founded the Comparative Theology Group at the American Academy of Religion in 2006, and Robert C. Neville led an important research project at Boston University between 1995 and 1999 called "The Cross Cultural Comparative Religious Ideas Project." These multi-disciplinary research projects involved scholars from various religious traditions and produced an interesting model of cross-cultural analysis. See the three volumes of the Crosscultural Comparative Religious Ideas Project: Robert C. Neville, ed., *The Human Condition*, *Ultimate Realities,* and *Religious Truth* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000). Also: Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

of Sayyid Qutb and Abu al-A'la Mawdudi. Six key *surah*s or chapters of their seminal Qur'anic commentaries *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (*In the Shade of the Qu'ran*) and *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (*Understanding the Qu'ran*) are examined in light of the antitheses "system of Islam" (*Nizam al-Islam*) versus "non-Islam" (*Jahiliyah*) and "human tyranny" (*Taghut*) verses God's Sovereignty (*Hakimiyah)*. We will see how, despite significant similarities, Qutb and Mawdudi employ somewhat different exegetical strategies and have different understandings of the role of exegesis in the Islamist vision.

The fourth chapter uses comparative discourse analysis to treat Qutb and Mawdudi's critiques of political modernity. We will compare the discursive strategies employed by these two political theologians in analyzing and finally rejecting the ideologies of nationalism, socialism-communism, capitalism and liberal democracy. We will also see how Qutb and Mawdudi deny the monopoly of modern ideologies over the crucial ideographs of equality, social justice, freedom and universality. The Islamization of these ideographs is essential to Quṭb and Mawdudi's re-Islamization of social, political and intellectual space.

The fifth chapter draws on comparative political theology to introduce the Spanish counter-revolutionary political theologian Juan Donoso Cortés as the first exogenous parallel to Qutb's theology of God's Sovereignty. Cortés's antithesis between *la civilización filosofíca* and *la civilización católica* is compared to Qutb's dichotomy between system of Islam and non-Islam. The differences and areas of congruence between Cortés's epochal critique of socialism and liberalism and Qutb's critique of modern ideological configurations will also be explored.

The sixth chapter brings the seminal neo-Calvinist political theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper into the comparison. The concept of God's Sovereignty in Islamism is laid alongside Kuyper's neo-Calvinist critique of all forms of modern sovereignty, without neglecting the significant differences between the two. Finally, the conclusion places Qutb in the context of contemporary scholarship on political theology, and discusses the Qutbian God sovereignty in the context of contemporary debates about sovereignty. The conclusion also suggests a Walzerian reading of Sayyid Qutb as the first modern out-of-office Muslim political saint.

Chapter 2: Sayyid Qutb—Convert, Radical, Martyr

2.1 Literature review

> This is the man, then—decent, proud, tormented, self-righteous—whose lonely genius would unsettle Islam, threaten regimes across the Muslim world, and beckon to a generation of rootless young Arabs who were looking for meaning and purpose in their lives and would find it in *Jihad*.[44]

Lawrence Wright's spectacular description aptly summarizes how the Western audience rediscovered Sayyid Qutb in the emotionally charged post-September 11, 2001, context. This rather superficial reading eventually ended up forging a pervasive *Sonderweg* between the Qutbian discourse and contemporary jihadist praxis of violence. [45] This connection would soon be considered the necessary and sufficient explanation for the entire phenomenon of radical Islamist resurgence.

Outside the space of convenient oversimplifications such as "Qutb the philosopher of Islamic terror,"[46] Sayyid Qutb has been for decades a distinct and important topic in the fields of political theory, Middle East studies and, to a lesser extent, Islamic Studies.[47] It is only after 1979,[48] however, that Sayyid Qutb becomes the focus of an ever-growing corpus of scholarship employing a plurality of theoretical frameworks and engaging virtually every field of the social sciences. In this rather conceptually crowded context, Sayyid Qutb's contribution to the creation, conceptual stabilization and dissemination of a coherent Islamist critique of modernity now represents an academic *locus communis.* From Olivier Carré's and Gilles Kepel's classic works[49] to very recent biographical studies,[50] Qutb has been almost unanimously regarded not only as one

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[44] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and The Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 10. Wright's very successful book spent eight weeks on The New York Times best seller list and is—along with Paul Berman's article "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror"—responsible for Qutb new found notoriety outside the narrow disciplinary confines of the academic landscape.

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

[46] Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 2003.

[47] John B. Hardie translated Qutb's first major theoretical work**,** *al-'Adalah al-ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* as *Social Justice in Islam* in 1953, only four years after the first Arabic edition, practically introducing Qutb to the Western episteme. For a definitive translation of this seminal Qutbian work see William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[48] The Islamic Revolution of Iran represents a watershed moment for both political theory and Islamic studies, which radically questioned the stability of established analytical models operational in the study of religious fundamentalism, political revolution and modern Islamic thought.

[49] Olivier Carré, *Mystique et politique: Lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb Frère musulman radicale* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po., 1984) and Giles Kepel, *Le Prophète et Pharaon* (Paris: La Découverte, 1984).

[50] John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and The Origins of Radical Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mohamed Guenad, *Sayyid Qutb: Itinéraire d' un théoricien de l' islamisme politique* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010)

of the most important intellectual figures of modern Sunni Islamic radicalism,[51] but also   the paradigmatic example of a radical Islamist response to political modernity.

Consequently, for Gilles Kepel, Qutb's most radical work, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (*Milestones*), represents *"pour les militants de la islamisation d'aujourd'hui ce que le Que Faire de Lenin était aux communistes,"*[52] containing *in nuce* the entire universe of Islamist ideology. For Ahmed S. Moussali, Sayyid Qutb's seminal contribution is his ability to create:

> …a new Islamic political ideology that encompassed the best in the Western tradition which had been accepted by the majority of people without negating or subordinating Islam…reinforcing the comprehensiveness and unbounding validity of Islam as the only system in accordance with the human nature. [53]

In the same vein, Ibrahim Abu-Rabi argues that Qutb created "a sophisticated and comprehensive system of thought" rendering visible essential themes and motives still shared by "a major part of modern Muslim intelligentsia."[54] In declaring Qutb "Egypt's most influential writer in the radical Muslim political tradition," Mark Juergensmeyer reinforces the thesis of his formative influence over the later jihadist ideology of Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.[55] Mohamed Guenad argues as well that Qutbian discourse became an essential part of the Islamic revival (*al-ba'th al-Islami*) in the last three decades.[56]

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad provides a rather enthusiastic reading of Qutb's work as a complex combination of theory and praxis. One the one hand, Qutb was, according to Haddad, the most influential theorist of Islamic social justice, who created a persuasive lexicon of Islamic authenticity designed to counter the malign effects of modernity (alienation, materialism, atomism and anomie). On the other hand, he was a *bona fide* revolutionary who progressively moved from

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and Joseph Bozek, *Sayyid Qutb: Analysis of Jihadist Philosophy* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co., KG, 2009).

[51] Scholars like Barbara Zollner—who argues that, in effect, Qutb's true impact on the future development of Muslim Brotherhood has been hyperbolized due to his martyr status on the expense of Hasan al-Hudayibi's essential contribution—or Simon A. Wood—who claims that, despite his rather non-spectacular life story, Mawdudi is the true seminal figure of Islamic fundamentalist current—are rather exceptional cases. See Barbara Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and Simon A. Wood: "Rethinking Fundamentalism: Ruhollah Khomeini, Mawlana Mawdudi, and the Fundamentalist Model," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 171-198.

[52] *Le Prophète et Pharaon*, 13.

[53] *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992), 243.

[54] *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 93.

[55] *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 83.

[56] *Sayyid Qutb: Itinéraire d'un théoricien de l' islamisme politique*, 103.

theoretical reflection to direct political action, actively shaping the project to establish a novel type of society and ultimately dissolving the distinction theory and practice.[57]

We should note here that the fusion of the theoretical and the practical within a vitalist political theology is powerfully represented in the thought of all four figures examined in this dissertation. All of them criticize what they perceive to be an over-intellectualized and endlessly deliberative political modernity. This is an essential point because systemic anti-intellectualism and a profound suspicion of theoretical mediation are constitutive centers of cross-cultural radical political theology. As Ibrahim Abu-Rabi has noted, Qutb's work in general and his Qur'anic exegesis in particular constantly vacillate between the theological and ideological. Theology is understood not only as dynamic belief system and particular epistemology, but also as a formative ideological force creating a way of life.[58]

Bypassing the divide between apologetics and diatribe that structures less hermeneutically informed studies on Qutb,[59] academic treatment of Sayyid Qutb seems to fall into three groups.

The first, most pervasive model consists of diachronic overviews of Qutb's life and work focused on his evolution from independent intellectual to moderate critic of the status quo and finally to radical Islamism. Many studies also emphasize Qutb's impact on the future evolution of Islamic fundamentalism, tracing working genealogies and establishing direct or indirect connections with contemporary figures of Sunni radical fundamentalism.[60]

The second model focuses on a thematically structured analysis of Qutb's ideology, presented as an integral part of the wider Islamic fundamentalist paradigm. Aiming to go beyond simple description, this model selects and deconstructs specific themes and concepts regarded as

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[57] "Few Muslim thinkers have had as significant an impact, on the reformulation of contemporary Islamic thought as has Sayyid Qutb. Since his execution in Cairo in 1966, his writings have inspired numerous revivalist movements throughout the Muslim world. They have captured the imagination and the commitment of young Muslims and transformed them into working for the cause of Islam in the world." Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam* ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 67.

[58] Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence*, 217.

[59] Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), and Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, S*ayyid Qutb: min al-milad ila al-istishhad* (Sayyid Qutb: From Birth to Martyrdom) (Bayrut: al-Dar al-Shamiyah, 1991) name a few examples.

[60] See: Adnan S. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005); Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*; Joseph Bozek, *Sayyid Qutb: Analysis of Jihadist Philosophy*; Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*; Guenad, *Sayyid Qutb: Itinéraire d'un théoricien de l'islamisme politique*; Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft: der islamistische Wegbereiter Sayyid Quṭb und seine Rezeption* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003); Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-milad ila al-istishhad.*

pivotal for the Qutbian perspective such as *Jahiliyah, Hakimiyah*, *Taghut, Jihad,* and *Tali'ah* (vanguard).[61] The model highlights Qutb's contribution to the creation of a functional grammar of Islamic radicalism. It focuses in particular on the Qutbian reading of *Jahiliyah* as a fundamental master narrative of the fundamentalist discursive order.[62] In this regard, William E. Shepard's "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyah"[63] and Sayed Khatab's *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*: *The Theory of Jahiliyyah* are essential.[64]

To this overview of thematically structured analyses, we should add a thematically oriented analysis that employs a flexible comparative grid in an effort to theoretically ground Quṭb's discourse. In the endogenous variety of this approach, Quṭb's views are contrasted and juxtaposed with those of other Islamic thinkers such as Mawdudi, [65] Hasan Hanafi,[66] Fazlur Rahman,[67] Hasan al-Banna, [68] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, [69] Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah [70] and Bint al-Shati'. [71] Exogenous thematic comparisons are much less employed, but recent studies of this kind focus on possible parallels between Qutb and important figures of Western theological and philosophical

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[61] At this level, monographic works such as Sayed Khatab's diptychal studies, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: The Theory of Jahiliyyah* (London: Routledge, 2006) and *The Power of Sovereignty*: *The Political and Ideological Philosophy of Sayyid Qutb* (London: Routledge, 2006); Moussalli's *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*; Muhammad Háfiz Diyáb's *Sayyid Qutb, al-Khitáb wa-al-aydiyúlújiyá* (Bayrut: Dar al-Taliah, 1988); Abu-Rabi's *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence*; Haddad's "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival;" José Antonio Doncel Domiguez's *Utopía y realidad en el Islam actual: la ideología islamista a través del discurso* (Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 1998); and William E. Shepard's "Islam as a 'System' in The Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25 no.1 (1989): 307-335, should be regarded as the most representative.

[62] Jeffry R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall Jr., and Steven R Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[63] William E. Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyah," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 34 (Nov 2003): 521-545.

[64] (London: Routledge, 2006).

[65] Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boston: Twayne/ G.K. Hall & Co., 1990).

[66] Shahrough Akhavi, "The Dialectic in Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought: The Scripturalist and Modernist Discourses of Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Hanafi," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no.3 (1997): 377-401.

[67] Peter O'Sullivan, "The Comparison and Contrast of the Islamic Philosophy, Ideology and Paradigms of Sayyid Qutb, Mawlana Abul A'la Mawdudi and Fazlur Rahman," *Islamic Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1998): 99-124.

[68] Ana Belén Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?" *The Muslim World* 99, no.2 (April 2009): 294-311.

[69] Baudouin Dupret, "Autorité et consultation en Islam. Présentation et traduction annotée des commentaires de Fahr al-Din al-Razi, Rashid Rida et Sayyid Qutb sur Cor. III, 104 et 159," *Annales Islamologiques* 29, no.1 (1995): 233-281.

[70] Olivier Carré, "Khomeinisme libanais: Qutb, Fadlallah, même combat," *Social Compass* 38, no.2 (June 1991): 187-200.

[71] S. Kafrawi, "Method of Interpreting the Qur'an: A Comparison of Sayyid Qutb and Bint al-Shati," *Islamic Studies* 37, no.1 (1998): 3-17.

thought such as Christos Yannaras,[72] John Rawls, Robert Nozick[73] and Georges Sorel.[74] A rather extreme example of this approach goes as far as to draw parallels between Quṭb and seminal political theorists such as Karl Marx and founders of political totalitarianism such as Adolph Hitler.[75]

Last but not least, in the category of exogenous thematically structured analyses, Roxanne Euben renders visible the cross-cultural significance of the Qutbian critique of modernity by placing his thought in a hermeneutically informed analytical framework of comparative political theory.[76] For Euben, Qutb's perspective on modernity is neither incoherent nor idiosyncratic. Rather, it affords a valuable window into the (non-Western) Other's conceptualizations of the political. Euben demonstrates that Qutb as a radical yet systematic political theorist can be integrated in a larger paradigm and serve as an epistemologically fertile ground for a novel, dialogical comparative political theory. Euben's groundbreaking study, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism: A Work of Comparative Political Theory*, represents a systematic effort to integrate Qutb in a wider model of comparative political theory. Questioning the all too convenient portrayal of fundamentalism as lacking any substantive vision of the world or system of ideas—as essentially the perfect embodiment of irrationality—Qutb's axiological and epistemological critique of modernity is shown to be commensurate with Western critical perspectives on modernity.[77]

The third model leaves behind the purely ideological dimension of Qutb's work to emphasize his role as one of the most influential modern exegetes (*mufassirun*) of the Qur'an. The first systematic work to identify Qutb's *In the Shade of the Qur'an* as the paradigm of political exegesis in the twentieth century and *le texte-icône* of the Islamist movement is Olivier Carré's

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[72] Daniel Payne, "Orthodoxy, Islam and the 'Problem' of the West: a Comparison of the Liberation Theologies of Christos Yannaras and Sayyid Qutb," *Religion, State & Society* 36, no.4 (December 2008): 435-450.

[73] Sulaiman Kabuye Uthman, *Distributive Justice: A Comparative Analysis of the Views of Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, John Rawls and Robert Nozick* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2008).

[74] John Calvert, "Sayyid Qutb and the Power of Political Myth: Insights from Sorel," *Historical Reflections* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 509-528.

[75] Hendrik Hansen, and Peter Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutb's Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no.1 (2007): 55-76.

[76] Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*: *A Work of Comparative Political Theory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[77] Consequently, Alisdayr McIntyre, Hannah Arendt, Richard John Neuhaus, Robert Bellah and Daniel Bell are cited as counterparts. Qutb's critique of modernity is finally presented as sophisticated, conceptually stable, and capable of "enlarging our understanding of a cross-cultural history of political ideas." Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 25.

Mystique et politique: lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, frère musulman radical, first published in 1984. Carré's pioneering work offers a close reading of Qutb's *tafsir* using comparative hermeneutics, placing *In the Shade of the Qur'an* alongside another seminal modern work, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manar*.[78] Mahmoud Ayoub also locates Qutb's exegetical system in relation to the classical exegeses of figures such as Ibn Kathir (1300-1373), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149-1209), al-Zamakshari (1075-1144) and the modern Shi'ite scholar Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (d.1981). Ayoub regards Qutb's commentary as "a *tafsir* for today's youth" and as a very good example of how a venerable genre can be re-activated to express contemporary concerns through canonical concepts.[79] Lastly, Ronald Nettler, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Aref Ali Nayed and Patrizia Manduchi have attempted to deconstruct Qutbian radical hermeneutics by highlighting the connection between Qutb the radical Islamist and Qutb the Qur'anic interpreter.[80] Some Arabic-language scholarly literature also takes the approach of comparative exegesis, usually juxtaposing Qutb with Mawdudi and Hasan al-Banna. Hence, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's *Tafsir al-siyasi lil-Islam fiī mir'at kitabat al-Ustadh Abi al-A'l'a al-Mawdudi wa-al Shahid Sayyid Qutb* and Shafiyah Siddiq's *Fikr al-harakah wa-harakat al-fikr: Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, al-Mawdudi* attempt to integrate Qutbian exegesis in the wider context of Islamic revivalist thought.[81]

This dissertation overlaps the second and third research models. It starts from the hypothesis that Qutb's work is the first antithetical anti-modern political theology of God's Sovereignty developed in the Sunni Muslim world. It then offers a systematic analysis of the

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[78] See Olivier Carré, *Mystique et politique*: *lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, frère musulman radical*, (Paris: Cerf, 2004). In the same vein, Andrea Quitz's more specific study *Das islamische Zinsverbot nach Koraninterpretationen von Rašîd Ridâ und Sayyid Qutb*, published in 2003 compares Rida and Qutb's perspective on the Qur'anic ban placed on *riba* (usury). See Andrea Quitz, *Das islamische Zinsverbot nach Koraninterpretationen von Rašîd Ridâ und Sayyid Qutb* (Erlangen, Germany: Univ. Magisterarbeit, 1998).
[79] Another example comes from Nigerian scholar Badmas Lanre Yusuf, who in his study *Sayyid Qutb: A Study of His Tafsir* (Kuala Lumpr: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), attempts to provide a reading of the qutbian exegetical system as perfectly congruent with Islamic exegetical tradition. Unfortunately Lanre's study is rather apologetic than critical and ultimately fails to provide a value neutral perspective on Qutb's exegetical system.
[80] Ronald L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: a Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification For an Islamic Revolution: The view of Sayyid Qutb," *The Middle East Journal* 37, no.1 (1983): 14-29; Aref Ali Nayed, "The Radical Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Sayyid Qutb," *Islamic Studies* 31, no.3 (1992): 355-363. Patrizia Manduchi: *Questo mondo non è luogo per ricompense. Vita e opere di Sayyid Qutb martire dei fratelli musulmani* (Roma, IT: Aracne, 2009).
[81] Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Tafsir al-siyasi lil-Islam fiī mir'at kitabat al-ustadh Abi al-A'l'a al-Mawdudi wa-al Shahid Sayyid Qutb* (Cairo: al-Qahirah, 1980) and Shafīyah Siddiq's *Fikr al-harakah wa-harakat al-fikr: Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, al-Mawdudi* (Al-Jaza'ir, Algeria: Dar Qurtubah, 2006). Unfortunately the topic is in many cases plagued by an apologetic undertone and by a pious hagiography that are detrimental to the necessary analytical precision.

conceptual architecture of Qutb's work, employing critical discourse analysis. Finally, it expands the analytical perspective by providing a more refined perspective on Qutbian exegesis through the approaches and comparisons described in the first chapter.

2.2 From Literary Critic to Islamist Martyr

Criticizing the paradigmatic model imposed by the Fundamentalist Project as an example of reductionism, Gabrielle Marranci[82] notes that the concept of fundamentalism tends to encourage a bird's-eye perspective in which disparate texts, social forces, and cultural imaginaries are amalgamated and reified. As a result, the individual dimension of fundamentalism is obscured along with important elements such as identity, emotion and belonging. We forget that such "isms" are the products of human subjects, specific reactions to history and society and conceptualizations of the existence of individuals and societies derived from real life histories and in some cases peculiar personalities. Thus, what follows is not simply another biography of Sayyid Qutb, but rather a short presentation of his life with the aim of facilitating a more productive *Sitz im Leben*.[83]

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn Shadhili was born on October 9, 1906, in the Upper Egyptian village of Musha, and died on the gallows on August 29, 1966, in Cairo. In many respects, and despite its violent end, his life trajectory and intellectual history are symptomatic of the intellectual itinerary of a significant segment of Egyptian intelligentsia. The Egyptian intelligentsia matured along with rapid modernization, profound social and political change, and last but not least a radical ideological acculturation of their society.[84]

During this complex and paradoxical period, Egypt went from a quasi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire ruled by the Turco-Circassian dynasty to an integral part of the

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[82] Gabrielle Marranci, *Understanding Muslim Identity, Rethinking Fundamentalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[83] Especially after September 11, 2001, the number of scholarly biographies of Sayyid Qutb significantly augmented the preexistent corpus produced especially in the Muslim academic space. Consequently, Adnan Musallam's *From Secularism to Jihad*, John Calvert's *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), James Toth's *Sayyid Qutb: the Life and Legacy*, Mohammed Guenad's: *Sayyid Qutb - Itinéraire d'un théoricien de l'islamisme politique*, and Patrizia Manduchi's *Questo mondo non è un luogo per ricompense: vita e opere di Sayyid Qutb, martire dei fratelli musulmani*, are going to be regarded as definitive works. Al-Khalidi's *Sayyid Qutb: min al-Milad ila al-Istihhad* remains, despite a very evident Islamist bias, a very useful bibliographical source. Muhammad Qutb even regards it as the authoritative biography of Sayyid Qutb, see Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 5.

[84] In "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyya" William Shepard argues that Qutb's "own pilgrimage in life…parallels developments in the Muslim world as a whole" (521).

British Empire's political, economic and military sphere of influence.[85] The country went through a long period of "liberal experimentation" (1922-1952)[86] and finally ended up, under Gamal Abdel Nasser, as the constitutive force of pan-Arabism that set the course for the ideological evolution of a large part of the Arab world. Qutb's worldview was shaped by his encounter with a dislocating political modernity, spearheaded by liberalism and socialism and carried forward by colonialism and authoritarianism. His evolution on an ideological axis from naïve nationalism and Romantic liberalism to moderate Islamic opinion and finally radical Islamism provides a privileged observation point on ideological modernity in the Egyptian context in particular and the Sunni Muslim world at large.

Despite his mother's deeply religious convictions, Qutb at her insistence attended the *madrasah* (modern elementary school) and not the *kuttab* (the Qur'anic school)[87]. This academic trajectory, continued with Qutb's education at Dar al-'Ulum in Cairo, might validate the claim that Qutb, like Hasan al-Banna before him, was a product of a modern pedagogical system intended to parallel the traditional Islamic track of *kuttab-madrasah-al-Azhar*. The later writings of both reflect a critique of modernity developed from within, employing a modernized religious lexicon and ultimately tackling modernity on their own terms, but nevertheless on its own terrain. This intellectual grasp of the main concepts of modernity gave them a significant advantage over the traditionalist and largely outdated discourse of the mainstream *ulema*. It also augmented their textual charisma and impact on a new generation of young Muslims.

Sayyid Qutb accomplished the task of memorizing the entire Qur'an, becoming a *hafiz* by the age of ten. The memory of the beauty and simplicity of the Qur'an of his childhood, unburdened by scholastic commentaries and appealing directly to the soul,[88] led him to rediscover the Qur'anic universe in the late 1930s. This discovery radically impacted Qutb's intellectual and ontological trajectory in the 1950s and 1960s.

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[85] "Britain's representative operated until 1914 with the lowly title of agent and consul-general, yet in effect ruled the country." Martin W. Daly, "The British occupation, 1882-1922," in *Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of The Twentieth Century,* 24. See aso: Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt and Cromer*: *A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1969).

[86] Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 98-127; Afaf Lutfl Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) and Marcel Colombe, *L'évolution de l'Égypte*: *1924-1950* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1951).

[87] In his autobiography, entitled *A Child from the Village*, Qutb expresses his disdain for the outdated and obscurantist qur'anic school and his love for the modern elementary school. See Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village*, trans. John Calvert and William E. Shepard (Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 2004), 15-32.

[88] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 28.

The revolution of 1919 and the towering figure of the nationalist hero Sa'd Zaghlul had a powerful and long-lasting impact on the young Qutb, shaping his perspective on nationalism, politics and social commitment for years to come. "When the revolution broke out in 1919 under the leadership of Sa'd Zaghlul, thirteen-year-old Sayyid Qutb was already making speeches and composing nationalistic verse, which he recited at mosques and at public gatherings."[89]

In 1921, Sayyid Qutb moved to Cairo in order to continue his education. Between 1929 and 1933, he completed his college education at Dar al-'Ulum,[90] from where he graduated with a diploma in Arabic language and literature. As John Calvert and Mohammed Guenad have noted, Qutb was at this point fully integrated into the new Egyptian intelligentsia, the "politically aware and ideologically seeking *effendiyya.*"[91] Qutb shared with this social category a deep concern for Egypt's social and technological progress, involving a quest for a renewed Egyptian authenticity that often meant rejecting Western acculturation.

After graduation, Qutb began his pedagogic career as Arabic teacher in rural Egypt. Between 1940 and 1945, he worked in the Ministry of Education as a school inspector and then until 1948 in the Directorate General of Culture. After returning from the US in August 1950, he worked as the assistant supervisor in the Direction of Technical Research and Projects until 1952, when he resigned in opposition to what he considered the non-Islamic character of the Egyptian educational system. From November 1948 to August 1950, Qutb was sent to the US on an educational scholarship not restricted to a specific university, particular study program or time frame, with the rather vague objective of studying American educational programs and curricula.[92] In reality, as Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi and John Calvert have suggested, this trip was more likely designed by the Egyptian government to alleviate Qutb's already fierce anti-Western

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[89] Ibid, 32.

[90] Founded in 1871 by 'Ali Pasha Mubarak, Dar al-Ulum was designed as a bridge institution between Islamic tradition and more modern, western oriented education. It comprised a hybrid curriculum: traditional Islamic disciplines such as *tafsir, fiqh, ahadith* but also history politics and economics. See Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 59. For a good analysis of Dar al-Ulum's importance in the larger context of Egyptian educational system, see Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145-153.

[91] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 76, and Michael Eppel, "Note about the Term Effendiyya in the History of the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 535–39.

[92] Anna Belén Soage's claim—shared by some apologetic texts focused on Qutb's American experience—that Qutb obtained a Master's degree from the University of Colorado has no factual validity. See Anna Belén Soage, "Islamism and Modernity: The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (June 2009): 190.

perspective visible in his polemical articles from 1941 onwards.[93]

Qutb's American experience accomplished the exact opposite by cementing Qutb's radical rejection of Western modernity. Unlike the Egyptian intellectuals Rifaʻah al-Tahtawi, Ali Mubarak or Taha Husayn before him, Qutb extracted from his extended visit to the US only the building blocks for a non-compromising critique of Western culture and civilization.[94] This narrow perspective facilitated the transition towards his moderate and later radical Islamism. Thus, far from being a main point of conversion to modernity, the American journey confirmed a pre-existent hostility towards what Qutb called the Western "cult of the machine over *al-nafs wa al-ruh* (soul and spirit)."[95] This hostility was already fully visible at the beginning of the 1940s.[96]

Interestingly, one of Qutb's formative influences shaping his perspective on modern Western civilization was not Islamic but Western. Qutb discovered the distinction between culture (*thaqafah*) and material civilization (*al-madaniyah*) in 1941 in the French-American physician and Nobel winner Alexis Carrel's bestseller *L'Homme, cet inconnu* published in 1937.[97] The relevance of Alexis Carrel resides in the fact that his work-among others- influenced Qutb's understanding of the US even before Qutb directly experienced the American way of life. "The spiritual desert" of modern civilization, alienated and perennially conflictual humanity, and the need for a spiritual counterbalance to uncontrolled scientific development are some of Carrel's notions guiding Qutb in his perception of America. Thus, Qutb's diagnosis of America leaves no room for misunderstandings or compromise:

> America is the biggest lie known by the world. We can benefit from America in the pure scientific scholarships: mechanics, electricity, chemistry agriculture ... and the like. However, when we attempt to benefit from America in theoretical studies including methods of teaching, I think we are making the most serious mistake. We are driven behind the American way.[98]

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[93] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 130.

[94] See: Ibid, 140; Rifaʻah Rafiʻ al-Tahtawi: *Takhlis al-ibriz fī talkhis Bariz* (Cairo: al-Hayʼah al-Misriyah al-ʻAmmah lil-Kitab, 1993); Ali Mubarak: *Alam al-Din* (Al-Qahirah, Egypt: Maktabat al-Adab, 1993).

[95] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 91.

[96] "What Qutb saw and what he perceived in his travels reinforced his preconceived ideas about the moral decay of Western civilization, including American society, which he had already written about prior to his arrival in the United States in late 1948." See Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 118.

[97] Carrel's work was translated into Arabic and will remain a constant reference for Qutb's condemnation of what he sees as the Western "alienation." For a systematic analysis of the influence of Carrel over Qutb, see Joseph-Simon Gorlach, "Der Islam und die Probleme der modernen Zivilisation: Saiyid Qutbs Auseinandersetzung mit Alexis Carrel" (PhD dissertation, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, 2008).

[98] Qutb quoted by Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 114. His writings written in the United States appeared in two Cairo magazines: *al-Risalah* and *al-Kitab* in 1949, and in 1950 and they were collected under the title *Amrika Al-Lati Ra'ayt: fi Mizan Al-Qiyyam Al-Insaniyah* (America that I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values) published after he returned to Egypt. These articles were also collected and published in a volume, titled *Al-Islam wa-Mushkilat Al-Hadarah* (Islam and the Problem of Civilization) that was published in 1962.

Due to growing disenchantment with political nationalism and literary modernism, Qutb took an increasingly discernable Islamist turn, as seen in his important work, *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* (*Social Justice in Islam*),[99] published in 1949. After a period of ideological vacillation, he formally joined the Muslim Brotherhood at the end of 1952. In early 1953, he was put in charge of *Qism Nashr al-Da'wah* (The Propagation of the Message Section), becoming one of the most influential leaders of the largest Islamist organization in Egypt. Furthermore, following a decree of the *Maktab al-Irshad* (Guidance Council) of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb became the editor-in-chief of the official weekly journal, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun.*[100]

Following a short period of accommodation and collaboration with the new political regime inaugurated by the Free Officers' Egyptian Revolution of 1952, Nasser showed his real, secularist hand. The Muslim Brotherhood's disappointment became open hostility. Nasser's resistance to implementation of what the Muslim Brotherhood termed *Nizam al-Islam* (the Islamic system) in the political, economic and social spheres*,* his ideological populism, nationalism, pan-Arabism, and authoritarianism eventually led to a failed assassination attempt on October 26, 1954, during a rally in Alexandria. This event was used to justify a crackdown on Nasser's main ideological rival, the Muslim Brotherhood. More than five hundred members of the Brotherhood were imprisoned. Six brothers were hanged, and Hasan Al-Hudaybi, the second General Guide (*al-murshid al-'amm*), along with the entire Brotherhood leadership, were sentenced to life in prison.

Sayyid Qutb himself was arrested in November 18, 1954, and put on trial. The accusations had no connection to Nasser's assassination attempt. They were focused instead on Qutb's very public critique of the government. Qutb was found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor.[101] Between 1954 and 1964, Sayyid Qutb lived, taught and produced most of his intellectual work (including the multi-volume *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'an*) in the notorious Liman Tura prison in Cairo. The majority of his biographers agree that this decade of imprisonment and especially the bloody

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[99] *Al-Adala al-Ijtima'iyya fi' al-Islam* remains probably the most systematic Qutbian work and one of the most popular. During Qutb's life, it was published in six editions, every one of them representing via revisions, a genuine roadmap of Qutb's evolution towards radical Islamism. See William E. Shepard, "The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Qutb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Editions of 'Social Justice in Islam,'" *Die Welt des Islams* 32, no. 2 (1992):196-236.

[100] Qutb was also in charge with the non-official textual productions such as the secret bulletin *al-Ikhwan fi al-ma`rakah* (The Brothers in the Battle), which appeared in the summer of 1954, and the underground pamphlets: *Hadhihi al-mu`ahadah lann tammur* (This Treaty Will Not Pass) and *Limadha nukafih?* (Why Do We Struggle?). See Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 147.

[101] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 150.

events of June 1, 1957, when twenty-three imprisoned Muslim Brothers were killed and forty-six injured in their cells after refusing to participate in the daily hard labour mark Qutb's complete embrace of radical Islamism.[102] His Islamist works produced in prison: *Hadha al-din* (*This Religion of Islam*, 1962), *al-Mustaqbal li-hadha al-din* (*The Future Belongs to this Religion*, 1965), *Khasa'is al-tasawwur al-Islami* (*The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, 1962), *al-Islam wa-mushkilat al-hadarah* (*Islam and the Problems of Civilization,* 1962), and finally his most radical text, *Ma'alim fi al-tariq* (*Milestones*, 1964), "would become an integral part of Islamic resurgence in the next forty years."[103]

Ma'alim fi al-tariq in particular had a profound impact, providing young radical Islamists with a genuine revolutionary catechism and an intellectual blueprint for direct political action. According to Calvert, its "diagnostic élan and call to action bear comparison with Lenin's tract 'What Is To Be Done.'"[104] Qutb's work was so popular that it was re-printed five times in the interval of just six months before the government successfully banned it.

Fully expressed in his writings, Qutb's emphasis on *Jahiliyah*, which effectively excommunicated Egyptian society, created a conceptual rift between older, more pragmatic leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood such as Umar al-Tilmisani, Abd al-Aziz 'Atiyah and Hasan al-Hudaybi and the younger, more radical activists whose vision was largely shaped Qutb's works.[105] This ideological divide was to be instrumental in the emergence of ultra-radical jihadist splinter groups.[106]

The first effect of Qutb's *Milestones* was the creation of a clandestine underground Islamist youth organization named *Tanzim al-Tali'ah* (The Vanguard Organization). The movement began

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[102] Emmanuel Sivan noted that the prison experience was in effect crucial for the maturation and radicalization of Qutb's ideas and profoundly impacted the creation of a radical Islamist ethos. See Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam*: *Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 57. In the same vein, Gabrielle Marranci asks "How can it be ignored that much of Qutb's worldviews and utopic ideology of Islam were inspired by the experience of humiliation, prison and torture?", suggesting that ontology, not hermeneutics, prison, and not the scripture, is the main analytical key to the Qutbian critique of modernity. See Marranci, *Understanding Muslim Identity,* 115.

[103] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad,* 151; Guenad, *Sayyid Qutb: Itinéraire d' un théoricien de l' islamisme politique,* 53.

[104] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 231.

[105] This rift will evolve rapidly in the decade after Qutb's execution, leading to a rapid ultra-radicalization of some of the dissident wings of the Muslim Brotherhood and to creation of movements such as Takfir wa al-hijrah and Tanzim al-Jihad. See Gilles Kepel, *Le Prophète et Le Pharaon.*

[106] For a comparative analysis of Takfir wa-l-Hijrah and Tanzim al-Jihad groups see David Zeidan, "Radical Islam in Egypt: A Comparison of Two Group*s*," *MERIA Journal* 3, no. 3 (September, 1999): 1-14, and Kepel *Le Prophète et Pharaon*.

as a study group organized chiefly by Zaynab al-Ghazali, "the unsung mother of the Brotherhood,"[107] and 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il,[108] and gradually expanded into the Egyptian prison system among the thousands of imprisoned Brothers. According to Qutb himself, the Vanguard functioned mainly as a study group in which the works of certain classical scholars—the exegesis of Ibn Kathir along with the writings of Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyyah[109] and Mawdudi—were read and discussed under his own spiritual and intellectual guidance.[110]

In 1964, Qutb was released from prison after suffering a heart attack. In January 1965, he assumed the intellectual leadership of the Vanguard Organization following a meeting with 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il. This short-lived clandestine organization and Qutb's real role in it remain understudied and rather controversial. In the view of Musallam, Qutb was no more than an advisor to those seeking spiritual guidance and was himself unaware of subversive aspects of the group until early 1965. Some would claim that Qutb rejected direct political action and violence, focusing instead on the pragmatic path of gradual Islamization of society.[111]

On the other hand, as John Calvert convincingly argues, Qutb permitted armed struggle when necessary for self-defense and was indeed informed of the plans to assassinate Nasser and his Prime Minister 'Ali Sabri. Qutb was also fully aware of a shipment of guns purchased from Libya and hidden in Cairo in preparation for a violent uprising.[112] In this light, Qutb looks more like a reluctant jihadist than a theorist of gradual Islamization.

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[107] Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 73.

[108] Zaynab al-Ghazali (1917-2005) was an Islamist activist who founded the Muslim Women's Association (the most importat women Islamist movement in Egypt). She played an essential part in the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s-1960s, and was very close to Qutb and his sisters. Zaynab al-Ghazālī was imprisoned in 1965 along with Qutb and she was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor. Her book of prison memoirs titled *Ayyam min hayati* (translated as *The Return of The Pharaoh*) is one of the strongest indictments of the Nasser regime. See: Miriam Cook, "Zaynab al-Ghazali: Saint or Subversive?" *Die Welt des Islams* 34, no. 1 (Apr., 1994): 1-20. 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il (d.1966) was one of the closest companions of Zaynab al-Ghazali who was instrumental in the reorganization of the Muslim Brotherhood as a clandestine organization during the Nasser persecution.

[109] Ibn Kathir (C.E.1300- 1373) was the most important disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah and a very influential Sha'afite qur'anic exegete and jurist. His *tafsir* entitled *Tafsir al-Qurʾan al-ʿazim*, along with his tract on *jihad*, *Al-ijtihad fī talab al-jihad*, remain central for the radical Islamist discursive order. Ibn Hazm (994-1064) was an Andalusian Zahiri exegete, historian, theologian and jurist who is widely regarded as one of the most prolific authors of the Islamic classical period. Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328) was a very influential Hanbali theologian and jurist who is widely considered a seminal influence for modern radical Islamist exegesis of the Qur'an.

[110] The dissemination of *Milestones* played a central role in creation and growth of this underground organization. The very concept of "vanguard" was derived from this text.

[111] Using Kepel's dichotomy, this perspective could be reformulated as a dynamic synthesis between islamization from above (focused on the political, economic and intellectual elites) and islamization from below (focused on mass education and extended *da'wah* among all social strata). See Kepel, *Le Prophète et Le Pharaon*, 12.

[112] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism,* 243.

Following the arrest of Sayyid Qutb's younger brother Muhammad on July 30, 1965, Sayyid Qutb, Zaynab al-Ghazali, 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il, Qutb's sister Hamidah and tens of other Brothers were also arrested. Qutb was accused of sedition, terrorism, conspiracy to assassinate government officials, and last but not least, "*Kharijism.*" *Kharijism*, a reference to the extremist purists who radically opposed the Umayyads, Abbasids and other established powers for centuries following their inception in the seventh century, remained an important criticism against Qutb. As Jeffrey T. Kenney argues, "in essence, *Kharijite* is an Islamic category of thought that carried as religious judgement. Those so designated are heterodox or heteroprax Muslims whose status in the community is in jeopardy because of their judgment and action against fellow Muslims, especially against rulers. The image of the *Kharijites*, then, speaks to the issue of who is a Muslim, of who meets the criteria for membership in the Islamic community."[113] Kenney traces the accusation of neo-*kharijism* levelled against Islamic radicals in Egypt to the reaction to Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* and its praxical expression, the Vanguard Organization. Kenney demonstrates that Sheikh 'Abd al-Latif Sibki, the head of Azhar's *fatwa* commission, made the connection between Qutb and *Kharijism* in his review of *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* in the November 1965 issue of *Minbar al-Islam*, a monthly journal published by the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs. [114] The *Kharijism* thesis was thus initially produced by the *ulema* as official Islam's theological response to the Muslim Brotherhood's radical Islamist position.[115] This symbolic association, carrying tremendous religious and political weight, was refined in a collection of essays published by prominent Azharites in 1966 under the revealing title *Ra'y al-din fi ikhwan al-shaytan* ("The Opinion of Religion Among the Brothers of Satan"). The Sheikh of al-Azhar, Hasan Ma'mun, links the Muslim Brothers not only with the *Kharijites* as internal sources of *fitnah* (sedition), but also with Zionists and imperialists, whose dangerous deviations, he cautions, should be opposed as strongly as possible.[116]

The prosecution in the Qutb trial accused Qutb of *Kharijism* in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of his critique of the status quo. The aim was to highlight the destructive potential of the radical perspective encapsulated in the notions of *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* and paint Qutb

[113] Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*: *Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid, 114.

as a source of social and political *fitnah*. On August 26, 1966, the court sentenced Qutb and six of his companions to death by hanging. Twenty-five other defendants received a sentence of life in prison and eleven others were sentenced to terms of ten and fifteen years.[117] Despite protests throughout the Arab world, on the night of August 29, 1966, at 3 a.m., Sayyid Qutb, ʿAbd al-Fattah Ismaʿil and Yusuf al-Hawwash were executed in Cairo police headquarters. Qutb's corpse was buried in an unmarked grave, without any funeral prayer.[118] His life ended, but his complex and fascinating legacy had just begun.

2.3 Qutb's Intellectual Biography: A Case of Conversion

Usually glossed over in studies on Qutb's thought and ignored or even denied in Islamist apologetic works, Qutb's secular literary career created a conceptual building block for his later, radical critique of modernity. The Romantic *Weltanschauung* that shaped Qutb's literary vision is also an underlying common ground between the political theologies compared in this study. Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi, Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper all begin their critiques of modernity from the point of Romanticism. As will become apparent in the next chapters, the ontological and intellectual trajectories of Qutb and his counterparts are, in effect, a road to Damascus, the outcome of which is a genuine metanoia. Thus, the study of the Qutbian discursive order and its Catholic and Protestant parallels is ultimately an exercise in comparative political-theological conversion.[119] All the political theologies analyzed in this study are the products of converts who began immersed in a seductive cultural and political modernity and subsequently experienced a "redirection of foundational trust"[120] from tenets of modernity such as individualism, aesthetic subjectivism, nationalism, and axiological pluralism to a fully religious understanding of existence.

As disappointed sons of modernity converting to an uncompromising religious definition of the world, Sayyid Qutb, Donoso Cortés, Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi and Abraham Kuyper afford privileged vantage points into the modernity that was left behind as well as the religious worldview

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[117] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism,* 261.
[118] Ibid, 263.
[119] I employ the term conversion as a complex experience, conceptualized "in terms of radical change, a transformation that is almost always described in terms of a 'before' and an 'after,' to the point of leading to a kind of 're-birth' and to the construction of a new identity." See: Guiseppe Giordan, "Introduction: The Varieties of Conversion Experience," in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, ed. Guiseppe Giordan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1.
[120] Anthony J. Blasi, "The Meaning of Conversion: Redirection of Foundational" in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, 11.

that replaced it.[121] A consideration of their radical discourse can, in other words, also reward us with insight into our modern condition in all its glory and fragility.[122]

Qutb's own allegiance to an unreflective, non-systematic, derivative and purely literary Romanticism profoundly shaped his understanding of modernity, even before his complete turn to Islamism. Never truly exposed to genuinely modern literary currents such as symbolism, naturalism, realism, and even less surrealism, Qutb's reading of modernity moved from Romantic revolt straight to an Islamist reaction to modernity. As Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre have aptly observed, Romanticism remains "the revolt of repressed, channeled and deformed subjectivity and affectivity." Vacillating between the irreducibility of the sovereign individual and the organic whole, it constitutes "modernity's self-criticism."[123] Qutb's poetry of loss, homelessness and exile is congruent with the Romantic ethos, as is his emphasis on the organic, living, dynamic and natural in opposition to what he sees as the artificial, soulless literature of neo-classicism. This perspective is, in addition, combined with a deep distrust of abstract, teleological rationality (Weber's *Zweckrationalität*). These features of Qutb's discursive order facilitated his transition to Islamism in a twentieth-century context in which the "return of the religious" is an important form of resistance to modernity.

Viewed from this perspective, Qutb's Islamism owes much more to the Romantic imaginary than his critics and hagiographers acknowledge.[124] Having said that, however, Löwy and Sayre's taxonomy of restitutionist, conservative, fascistic, resigned, reformist and revolutionary/utopian Romanticism[125] is not fully applicable in Qutb's case, since his romantic sensibility was forged almost exclusively in aesthetic and literary frameworks. Perhaps the term "mimetic Romanticism," meaning a derivative, acculturated form, is more useful for our analysis. Mimetic Romanticism extends the concept of "Romantic ideology" introduced in Jerome McGann's 1983 work of that name. McGann argues that the "clerical preservers and transmitters" of Romanticism are themselves affected by "an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-

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[121] For a discussion of conversion in this sense, see Kieran Flanagan, "Conversion: Heroes and Their Sociological Redemption," in *Conversion in The Age of Pluralism*.

[122] This mirror quality of radical fundamentalism is the major theoretical premise of Euben's work and an important analytical avenue for this study.

[123] Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 21.

[124] Sharif Yunus is one of the few scholars who regard romanticism and elitism as perennial features of Sayyid Qutb's worldview. See Sharif Yunus, *Sayyid Qutb's wa-al-Usuliya al-Islamiyah* (Cairo: Dar– al-Tiba'ah , 1995).

[125] Löwy and Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, 40-48.

representations."[126] Following this suggestion, we will argue that, mainly under the influence of 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Qutb quite early developed a Romantic holistic, existential perspective centered on the role of the intellectual in society. As we shall see, this worldview facilitated his conversion to moderate and later radical Islamism.

It is well established that Qutb's career as a literary critic and poet was fostered by 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889-1964),[127] one of the most influential Egyptian literary figures of the first half of the twentieth century.[128] Al-'Aqqad's impact on Qutb is pervasive in the aesthetic, political and theoretical spheres. His Romantic emphasis on feeling, superiority of intellect and subjective interpretation of the world insulated the young Qutb from the intellectual temptations of Marxism and materialism in general, a resistance that becomes apparent later in his Islamist works.[129] Moreover, al-'Aqqad's neutrality in relation to religion, doubled by his modern-liberal nationalist political stance, shaped Qutb's first perspectives on literature and politics, facilitating a specific understanding of modernity. Qutb will later distill and employ this understanding of modernity as a hostile alterity of Islam in his radical Islamist exegesis.

The modernist, neo-Romantic *al-Diwan* school of poetry, which was created partly by al-'Aqqad and represented a radical reaction against the dominant neo-classicist paradigm, was also an important influence on Qutb.[130] The *al-Diwan* theorists carried forward the principles of Romanticism,[131] distilled and tailored to fit the Egyptian context. Thus emphasis was placed on the organic unity of poetic expression (the Romantic meta-concept of the Whole), intellect and

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[126] Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 1.

[127] For an analysis of the role of 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad in the developing of modern Egyptian literature, see David Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi, "The Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts of Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, 1889-1964" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1970), Ahmad Mahir Baqarial, '*Aqqad, al-rajul wa-al-qalam* (al-Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1984). Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad was an extremely prolific author in the fields of poetry, prose, literary criticism and biographical writing. His most popular works were the biographies of Ibn al-Rumi (1931) and Sai'd Zaghlul (1936) and a series of biographies of the most important figures of the Islamic tradition: Muhammad, 'Umar and 'Aisha, titled *Abkariat* (The genius of). Al-'Aqqad was also an influential political figure, associated with the Wafd party. In 1930, he was condemned to nine months in prison for the crime of lese-majeste against the king Fuad, experience described in his work "The World of Prison and Chains."

[128] Qutb met al-'Aqqad while he was living with his uncle in Cairo and soon became his intellectual disciple, and political protégé. Since al-'Aqqad was at that time and influential member of the Nationalist Wafd party, Qutb became himself an active member, publishing regularly in the party official journal *al-Balagha* and fully embracing the party's nationalist and anti-colonialist ethos.

[129] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad,* 134.

[130] The movement defined itself as *ruwwad* (the new direction) and *madhab al-jadid* (the new school) and took its name from its foundational text: *al-Diwan kitab fi adab wa al-naqd*, published in 1921.

[131] We can call this theoretical stance a delayed romanticism without a back-up philosophical structure.

feeling. Deep emotional experience is considered the essence of genuine poetic experience. Qutb's entire body of work was to be profoundly influenced by the concepts of unity and emotion.

Thus we see that Sayyid Qutb was deeply involved in the controversies current in the Egyptian literary scene of his time. He was, in fact, a typical modern *effendi* intellectual, vacillating in his politics between nationalism and liberalism and professing Romanticism in the literary field. In Qutb's own words: "The essential question for me concerns: my honor, my language and my culture."[132] The conspicuous absence of Islam in this statement penned in the early phase of Qutb's public life speaks volumes about his perspective on religion. Though not a radical or systematic secularist, he professed a strict separation between religion and art, emphasizing in a typical yet rather unrefined Romantic fashion the essential relationship of the free and value-creating individual with the highest ideal *(al-mathal al-a'la)* of unity and beauty.[133] For the young Qutb, religion without the guiding light of feeling and intellect is nothing more than an ontological crutch and imagined panacea for social and personal problems: "Religion…Religion…This cry of the feeble and the weak who take refuge in religion every time the current overwhelms them."[134]

Qutb's poetry between the late 1920s and 1930s is consistent with the spirit and theoretical stance of *al-Diwan*, making him perhaps the only true disciple of this literary current. Originally published in important publications such as: *al-Balagh*,[135] *al-Risalah*, and *al-Shati*, sixty-two of Qutb's poems appeared in his first *diwan* (collection) titled *Ila al- Shati al-Majhul* (*To the Unknown Shore*), published in January 1935. The second *diwan,* projected for December 1937 and titled "Echoes of Time," was never published.[136] Despite the claims of apologetic biographers of Qutb such as Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, who compares Qutb with Ibn al-Rumi, the classic poet of the Abbasid period,[137] Qutb was seen by the critics of the time as a rather mediocre poet,

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[132] Sayyid Qutb, "Ha'ula'i al-aristuqrat," *Al- Risala* (year 14, No. 687, Sept. 1946), 687, 963.

[133] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 49

[134] Ibid, 51.

[135] Qutb published his first poem in this publication at the age of 19 on January 16, 1925, defending the nationalist leader Sa'ed Zaghlul against the British colonial regime. See Muhammed Husayn Abd al-Baqi, *Sayyid Qutb: Hayatuh wa Adabuh* (Al-Mansurah, Egypt: Dar al-Wafa, 1986), 122.

[136] For a complete anthology of Qutb's poetry, see Muhammad Husayn Abd al-Baqi, *Diwan Sayyid Qutb*, (Al-Mansura, Egypt: Dar al-Wafa, 1989). These poems, later called by Qutb as "the poetry of psychological states" *(shi'r al-halat al-nafsiyah*) showcased an emphasis on feeling, suffering and loneliness. As Musallam notes in *From Secularism to Jihad*, Qutb's poetry rendered visible "a morbid fascination with death" and a "relentless quest for the meaning of life and human existence" (38). In addition, the romantic spiritualization and exaltation of the aesthetic beauty, specific for the neo-romantic vision are combined with a growing interest in individual ethics and social morality, signaling the future evolution towards the Islamist worldview of the 1950s and 1960s.

[137] Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb: min al-milad ila al-istishhad,* 45.

displaying a good command of Arabic but not excelling in either originality or lyrical force.[138] Nevertheless, his poetic perspective is carried forward into his Islamism. His theology is not dry or analytic; it has, rather, a poetic drive that is designed to persuade through stirring feelings.

Qutb's prose was more successful. His chief work, the autobiographical *Tifl min al-qaryah* (*A Child from The Village*) was heavily inspired by Taha Husayn's famous 1947 autobiography, *al-Ayyam* (*The Days*),[139] itself part of a larger current of literary autobiographies that blurred the lines between fiction and non-fiction and experimented with modern perspectives and literary techniques.[140] Qutb's autobiography displays features that will be central to his later worldview: a preoccupation with social justice, a moralistic perspective, and an incessant quest for personal and collective authenticity. As Musallam notes, *A Child from the Village* reflects the dualistic nature of Qutb's pre-Islamist outlook, in which tradition and modernity collide as they forge a conflicted individuality and alienated self.[141]

Qutb's considerable, more systematic and also more successful body of literary criticism also foreshadows his Islamist discourse. His *al-Naqd al-adabi: usuluhu wa-manahijuhu (Literary Criticism: Its Foundations and Methods*) presents a fully developed holism bordering on totalism. The totalist perspective is embodied in what Qutb terms *manhaj takamuli* (a comprehensive program), in which artistic, historical and psychological aspects of the literary work fuse so as to

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[138] Salma Khadra Jayyusi's authoritative work *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) mentions Qutb only twice (on page 382 and 352) and just as "a follower of al-Aqqád," while M.M. Badawi's *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) does not mention Qutb as a poet at all.

[139] In effect, Qutb dedicates his autobiography to Taha Husayn and his text renders visible the strong influence of Husayn's narrative style. For a detailed introduction to this topic see Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, and Kristen Brustad eds., *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Los Angeles: California University Press, 2001). Despite this venerable tradition, it was Taha Husayn's autobiography, whose first volume was published in 1926-1927, which radically changed the Egyptian literary landscape, soon becoming one of the most influential literary texts in the Arab-speaking world. See Robin, Ostle, Ed de Moor, and Stefan Wild, eds. *Writing the Self: Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1998) and Tetz Rooke, *In My Childhood: A Study of Arabic Autobiography* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 1997).

[140] Besides the aforementioned *al-Ayyam* (*The Days*), other examples of modern Egyptian autobiographical works are: *Qissat Haya* (The story of a life) by Ibrahim al-Mazini (1943), *Hayati* (My life) by Ahmad Amin (1950), *Mudhakkirati* (*Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*) (1879-1924) by Hudá Sha'ráwí, and *Mudhakkirat tabibah* (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*) by Nawal al- Sa'dawi.

[141] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad*, 28. Qutb also published two novelettes. Published in 1946 (Al-Qahirah, Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif) *Al-Madinah al-Mashurah* (*The Enchanted City*) was heavily inspired by the *Kitab alf laylah wa-laylah* (*One Thousand and One Nights*). *Ashwak* (*Thorns*) was published in 1947 (Jaddah: al-Dar al-Saudiyyah li-al-Nashr) as a putatively autobiographical tragic love story. The critical reception of these texts was mildly positive but Qutb never established himself as *a bona fide* novelist. After 1947 he never wrote another fictional text.

convey a unified meaning, which is considered to be the essence of the literary text.[142] This holism, combined with a strong emphasis on the comprehensive understanding of existence and claims about the ideological structure of religious concepts, will be re-cast in a different discursive strategy and become instrumental in Qutb's radical hermeneutics of his late Islamist phase.

2.4 Sayyid Qutb and the Qur'an: From Secular Critic to Islamist Exegete
2.4.1 Qutb's Early Aesthetic Theory of the Qur'an

Qutb's approach to the Qur'an is an example of hybrid exegesis, combining low-level apologetics and journalism with a more systematic, high-level hermeneutics seen in his literary criticism and finally in his exegesis (*tafsir*). Like other Islamists as well as modernist-reformists, he aims to create an alternative relevant for contemporary society to the highly technical traditional exegesis of the *ulema*. In this regard, his understanding of the Qur'anic revelation as a living text that shapes the present is firmly anchored in the reformist (*Tajdid-Islah*) current of thought. This outlook on the Qur'an appears relatively early in Qutb's career. Already in the late 1930s, he is engaged in recovering, in a quest for what Paul Ricouer called "a second naïveté,"[143] "the Qur'an of childhood" (*Qur'an al-tufulah*[144]) as a pleasant, exciting text. This interest in the Qur'an is consistent with a tendency among the Egyptian intelligentsia of the time to maintain authenticity by returning to Islamic topics in a modern context. The Qur'anic turn marks the beginning of Qutb's distancing from modernist Romanticism and his emergence as a "moralist and as an anti-Western, anti-establishment intellectual."[145] The quest for the unadulterated Qur'an as a living, emotive force capable of shaping praxis is a key element of Qutbian political theology, a recuperative perspective on scriptures that is also, as we shall see, evident in the Catholic and Protestant anti-modern political theologies examined in subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

Notions absorbed by Qutb from the peculiar Romanticism described above about the emotive force of the text and original, authentic and personal connection to it combined with his "Qur'anic turn" to produce an emotionally infused exegesis. Qutb's emphasis on the emotional dimension of the revelation appears for the first time in the late 1930s, when he re-discovered what

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[142] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad,* 54, and Mbaye Lo, *Understanding Muslim Discourse*: *Language*, *Tradition, and the Message of Bin Laden* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), 45.
[143] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad,* 56.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

he calls "the beautiful and beloved Qur'an" (*al-Qur'an al-jamil al-habib*) as a text infused with powerful imagery and a unique capacity to move and convince a diverse audience. *In the Shade of the Qur'an* is a particularly seductive text, striking a chord even today because of its deep emotional tenor.

Qutb expands on the elegant simplicity and emotive force of the Qur'an in two works of literary criticism, "The Artistic Portrayal in the Qur'an" (*al-Tafsir al-fanni fi al-Qur'an*), published in 1945, and "Scenes of Resurrection in the Qur'an" (*Mashahid al-qiyamah fi al-Qur'an)*, published in 1947. While focused, in a modern manner, on literary analysis of imagery, the underlying principle of both works is really the traditional idea of "inimitability of the Qurʾān (*iʿjaz al-Qurʾan*).[146] Qutb believed that he could retrieve the inimitable aesthetic and above all emotionally persuasive force of the text by stripping away the linguistic, legalistic and historical elements of traditional exegesis. In Qutb's view, these hamper the impact of the text by burdening it with arid, technical knowledge. Qutb is particularly critical of the focus on utterance and meaning (*al-lafz wa-al-ma'na*) that has been the hallmark of traditional philology. He argues that most classical exegesis underplays the artistic and rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an by emphasizing linguistic elements.[147] Anti-scholasticism of this kind becomes a full-fledged anti-intellectualism in Qutb's *tafsir*, resulting in the bypassing of much of the Islamic exegetical tradition.

Qutb's deconstruction of traditional exegesis is paired with the constructive objective of demonstrating that the Qur'an represents a "unified method of expression" (*tariqah muwahhadah fi al-ta'bir*), and "single way of expressing all of its purposes."[148] Qutb's idea of unified expression, like his anti-intellectualism and sentiment that the Qur'an is a vital force demanding action, portrays the Qur'an as inimitable in its ability to affect and move believers. For instance, the Qur'an offers an ideal depiction (*taswir*) of "palpable fancied images … intellectual meaning,

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[146] Qutb did engage directly and critically with the theory of *i'jaz*. In his view, only 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani's work *Dala'il al-I'jaz* and also to some extent al-Zamakhsari's *tafsir* treat the *i'jaz* as a fundamental exegetical concept outside the juridical and philological dimensions of traditional exegesis. Qutb largely ignored Baqillani's seminal work: *I'jaz al-Qur'an*, despite the fact that "it has been described by many as the apogee of the attempts to systematise the theories on the topic, effecting a synthesis of ideas which is partly due to his twin roles of theologian and literary critic." See Sophia Vasilou, "The Miraculous Eloquence of the Qur'an: General Trajectories and Individual Approaches," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2002), 33.
[147] Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad,* 44.
[148] Sayyid Qutb, *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1995), 19. It is noteworthy that both Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper expressed in different contexts the same theme of methodologic holism.

psychological states, perceptible events, visceral scenes, human types and human nature."[149] The text, in other words, is affective because it is close to reality, including its interior, human dimensions. Similarly, according to Qutb, the Qur'an uses *al-tanassuq al-fanni* (artistic harmony) to create a dynamic equilibrium between images, concepts and ideas. Consequently, it is a perfect tool of persuasion, appealing to the emotional logic (*al-mantiq al-wijdani*) of the believer and generating a "renewed dynamism" *(harakah mutajaddidah)* and fresh understanding of the Qur'anic universe.[150] In the following chapters we will see how Qutb relates this unique, affective Qur'anic rhetoric to his ideology and the ideal Islamic society.[151]

At this point in his development, Qutb separates religion and literature, declaring that: "beauty can be enjoyed in and of itself, although its value is enhanced within the context of religious interests."[152] This aesthetic perspective is perfectly consistent with Qutb's Romantic view at this stage of his life and with his cultural and linguistic nationalism.[153] The criticism aimed at him for this stance by the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna and others in Islamist circles points up the difference between Qutb the literary critic and Qutb the radical Islamist *mufassir* (exegete).[154] Qutb's literary study of the Qur'an nevertheless serves as an important premise for his Islamist radical hermeneutics. His prison *tafsir* and low, ideological exegesis (an intrinsic part of his political theology) build on an understanding of Qur'anic language as not just an awe-inspiring *lingua sacra,* but mantic speech[155] creating and shaping outer and inner reality. For Qutb, the Qur'an is a world-creating revolutionary force, the dynamic essence of which is to be recaptured, recast and "weaponized" in order to fight a hostile modernity. As Ibrahim Abu-Rabi puts it, "Qutb's utilization of the Qur'anic text as aesthetics paves the way for a more general and perhaps imaginative use of the text as an ideological document in the 1950 and

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[149] Qutb quoted in Issa J. Boullata, "Sayyid Qutb's Literary Appreciation of the Qurʿan," in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2000), 356.

[150] Ibid, 357.

[151] Qutb, *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an*, 24.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Other literary figures of the time such as Amin al-Khuli (d. 1967) shared the same perspective.

[154] See Yusuf al-'Azm, *Ra'id al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir: al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1980), 247.

[155] The concept of mantic speech was firstly developed by Nora Kershaw Chadwick in her 1942 work *Poetry and Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), and it defines a speech form recognized by both the speaker and the listener as emanating from a divine or supernatural realm. For an analysis of the Qur'an as a mantic speech, see Stefan Wild, "Why Self-Referentiality?" In *Self-referentiality in the Qur'an* ed. Stefan Wild, 1-25 (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).

1960s."[156]

2.4.2 *In the Shade of the Qur'an*: A *Tafsir* For a New Generation?

The objective of this section is to place Qutb in the context of Qur'anic commentary (*tafsir).* Traditional Qur'anic exegesis shapes the interpretative act through a set of normative elements. These exegetical principles create what might be called the traditional interpretative paradigm.[157] The traditional paradigm involves a formal structure in which the complete text is treated from beginning to end, commentary follows successive segments of the text, and description is regarded as an interpretative strategy.[158] Traditional *tafsir* also depends on citation of exegetical authorities, making the work essentially acquisitive and constructive rather than critical.[159] Placing Sayyid Qutb in relation to this paradigm is necessary for the comparison between him and Mawdudi in the next chapter. This task, however, is difficult not only for the traditional but also modern exegetical tradition, since there is no consensus on the nature of *In the Shade of the Qur'an* or even its value. Some judge Qutb's *tafsir* to be lacking in the systematic treatment and erudition that are the marks of exegesis "based on the authorities of early Islam" (*tafsir bi-al-ma'thur*) that is much favoured by traditional scholars,[160] while others consider it to be one of the most influential modern exegeses produced in the Arab-speaking world[161] and a "magnificent" instance of "systematic theology" synthesizing hermeneutics, ideology, and action.[162]

Let us first address the nature of Qutb's work. From a formal point of view, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is a somewhat rudimentary rendition of a classical *tafsir,* simplified for modern readers,

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[156] Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgance*, 106.
[157] For a presentation of the main elements of the *tafsir* genre see Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham," in *Approaches to the Qurʾan*, eds. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader Shareef, 101-140 (London: Routledge, 1993); Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'an and Its Interpretative Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); Hussein Abdul Rauf, *Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa-al-mufassirun: bahth tafsili 'an nash'at al-tafsir wa-tatawwurah wa-alwanuh wa-madhahibuh*, vol. l. (Bayrut: Dar al-Qalam, 1987).
[158] Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," 101.
[159] Ibid, 103.
[160] Massimo Campanini and Hussein Abu-Rauf, along with Olivier Carré would be the most preeminent advocates of this point of view. See Massimo Campanini, *The Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2011), Olivier Carré, *Mystique et politique*: *lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, frère musulman radical*, and Hussein Abdul-Rauf, *Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development*.
[161] Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qurʾan and its Interpreters Volume 1* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984).
[162] Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgance*, 94.

augmented by modern literary discussion, and forged as a rhetorical-ideological instrument. The conservative *ulema* perceive Qutb's *tafsir* to be a departure from the classical tradition; thus the Salafi-Hanbali Rabi' ibn Hadi 'Umayr Madkhali (d. 1931) and the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Bin Baz (d. 1999) go so far as to qualify it as dangerous innovation (*bid'ah*).[163] Nevertheless, judged without a theological agenda, it is hardly debatable that Qutb's *tafsir* remains within the bounds or at least periphery of exegetical orthodoxy.

The views cited so far are either apologetic or vituperative. Let us bypass committed perspectives and proceed to classify Qutb's exegesis according to a number of outstanding characteristics. *In the Shade of the Qur'an* is:

1. A serial (*musalsal*) *tafsir*, i.e. an extensive linear commentary of the whole of the Qur'an. In this sense, Qutb's work follows at least formally the format of traditional *tafsir*.[164] This feature confers canonicity while providing a perfect canvas for the essential Qutbian concept of comprehensiveness and unity of the Qur'anic universe.

2. A thematically focused exegetical effort, which does not, however, fall into the genre of thematic or topical *tafsir* (*tafsir mawdu'i*). Rather than drawing out one theme from the text as topical *tafsir* does, Qutb's commentary aims to identify the *mihwar* (axis) for each *surah*, around which its topic (*mawdu'i*), personality (*shakhsiyah*) and special atmosphere (*jaww*) are believed to revolve.[165] Rather than a topic, dichotomies such as Islam vs. non-Islam are carved from the text and employed as hermeneutical anchors throughout the entire commentary.

3. A modern commentary, which is not, however, modernist, as it is designed to simplify, adapt and translate the message of the Qur'an to the contemporary world. Qutb's work is

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[163] See Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*, 287. Rabi' ibn Hadi 'Umayr Madkhali (b. 1931) who is the head of the department of *Sunnah* at the Islamic University of Medina is probably the most radical critic of Qutb's work, coming from within the Salafi-Hanbali tradition. Madkhali*'s* works—*Adwa' Islamiyah 'ala 'aqidat Sayyid Qutb wa-fikrih* (Sharing the Islamic Light on the Credo and Ideology of Sayyid Qutb) (al-Madina: Maktabat al-Ghuraba' al-Athariyah, 1993) and especially *Mata'in Sayyid Qutb fi ashab Rasul al-Allah al-Madinah* (The Abuse of Sayyid Qutb against The Companions of The Messenger of 'Allah) (Maktabat: al-Ghuraba' al-Athariyah, 1993)— are amongst the most representative mainstream Hanbali critical works directed against the Qutbian exegetical system.

[164] Johannes J. G. Jansen places Qutb's commentary among the sixteen modern complete *tafsirs* written between 1905 and 1967. See: Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

[165] Boullata, "Sayyid Qutb's Literary Appreciation of the Qur'an," 367. Despite its rather long history, the thematic exegesis is regarded by Mustansir Mir and Hasan Hanafi as the essential mark of modern tafsir. See Mustansir Mir, "The Surah as Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qur'an exegesis," in *Approaches to the Qur'an*, eds. G. R. Hawting and 'Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993), 211-224.

a successful *aggiornamento* which discards theological and linguistic subtleties in favor of a clear message anchored in the ideological and political landscape of the present day.

4. An example of carceral-prison *tafsir*, a specific type of Islamist exegesis that constitutes the perfect carrier of a radical hermeneutics of the Qur'an. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is presented by Qutb and especially by his disciples as a close application of the methodology of Ibn Taymiyyah[166] and appears to be a model for other prison-produced *tafsir* works such as Sa'id Hawwa's *al-Asas fi al-tafsir* and Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, the most extensive commentary produced in Indonesia.[167] Islamist carceral *tafsir* in general and Qutb's commentary in particular fulfills three functions:[168]

   a) The guidance of future activists through political praxis extracted from the text. In order to fulfill this function, the exegetical polyvalence and plurality of classical *tafsir*[169] is eliminated in favour of interpretative purism.

   b) Issuance of *da'wah*, the homiletic "call" to Islam. By using a "popular preaching format"[170] featuring a particular concept or verse rather than a scholarly, structured exegetical focus, Qutb appeals directly to his audience's feelings and sensitivities.

   c) Presentation of polemics and apologetics. Commentary is used as a power instrument in a conversation with religious, political and ideological alterity.

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[166] Ibn Taymiyyahh, *Muqaddima fi uṣul al-tafsir: An Introduction to the Principles of Tafsir*, trans. Muhammad ʿAbdul Haq Ansari (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 1993). For a focused discussion of the seminal importance of Ibn Taymiyyahh's hermeneutical methodology for the radical interpretative paradigm (stretching from Ibn Kathir to Sayyid Qutb) see Walid A. Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'anic Exegesis," in *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, eds. Yossef Rapoport, and Ahmed Shahab (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 123-162.

[167] Sa'id Hawwa (1935-1989) was the Muslim Brotherhood's chief ideologue in Syria and he explicitly listed Qutb along with Ibn Kathir and al-Nasafi as the main inspiration sources for his tafsir. Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah bin Abdul Karim Amrullah aka Hamka (1908-1981) was one of the most representative Islamist thinkers, writers, activists and journalists in modern Indonesia. His active role in the Islamist *Muhamaidiyah* movement put him into a collision course with the Sukarno Regime and in 1964 he was sentenced to two and a half years of house arrest. After his release, Hamka climbed the ranks of the Indonesian ulema, and between 1977-198 served as the leader of the *Majlis Ulama* Indonesia. For an analysis of Hamka's contribution to the Islamist discourse see Gérard Moussay, "Une grande figure de l'Islam indonésien: Buya Hamka" *Archipel* 32 (1986): 87-111; Johanna Pink "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunni Tafsir: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12, no. 1-2 (2010): 56-82; Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia: A Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). For a discussion of Hawwa's works, see: Khatib Line, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba'thist Secularism* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011)*,* Itzchak Weismann*,* "Sa'id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba'thist Syria," *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997): 131-154.

[168] Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunni Tafsir," 72-73.

[169] Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Tabarii to Ibn Kathir: Problems in the Description of a Genre,"103.

[170] Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunni Tafsir," 73.

5. The chief representative of what Islamists call the *manhaj haraki* (motivational or praxical method) of *tafsir*. The Islamist thinker and noted Qutb biographer Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi defines the *haraki* school—of which he considers Qutb to be the founder—as "a trend that focuses on *da'wah* and movement/action (*harakah*), as well as on education, purification, *Jihad* and struggle. It also focuses on calling Muslims to be active with the Qur'an and to fight against nonbelievers." [171]

Concerning the fifth classification, it should be noted that *harakah* (movement) is a key term in Islamist discourse. *Harakah* implies an active effort by a group of fully committed individuals to return to exclusively Islamic politics, society and economics as the only response to the perceived malaise and decay of Muslim societies. *Manhaj* (program or method) is also a pillar of the Islamist lexicon, and Qutb is credited with its widespread dissemination. *Manhaj* is the equivalent of ideology, describing a comprehensive, systematic and flexible program that creates and enforces a social, historical and political vision.[172] Thus the *manhaji tafsir* is "a specific, practical, objective plan in the interpretation of the Qur'an… a road or method that is followed by the researcher to study a phenomenon or a problem in order to find the truth."[173]

In sum, Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* remains—despite the undisputed absence of technical and exegetical erudition and lack of scholarly credentials—a very significant work of Islamist radical hermeneutics. It is an outstanding example of dynamic, combat-oriented exegesis, offering a Qur'anic-based radical critique of political, cultural and social modernity. As Mahmoud Ayoub points out, Qutb's understanding of Islam as a religious system placed in a relation to rival systems and ideological configurations is carried through the commentary via an "amazing command of the Arabic language" which leaves a powerful mark on his audience.[174] Last but not least, as it will be made apparent in the next chapter, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is a foundational text of political theology produced by the first modern political theologian of God's Sovereignty in the Sunni Islamic world.

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[171] Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Madkhal ila Zilal al-Qur'an* (Amman: Dar Ammar, 2000), 51-189, 247, 254, 568.
[172] For a focused analysis of the concept of *Manhaj* in the Islamist works of Sayyid Qutb, see William E. Shepard, "Islam as a 'System in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1989): 31-50.
[173] Haziyah Hussin and Sohirin M. Solihin, "Manhaj Haraki in the Revival of Qur'anic Exegesis," *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research* 16, no.1 (2013): 12.
[174] Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, 7.

Chapter 3: Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb:
An Exercise in Comparative Hermeneutics

3.1 Methodological Preamble: Comparative Hermeneutics

Qutb and Mawdudi forge the dichotomies Islam versus non-Islam and Divine Sovereignty versus human tyranny essentially in two discursive orders: a higher-level exegesis developed in Qur'anic commentary, and a low-level exegesis found in polemical, ideological texts. For the higher-level exegesis treated in this chapter, we will apply the method of comparative hermeneutics, and for the second, discourse analysis. Comparative hermeneutics, according to Michael Pye who first introduced the term in 1973, is a phenomenological method of identifying possible (not certain) analogies between the interpretive procedures of diverse religious traditions.[175] In this study, we also adopt Jonathan Z. Smith's perspective on comparative exegesis and comparative theology as methods that compare "strategies through which the exegete seeks to interpret and translate his received tradition to his contemporaries."[176] Comparative hermeneutics is applied in this study as a properly analogical, heuristic device that places together specific relations, aspects, and processes, and not essentialized things in themselves.

Mawdudi's *The Meaning of the Qur'an* and Qutb's *In the Shade of the Qur'an* are analyzed in this manner using a tailored comparison focused on the core dichotomies: *Nizam al-Islam* versu*s Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut.* The analysis builds, as explained in the methodology, on the framework developed by Barbara Holdrege in her 1995 *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*.[177] We begin with a diachronic analysis of the two texts in the context of their respective religious and political traditions. This historical perspective is followed by a comparative analysis based on family resemblance, aimed at identifying and explaining structural similarities and systemic differences. Finally, cultural interpretation is used to place similarities and differences in a wider matrix that serves as a supraordinate, *tertium quid* category. The category chosen is the political-theological notion of God's Sovereignty, which produces and

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[175] Michael Pye, "Comparative Hermeneutics: A Brief Statement," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, no.1 (March 1980): 25-33, and Michael Pye, "Comparative Hermeneutics in Religion*,*" in *The Cardinal Meaning*: *Essays in Comparative Hermeneutics: Buddhism and Christianity,* eds. Michael Pye and Robert Morgan, 9-58 (The Hauge: Mouton Publishers, 1973).

[176] Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 52.

[177] Barbara A. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

enforces a radical hermeneutics of text and action[178] while engaging in a complex dialogue with modernity. We will see that Qutb and Mawdudi's exegesis, though often conflated as instances of "fundamentalism" and sharing an underlying structural similarity, are actually quite different.

Both commentaries are massive, multi-volumes works, so we obviously cannot treat the exegesis of the entire Qur'an. In selecting relevant passages, we have built on the work of Olivier Carré, who identifies Qur'an 2:104-160, 3:65-179, 4:15-104, 5:51-66 and 8:55-65 of Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* as central to his seminal work *Milestones*, which distills his radical thought. These are also the *surahs* that appear most frequently in contemporary radical Islamist discourse overall. Having analyzed data from both formal and informal contemporary Islamist texts gathered in a data base created by the Center for Strategic Communications at Arizona State University, Jeffrey R. Halverson, R. Bennett Furlow, and Steven R. Corman have concluded that *surah 9, al-Tawbah*, is the most quoted chapter of the Qur'an, followed by *surahs* 3, 4, 2, 5, and 8. These, indeed, are the *surahs* in which the antitheses I have identified as axes of Qutb's political theology are best and most fully expressed (along with the short first *surah*, *al-Fatihah*, which I include because it reveals similarities and differences between Qutb and Mawdudi in condensed form). In the exegesis of other *surahs,* the antitheses that are central to the dissertation are merely sketched, scattered in a less coherent fashion or just repeated.

3.2 Mawdudi's Biography—From Theorist of Islamism to Party Founder

Before proceeding to compare Qutb and Mawdudi's *tafsirs*, a brief *Sitz im Leben* for Mawdudi is necessary for a better contextualization of our comparative analysis. Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi (1903-1979) is arguably the first consistent and systematic thinker of twentieth-century Islamic revivalism,[179] as well as the creator in Lahore, India, in 1941 of the first truly modern Islamist political movement, the Jamaat-e-Islami.[180] If Hasan al-Banna's talents were pragmatism

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[178] Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991).

[179] For Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, Maududi is "the most influential of contemporary revivalist thinkers". See Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3. S.N. Eisenstadt went as far as defining Islamic radicalism as "the illegitimate offspring of Islamic reformism and Wahhabite-Mawdudian fundamentalism." See S. N. Einsenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101.

[180] MuhammadʿImara's, *Abu 'l-Aʿla Mawdudi* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988), Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr's, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, and Roy Jackson's, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam*: *Authority and the Islamic State* (New York: Routlege, 2011) are to be considered the definitive intellectual biographies of Mawdudi. For an analysis of the importance of Jamaat-e-Islami as the archetype for the modern Islamist political party, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan* (London: I. B.

and organizational ability and Sayyid Qutb's strong points were theory, discourse, and textual charisma, Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi may be credited with being both a theorist and ideologue with the ability to perform in speculative and praxical registers. Thus, Mawdudi effortlessly combines the construction of an activist ideology with theoretical reflection.[181]

Abu al-A'la Mawdudi was born in Aurangabad, Deccan, in 1903 in a family of descendants of the Prophet's family originally from Delhi. His family history is linked to the Sufi order of Khwajah Qutb al-Din Chishti. In the early sixteenth century, Mawdudi's ancestors moved from Herat, Afghanistan, and settled in Delhi. Mawdudi's father was a secular lawyer by trade, having completed his degree at Godabad University[182] after being forced to leave the Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh due to his Western propensies. Thus it is not surprising that, like Qutb, Mawdudi was not given a traditional Islamic education. He was, however, schooled, as would befit the scion of a family proud of its Indo-Muslim heritage, in Arabic, Urdu and Persian from an early age by private tutors. In particular, Mawdudi's biographers note that his father instilled in him a deep concern for the purity of the Urdu language. This focus on the quality of language would substantially contribute to Mawdudi's textual charisma and gain him prestige in Islamist circles. Mawdudi's father also insisted that the young Abu al-Aʿla learn logic, law (*fiqh*) and *hadith*.[183] After finishing his high school education in Awrangabad, Mawdudi enrolled in a seminary college (*Dar ul Uloom*) under the well-known educational reformer and exegete Hamid al-Din Farahi. Though he left the seminary very soon due to the death of his father, this early private and then institutional religious education started him soon on the path to conversion to Islamism. Unlike Qutb, who began fully immersed in secular culture, Mawdudi always had a foot in both worlds.

Mawdudi then began his career as a journalist, at the age of eighteen. He moved to Bijar where his brother, Abu al-Khayr, who was editor of the journal *Madinah*, helped him to get his first job. The two brothers moved to Delhi, where Mawdudi's passion for politics emerged. In this period, he wrote for publications such as the weekly *Taj*, weekly *Muslim* (1921-23), and *al-Jamiah* (1925-28).[184] This early and prodigious entry into journalism alerted Mawdudi to the importance

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Tauris Publishers, 1994), and Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India*: *The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[181] In this regard, as we will see in the fifth chapter, Mawdudi is closer to Abraham Kuyper.
[182] His father called him home when he learned that he had played cricket, wearing *kafir* (unbeliever, Englsh) clothes. See: Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 10.
[183] Ibid, 12.
[184] *Muslim* was the publication of the influential Deobandi organization: Jamaat Ulema-e-Hind (Society of Ulema of India).

of the dissemination of ideas through modern media (which Qutb realized only after his literary-poetic phase). He also continued learning English, first with a tutor and later on his own, thus acquiring sufficient reading skills to delve into a long list of Western authors. As Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr notes, Mawdudi's "readings on modernity and the West were thorough, and he discovered the intellectual lure as well as the challenge of modern scientific thought."[185] Qutb, again, learned English later, giving him less exposure to Western sources and at least initially a more limited understanding of modernity.

In parallel with his Western self-education, Mawdudi also continued with his study, mostly under private tutors, of Arabic literature, Qur'anic exegesis, *hadith*, *fiqh*, and Islamic logic and philosophy.[186] There is a great different here between Mawdudi and Qutb. While Sayyid Qutb was the disciple of al-'Aqqad, a secular literary critic, Mawdudi immersed himself in the Islamic religious sciences, including Arabic belles-lettres (*adab*) and scholastic theology (*kalam*). He studied first with the eminent *'alim*, Mawlana 'Abd al-Salam Niyazi (d. 1966), and then in 1924 with two influential Deobandi *ulema* at the Fatihpuri Mosque seminary in Old Delhi.[187]By 1926, Mawdudi had earned certificates (*ijazah*) to teach religious sciences, becoming, as Nasr points out, a *de jure* Deobandi *'alim* and a "member of the sodality associated with that school."[188] Mawdudi acquired, in effect, the credentials to be included in the ranks of the *ulema.* He refused, however, to join the mainstream Islamic interpretative community and even tried to conceal the fact that he had the requisite training.[189] Nasr advances two possible explanations for this apparently odd refusal. It may, according to Nasr, be that Mawdudi wanted to distance himself from the traditional concept of consensus (*ijma'*) underlying the authority of the *ulema*, since this would constrain his ambition, which he showed very early, to present himself as a "renewer" (*mujaddid*) of Islam destined to introduce a novel perspective into Islamist revivalism. Or it may be that the young Mawdudi did not want to be "typecast" as part of what the new Indian intelligentsia perceived as an obscurantist, retrograde religious establishment. As Nasr remarks, "For a young man with

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[185] Nasr lists: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Liebniz, Kant, Saint Simon, Comte, Goethe, Hegel, and Nietzsche to Darwin, Fichte, Marx, Lenin, and Bernard Shaw as the most quoted western sources for Mawdudi's perspective on modernity. See: Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 15. In this regard, Mawdudi's familiarity with the Western philosophy is stronger than Qutb's.
[186] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 17
[187] Ibid, 18.
[188] Ibid.
[189] "Mawdudi never publicized his Deobandi training or his ties to the ulema. It was not until after his death that his *ijazahs* were discovered and references to them began to appear in the Jamaat-i Islami's literature" Ibid, 19.

political ambitions who was determined to influence the thinking of educated Muslims, the title of *'alim* was more a liability than an asset."[190]

The fact that Mawdudi was initially shaped, despite his ambivalence, by Deobandi *ulema* finally impacted his perspective on the traditional Islamic scholars. As we shall see, although Mawdudi, Qutb, and the other political theologians discussed in this dissertation reject the monopoly of traditional religious experts and profess a systematic anti-intellectualism, Mawdudi's critique is often less direct and radical.

Mawdudi's path to Islamism began with his interest in the short-lived anti-colonial Khilafat Movement.[191] As his biographers note, his hostility against British rule was influenced by the fiery sermons of one of the most influential leaders of the Khilafat Movement and leader of All India Muslim League, Mawlana Muhammad Ali (d. 1931).[192] After a Muslim—believed to be connected with the Khilafat [Caliphate] Movement—killed Swami Shardhanand, the leader of the radical nationalist Bhartiya Hindu Shuddhi group,[193] inter-communal violence plagued Hindu-Muslim relations. In this charged context, Mawdudi wrote his first career-making work, *al-Jihad fi al-Islam* (*Jihad in Islam*). Its primary objective was the apologetic one of rationalizing the concept of *Jihad* and defending it against accusations of fanatical religious violence launched by Hindus in the aftermath of Swami Shardhanand's assassination. *Jihad in Islam* argues that *Jihad*, as the only ethically pure form of combat, is entirely different from modern warfare. We will return to Mawdudi's reconceptualization of *Jihad* in the following chapters. For now it is sufficient to say that the book was a success, making Mawdudi one of the most promising young Muslim voices in India.[194] According to Mawdudi himself, his tract on *Jihad* also marks the beginning of his conversion from Indian-Muslim nationalism to Islamism. With the collapse of the Khilafat Movement, in 1924 as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the caliphate, he also developed a "deep-

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[190] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 18.

[191] For a systematic analysis of this very important expression of Islamic Indian nationalism, see: Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), and M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[192] Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878 –1931), also called Mawlana Muhammad Ali, was one of the most influential leaders of the Khilafa movement and the leader of All India Muslim League. He was also elected as President of Indian National Congress in 1923.

[193] The Hindu Shuddhi movement was focused on the religious purification of India by converting all the other religious communities to Hinduism.

[194] The book was positively reviewd by Muhammad Iqbal, Mawlana Muhammad Ali, Suleiman Nadwi of Nadwat-ul-Ulama and Mawlana Said of the JUH. See: Husnul Amin, "From Islamism to Post Islamism: A Study of a New Intellectual Discourse on Islam and Modernity in Pakistan," (PhD dissertation, Erasmus University, 2010), 113.

seated suspicion" of secular nationalism and Westernization together as he perceived that Turkish and Arab nationalists had served as a fifth column for Western imperialism.[195] As we will see in the next chapters, Mawdudi, unlike Qutb, remained attached to the concept of caliphate and tried to re-insert it in the Islamist lexicon.

Mawdudi's disillusionment with nationalism caused him to progressively distance himself from the Indian nationalist cause, mainly associated with Jamaat-e-Islami and Indian National Congress.[196] Up to 1930, Mawdudi turned to a focus on intellectual work, labouring at the Translation Institute where he helped to translate the work of the Iranian theosopher Mulla Sadra (d. 1640) into Urdu.[197] Nasr writes that Manazir Ahsan Gilani, a leading Deobandi scholar, supervised this massive translation project, which augmented Mawdudi's understanding of the Islamic intellectual legacy.[198] Again we see Mawdudi's appreciation of traditional Islamic knowledge.[199] His work on Mulla Sadra also indicates a growing awareness of translation as an instrument for creating a renewed Islamic consciousness, which will be fully expressed in his *tafsir.*

Husnul Amin provides the clearest periodization of Mawudid's Islamist evolution. Following the chronology provided by Mawdudi himself, he delimits four stages.[200] In the first phase between 1928 and 1937, Mawdudi diagnoses the crisis afflicting the entire Muslim world and prescribes the cure. Atheism is countered by Islamic civilization. "Islamic nationalism" (*qawmiyyat-i-Islam*) is prescribed as the cure for nationalism, and the institution of *purdah* counters feminism. Essentially, all "the diseases of *Farangiyyat"* are to be healed by a complete application of Islam.[201] In the latter part of this phase between 1932 and 1937, his conversion to Islamism accelerates.[202] In this period, Mawdudi published *Risalah-i diniyat*, translated in English

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[195] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 20.

[196] Deobandi *ulema* did not see an independent state as a solution for the Indian Muslims and favored instead the composite nationalism of the Indian National Congress.

[197] Roy Jackson notes that despite Mulla Sadra's lack of overt political dimensions, Mawdudi will consider the author of *al-Asfar al-arba'ah al-'aqliyyah* as a major source of inspiration. See Jackson, *Mawdudi and Political Islam*, 43.

[198] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 20.

[199] Mawdudi also wrote mystical poetry under the pen-name 'Talib' (a term often used by Sufis to signify a "seeker" of enlightenment. The poems were kept hidden and were made available only after Mawdudi's death. See: Jackson, *Mawdudi and Political Islam*, 47.

[200] Amin, "From Islamism to Post Islamism," 113.

[201] Amin, "From Islamism to Post Islamism," 96. Roy Jackson calls the period of 1930-1939 a "crisis of the spirit." See: Jackson, *Mawdudi and Political Islam*, 42

[202] Mawdudi marked the year 1933 as the moment of his conversion: "In reality I am a new Muslim" *(dar haqiqat mein ik naw-musalman hun)."* Mawdudi quoted in Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 31.

as *Towards Understanding Islam*.[203] This work remains a very popular Mawdudian text and an important key to his political theology. In 1932, Mawdudi bought the Hyderabad journal *Tarjuman-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Interpretation) and single-handedly transformed it into one of his life missions.[204] He remained the chief editor of *Tarjuman-Qur'an* until his death in 1979.

In the second phase from 1937 to 1938, Mawdudi's hostility towards Hindu and Indian nationalism becomes systematic.[205] He denounces all forms of nationalism as sectarian creeds based on race and ethnicity, as toxic for an authentic Muslim identity that is rooted solely in Islamic universalism. As Husnul Amin notices, Mawdudi actually characterizes Indian nationalism as infidelity (*kaaferana*), which will only "replace the British colonial infidel system with infidelity of Indian nationalism."[206]

The third phase between 1939 and 1941 is dominated by the creation of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*. The movement derives its inspiration from the last project of the poet and thinker Muhammad Iqbal. Regarded as the most important Muslim intellectual in India, Iqbal proposed the creation of an Islamic institution that would lay down the conceptual and spiritual premises for a Muslim homeland in the Indian subcontinent. Mawdudi succeeded in being appointed by Iqbal to a new *Dar ul Uloom* in Punjab intended as a launching pad for a comprehensive intellectual and educational reformist movement. In March of 1938, he moved to Punjab, but he had a different agenda than Iqbal and after his death in April of 1938 transformed the project into a political-revivalist initiative under the name *Dar al-Islam*. The Dar al-Islam movement was designed as an alternative to the composite Indian nationalism of the Indian National Congress and *Jamaat Ulema-e-Hind* on the one hand, and the Islamic nationalism of the Muslim League on the other. The Jamaat-e-Islami was created in August 1941 in Lahore, and as Nasr notes, was "from the very beginning, the platform for Mawdudi's ideas."[207] The founding of the Jamaat-e-Islami marks the end of Mawdudi's life as a theorist of Islamic revival and the beginning of his career as an organizer

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[203] Nasr points out that this book was written at the request of Manazir Ahsan Gilani who wanted to use the work as a textbook for the Islamic colleges across the subcontinent. This rendered visible the growing intellectual influence of Mawdudi. See: Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 27.

[204] Nasr notes that the journal *"*gave Mawdudi a place to air, test, refine, and rationalize his ideas and his vision and, despite its modest subscription list, cast him as a leader of the Muslim community of India" (Ibid, 30).

[205] The main works dedicated to the critique of nationalism were *Musalman awr Mawjooda Siyasi Kashmekesh* (Muslims and the Contemporary Political Struggle) and *Masala-e-Qawmiyyat* (The Question of Nationalism).

[206] Amin, "From Islamism to Post Islamism," 97. We will discuss Mawdudi's critique of nationalism in the third chapter.

[207] *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism,* 30.

and politician.[208]

The fourth phase (1941-1947) sees the theoretical articulation of accommodation of the Islamist message with the reality of a nascent secular state for Indian Muslims. On the eve of partition in 1947, the Jamaat-e-Islami divided into Indian and Pakistani organizations. Despite forbidding party members to pledge allegiance to the newly created state of Pakistan until it became fully Islamic,[209] Mawdudi took the core of his party to Pakistan. We will not discuss here the evolution of Jamaat-e-Islami in the complex and often turbulent political context of Pakistan.[210] Suffice it to say that even though the Jamaat never governed, it had a definite impact on the Pakistani political scene. Husnul Amin notes that Mawdudi's organization was the first Islamic political party in Pakistan to accept membership from all sectarian denominations—Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith and Shi'a. It succeeded in mobilizing urban, educated middle classes as well as students and workers into a coherent, modern political organization.[211] Despite the fact that it created militant, radical wings in Kashmir and Afghanistan, in Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami progressively integrated into the normal political system. Even if its message remained anti-secular and Islamist at its core, it participated in several elections and usually preferred peaceful demonstrations as instruments of protest. This theoretical integration in a participative political party system was not possible for the Muslim Brotherhood, which was consequently pushed toward the extreme of the political spectrum. Unlike Mawdudi, Qutb never had a real chance to become a politician. His violent life history made him more radical and gave him a different understanding of what politics is. While Mawdudi had to adjust his vision to the pragmatic imperatives of real politics, Qutb's intransigent ideological perspective remained intact.

Despite his political activity having been mostly non-violent, Mawdudi was incarcerated in 1948 on charges of treason because of his objection to what he saw as the non-Islamic character of Pakistani intervention in Kashmir; although he was released shortly after. In 1953, following a violent campaign against members of the Ahmadiyah community in Lahore, Mawdudi was jailed again, put on trial for sedition, and sentenced to death by a military tribunal. A civilian court subsequently commuted the sentence to fourteen years in prison, and the Supreme Court finally

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[208] Ibid.

[209] In the first years after the creation of Pakistan, Mawdudi forbade the members of his party from pledging allegiance to the newly created state until it became de facto a completely Islamic regime.

[210] See: Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution.*

[211] Amin, "From Islamism to Post Islamism," 97. We will discuss Mawdudi's critique of nationalism in the forth chapter.

nullified the verdict in 1955. In both cases, members of the Pakistani *ulema* played an important part in Mawdudi's release. Even if on a theoretical level Mawdudi criticized the religious establishment for its supposed inertia, on the practical side, he benefited from their support. Both were, after all, engaged in a struggle with an essentially secular state. Qutb, in contrast, had an ongoing hostile relation with the Egyptian *ulema.* Moreover, as we discussed, the al-Azhar establishment played an important part in Qutb's execution, providing the prosecution with arguments for its accusation of *Kharijism.* These difference circumstances led to very different attitudes of Mawdudi and Qutb toward the religious establishment, which can be seen clearly in their *tafsir*s. Mawdudi's *Tafhim al-Qur'an* does not directly attack the *ulema* (though his ideological writings are less oblique); while Qutb, though not "naming names," goes in the *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* so far as to denounce the *ulema* as an integral part of *Jahiliyah.*

Mawdudi's party was a very active political actor in the opposition against the autocratic regime of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969). Consequently, the Jamaat-e-Islami was subjected to a systematic campaign of political and economic repression. Mawdudi himself was imprisoned again in 1964 and in 1967 for his open opposition to the Ayub regime.[212] The Jamaat continued its opposition against what Mawdudi considered the un-Islamic political regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1973 to 1977), but supported the military dictatorship of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq (1978 -1988), hoping that it could become the Islamist political arm of this regime with Mawdudi as its *de facto* leader. In 1979, Mawdudi's kidney disease worsened and he took a trip to the US where his second son worked as a physician. He died in Buffalo, New York, in September 22, 1979, at the age of 75. Abu al-A'la Mawdudi was buried (at his own request) in an unmarked grave in Lahore, Pakistan, but his funeral procession was attended by thousands of people.

Mawdudi's mark on the theoretical and praxical evolution of Islamism is clear, and numerous observers, including Roy Jackson, Y.M. Choueri, Roxanne Euben and Emanuel Sivan,[213] have asserted that Sayyid Qutb was directly influenced by him. Qutb's radical reading of *Jahiliyah,* his use of Divine Sovereignty or *Hakimiyah* as a meta-concept, and even the very particular concepts of '*uzlah shu'uriyah* (emotional separation) and *Tali'ah* (vanguard) are said to

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[212] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 30.
[213] See: Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*; Sivan, *Radical Islam*; Jackson, *Mawdudi and Political Islam*.

be originally Mawdudian, picked up by Qutb through Arabic translations.[214] We will not repeat here the anecdotal and biographical material cited in favour of this thesis. Other scholars, including Sayed Khatab and Abu-Rabi, deny that Qutb borrowed extensively from Mawdudi. [215] Suffice it to say that, regardless of specific channels, Mawdudi's influence on Qutb's Islamist writings of the late 1950s and 1960s is easily discernible from the texts themselves. Mawdudi's works and particularly his very popular tracts *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms* and *Jihad in Islam* are mentioned directly in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, sometimes with lengthy quotations. More important for this study, there is a clear affinity between the concepts used by the Pakistani and the Egyptian, in addition to a similar *Weltanschauung* at the levels of both political ideology and theology.

However, the question persists: do these similarities justify regarding Qutb as an epigone, whose critique of modernity is essentially derivative? The present chapter answers that question in the negative. As contextualization is necessary to non-essentializing comparison, we will take as our starting point the different religious and political contexts of India-Pakistan and Egypt.

As noted above, Mawdudi crystallized his Islamist vision in India before the 1947 partition in a context in which Muslims were a minority and not the chief players in the struggle against British domination. For this reason, Mawdudi's vision of an Islamic solution appears less radical and abrasive than that of Qutb, who lived in a Muslim majority country in which religious identity did not need to be negotiated. As related above, Mawdudi was imprisoned three times between 1949 and 1950, and twice again under Ayub Khan in 1964 and 1967; he was even sentenced to death in 1954.[216] The imprisonments and death sentence were all ultimately the outcome of his feeling that various governments of Pakistan, since they were avowedly secular, were not legitimate according to his interpretation of Islam. But Mawdudi, unlike Qutb, was nevertheless able to work, write and publish in a relatively free environment. His political creation, the Jamaat e-Islami movement of Pakistan, functioned on many occasions as a part of the political system, participating in national elections as early as 1951 and opening the way to a relatively routine,

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[214] Jackson openly calls Qutb "not only a 'salafi' but a 'Mawdudian'" (*Mawdudi and political Islam,* 173). In the same vein, see Youssef M. Choueri, "The Diagnosis: Sayyid Qutb and al-Mawdudi," in *Islamic Fundamentalism,* ed., Youssef M. Choueri, 93-119 (London: Pinter Publisher, 1990), and 'Imara, *Mawdudi*.

[215] We should mention here that Sayed Khatab and Ibrahim Abu-Rabi are the most notable critics of this paradigm. Sayed Khatab's two lengthy monographs aim to demonstrate that Qutb's lexicon preceded the Indo-Pakistani influence. Hence Qutb's master concepts: *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* are not reinterpreted Mawdudian notions, but they were extracted and distilled from the Islamic tradition and from the Arabic literary culture. See: Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 50-60.

[216] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism,* 64.

modern Islamist political party.[217] This is in stark contrast to Qutb's long sentence and experience in prison as a member of an outlawed, anti-system Islamist movement regarded by the Nasser regime as a terrorist organization and subjected to violent oppression. While Qutb consequently died on the gallows and was buried in secrecy, Mawdudi would die while on a trip to America at the ripe age of seventy-five, with his passing marked by public ceremonies attended by thousands in Lahore. Finally, as we have emphasized, Mawdudi was in effect a certified traditional scholar (*'alim*) of the Deoband School, having received his *ijazah*s (certificates testifying to his knowledge and authorizing him to teach) from the Fatihpuri Seminary in 1926.[218] Though he concealed or at least did not publicize this fact and had an ambiguous relation with the *ulema*, of whom he was at times critical, his traditional training left him with a different intellectual heritage than Qutb, the effect of which is seen clearly in the more traditional features of his exegesis, as discussed below.

3.3 *In the Shade of the Qur'an* and *Understanding the Qur'an*: An Overview

Before proceeding to a tailored analysis of the two commentaries using, as stated in the methodology, comparative hermeneutics, it is necessary to establish the commensurability (while not denying differences) of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Tafhim al-Qur'an* by identifying and comparing their outstanding formal features. These are holism, simplification, and finally, use of the text for mobilization. These three exegetical imperatives are manifest in each of the political theologians discussed in this dissertation and thus function as a common ground in a more capacious understanding of anti-modern political theology.

Holism represents a distinctive mark of a political theology that fuses the political and the religious in an all-encompassing, integral *Weltanschauung*. When confronted with what is perceived to be a hegemonic and disruptive modernity, holism gains exegetical, ideological, political and social dimensions. Moreover, when it is applied to the political sphere, exegetical holism becomes in the cases of both Qutb and Mawdudi a full-fledged totalism embodied in the utopia of an integral Islamic state-society exclusively shaped by God's Sovereignty.

The imperative of simplification is usually translated into a more or less radical critique of scholasticism, and in the case of the political theologians discussed here, a programmatic and

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[217] See: Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution.*
[218] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism,* 75. As we mentioned in the first chapter, Qutb is a self-taught religious thinker whose education was received solely in non-religious institutions.

virulent anti-intellectualism. What are perceived to be endless abstract debates and a penchant for obscure technicalities transform the exegesis into a monopoly of a closed circle of religious experts with little or no connection to praxis. Consequently, simplifying exegesis is seized upon as a strategy for creating and disseminating an anti-elitist ethos facilitating the mobilization of previously excluded voices. These strands create the premises for a new paradigm focused on eliminating the divide between theory and praxis.

Lastly, the employment of the text for ideological and political mobilization is a constant of antithetical political theology, which concentrates not on interpreting the metaphysical structures of the world, but rather radically transforming politics and society. In this regard, Mawdudi and especially Qutb provide formative examples of the mobilization exegesis that has structured the radical Islamist critique of modernity.

The significance of holism for Qutb's and Mawdud's *tafsir*s cannot be overstated, as it guides their entire political theology. In a modernity thought to be plagued by individualism and thus suffering from fragmentation of meaning and debilitating relativism, the divine, perfect unity of the Qur'an is thought by Mawdudi and Qutb to naturally generate a unitary ideological "system," as they say, that is the sole valid source of universal principles. Consequently, they read the Qur'an as a complete book of guidance leading all humanity on a path that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, nationality, and jurisprudential schools. The revelation is regarded as the immutable source not only of religious but all social, political, and economic norms. Rediscovering the perfect coherence of the Qur'an and its total applicability to the present and all possible futures is the common objective of Mawdudi and Qutb.

The feature or aim of holism begins with comprehensiveness. The holism of the Qur'anic text is initially established by presenting commentary upon it in the form of a traditional serial (*musalsal*) exegesis. That Mawdudi and Qutb embarked on the writing of complete *tafsir*s even though the genre had come to be regarded by some as overly complicated, outdated, and difficult to publish and read[219] also considerably augmented their intellectual status. While denying the

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[219] Modern commentaries were dominated by thematic exegesis, which aims to provide an overview of the major Qur'anic themes of each *surah*. This type of *tafsir* is focused on native speakers of Arabic without advanced linguistic training in Qur'an's classical Arabic and on Muslims living in the West. It should be noted here that scholars like Hasan Hanafi regard the thematic commentary as the modern alternative par excellence. See Hasan Hanafi, "Method of thematic interpretation of the Qur'an," in *Islam and the Modern World*, vol.1 of *Religion, Ideology and Development* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1995), 407-428. For an analysis of the main models of modern *tafsir*, see: Campanini, *The Qur'an*, and Johanna Pink, *Sunnitische*r *Tafsir in der modernen islamischen Welt* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

importance of the supposedly overcomplicated intellectual style of the traditional *ulema* and classical *tafsir*, they co-opted its prestige.

Mawdudi and especially Qutb reject traditional atomistic exegesis that focuses only on specific *surah*s and concepts.[220] Beyond adoption of the *musalsal* form, however, the internal architectures of Qutb's and Mawdudi's *tafsir*s achieve holism in different ways. Mawdudi's *Tafhim* is an interpretive translation, organized on three levels. The first level consists of the Qur'anic text in its original Arabic. The second level is represented by the Urdu translation, and the third consists of explanatory notes. Every *surah* is provided with an introduction (*dibachah* in Urdu) in which Mawdudi discusses the occasions of revelation, historical background, the place of the verse or pericope in the chronology of the *surahs* and "what phase the Islamic movement was passing through, what needs and requirements the movement had, and what problems it faced at the time of a given *surah's* revelation."[221] Bringing all this material together at the beginning of the *surah* maintains the holistic perspective by anchoring the text in a larger world of meaning, in the comprehensive universe of the Qur'an.

The exegesis *per se* is performed at the third level, via an extensive and often elaborate system of notes. According to Mawdudi, notes are introduced only when there is a need for an explanation. "I was [otherwise] afraid," he says, "that the reader would not pay sufficient attention to certain verses and, as a result, would fail to grasp their true significance."[222] This structure allows the reader to read the translation in a fluid fashion, without being interrupted by the commentary that might hamper understanding of the Qur'an as a fluid, unified text.[223] As Mustansir Mir remarks, the notes function to bring together each of the *surah*s as an integrated whole, organized around a central theme and forging a unified and coherent message.[224]

Qutb's *tafsir*, on the other hand, freed from translating the original text, achieves holism in a different way. As in the case of Mawdudi, each *surah* is framed with an introduction presenting the occasion of revelation, historical context, and main themes (Qutb, in accord with his literary

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[220] Leading figures of Islamic modernism like Muhammad Shahrur and Fazlur Rahman also reject the idea of 'atomization' (*ta'diya*), advocating an understanding of the individual *ayas* as organic, single building blocks of the grand, concrete and perfect unity of the Qur'an as a whole. See Fazlur Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980) and Muhammad Shahrur, *The Qur'an, Morality and Critical Reason: The Essential Muhammad Shahrur* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[221] Mustansir Mir, "Some Features of Mawdudi's Tafhim al Qur'an," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (1985): 239.

[222] Ibid, 240.

[223] Ibid, 234.

[224] Ibid, 241.

sensibility, also treats stylistic characteristics). The introduction, however, is significantly longer than in Mawdudi's *tafsir* and ideological and polemical material often overshadows the historical and stylistic elements. Qutb brings together autobiographical elements, homiletic exhortations, ideological critique of modernity and stylistic and rhetorical analysis through commentary focused on blocks of verses—even entire *surah*s—as well as the extended introductions just mentioned. If in Mawdudi's *tafsir*, holism is aimed at creating an understanding of the Qur'an as a complete moral-ethical world, Qutb's exegetical holism marks off the all-embracing world of the Qur'an as radically different from the world of *Jahiliyah.*

In order to re-cast the Qur'anic text as a holistic blueprint for the present and future of a Muslim world seduced by non-Islamic modernity, both Mawdudi and Qutb conceived of their commentaries as the functional alternative to the scholarly exegesis of the *ulema.* This was translated into a programmatic simplification of the exegetical act. Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and Mawdudi's *Tafhim al-Qur'an* are openly anti-scholastic, focused on distilling a clear, simple and easily instrumentalized meaning, free of hermeneutical subtleties and resistant to the elitism of the classically trained *mufassirun.* As we shall see, this anti-epistemological, anti-speculative tone is essential to the anti-modern political theology shared by Mawdudi and Qutb with their non-Muslim counterparts.

A prime aim of simplification is the desire to reach a wide audience. In accord with this aim, both *tafsir*s address a popular audience. This is how Mawdudi explains the impetus and aim of his *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, a monumental, lifelong project in six volumes of approximately seven hundred pages each begun in 1942 and completed in 1972:

> The present work is neither directed at scholars and researchers, nor is it aimed at assisting those who, having mastered the Arabic language and the Islamic religious sciences, now wish to embark upon a thorough and elaborate study of the Qur'an. Such people already have plenty of material at their disposal. Instead it is intended for the lay reader, the average educated person, who is not well-versed in Arabic and so is unable to make full use of the vast treasures to be found in classical works on the Qur'an…In October, 1948, by a stroke of luck, good or bad, I was arrested under the Public Safety Act and imprisoned. I was thus able to find the time needed to prepare this work for the press. I now pray to God that He may fulfill the purpose for which this work was undertaken, and make it useful for developing a better and fuller understanding of the Holy Qur'an.[225]

Both commentaries are consequently written in modern languages: Modern Standard

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[225] Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an: English Version of Tafhim al-Qur'an* vol. 1, trans. Zafir Ishaq Ansari, (Leicestershire, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1988), 1. This chapter uses two different English translations of Mawdudi's tafsir. The newest one was published in the UK in 1988 and the oldest one was published in Lahore, Pakistan in 1985 under the title "The Meaning of the Qur'an. When this particular version is used, it will appear in the footnotes as "*Tafhim al-Qur'an* (1985)."

Arabic for Qutb and modern Urdu for Mawdudi. Stylistic obscurities and dense classical constructions are avoided. Mawdudi and Qutb use paragraphs, notes, and a subject index to facilitate understanding by the largest number of readers possible and exchange the traditional audience of the *tafsir* genre, classically trained scholars, for a wider, potentially activist audience of modern educated Muslims. The two commentaries fall in the rather fluid category of popularizing *tafsir.* They are, in fact, very much in accord with Mawdudi and Qutb's use of journalism to disseminate their Islamist message, initially published in the journal *Tarjuman al-Qur'an* in the case of Mawdudi and *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun,* as a monthly column, in the case of Qutb. They can be regarded as journalistic expressions of modern exegesis, placing them in a problematic relation to the constraints of the traditional genre. Journalistic language with its appeal to emotion, persuasive writing, and frequent use of metaphors, apologetics, hyperbole and diatribes is at odds with the sober, analytical and precise tone of classical exegesis.[226]

The journalistic perspective accommodates Qutb and Mawdudi's strategy of simplification. Because they are urgently focused, in journalistic style, on the present, neither *tafsir* provides a detailed and systematic analysis of previous exegetical authorities. Mawdudi and Qutb do selectively employ a number of seminal traditional *hadith* experts (*muhaddithun*) and *mufassirun* such as Ibn Hanbal, Tabari, Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Kathir, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah and Qurtubi. [227] Citation of past authorities is not, however, a consistent methodological principle. It is basically rhetorical, aimed at to forestalling accusations of dilettantism from the exegetical establishment.

Nor do Mawdudi and Qutb preoccupy themselves with variant readings and *hadiths*. *Hadiths* are cited only sporadically, without mentioning the chain of authority (*isnad*). The often-fabulous aggadaic material, known as *Isra'iliyat* and tales of the prophets (*qisas al-anbiya'*), are completely discarded, despite the fact that it is a distinct presence in traditional *tafsir*.[228] The

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[226] Johanna Pink mentions *Tafsir al-Manar* by Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida as paradigmatic for the journalistic, anti-elitist modern *tafsir*, but Qutb's commentary could also be included in this category.

[227] As Nasr observes in *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Mawdudi employed a strategy of doctrinal neutrality, which actively bypasses the traditional four *maḏahib* (schools of Sunni jurisprudence), thus "deemphasizing theological and legal differences in favor of a systemic reading and regimentation of the religious source" (61). Qutb, despite his obvious preference for Ibn Kathir (a Shafi'i *mufassir*) and Ibn Taymiyyah, (a seminal *Hanbali* scholar) employs the same basic strategy.

[228] For an analysis of the role of al-Isra'iliyyat in the classical *tafsir* paradigm, see: Muḥammad al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Dahabī, *al-Isra'iliyyat fi al-tafsir wa-al-ḥadith* (al-Qahira: al-Azhar, 2008); Ismail Albayrak, *Qur'anic Narrative and Isra'iliyyat in Western Scholarship and in Classical Exegesis* (Leeds: University of Leeds Press, 2000), and Jane

citations from pre-Islamic poetry that functioned in classical *tafsir* as *loci probantes* (*shawahid*) for the meanings of words are also omitted.[229]Qutb and Mawdudi omit these foundational elements of traditional exegesis because for them, exegesis must be purified of any foreign accretions. The "Islamic way of thinking" (*fikr Islami*) must be self-sufficient, and even more important, realistic and pragmatic.

The idea of a pure exegesis, however, does not begin with Mawdudi and Qutb. In rejecting important elements of the classical exegesis as a *corpus alienum*, Mawdudi and especially Qutb are laying claim to an exegetical tradition famously discussed by Ibn Taymiyyah in his *Introduction to the Principles of Exegesis* (*Muqaddimah fi usul al-Tafsir*) and incorporated into the introduction to the commentary of his student Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373). As Norman Calder points out, Ibn Taymiyyah's seminal role in the forging of a restrictive exegetical methodology is very relevant: "An overleaping of the intellectual tradition in favor of a dimly defined *salaf*, as stringent reading of revealed texts, and a rigid dogmatic agenda is the major intellectual gift to Islam of Ibn Taymiyyah, not that he originated this kind of fundamentalism, but, putting his considerable intellectual powers into the service of a naïve faith, he gave and still gives this kind of view respectability." [230] Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir after him establish a four-tiered model of exegesis based on a hierarchy of: interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an (*tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*), interpretation by the *Sunnah,* interpretation according to the views of the Companions of the Prophet, and finally and only as a last resort, according to the views of the Successors. Other sources are rejected. Mawdudi and Qutb anchor their commentaries in this tradition and legitimate their work by presenting themselves as the true heirs of the two revered scholars.[231]

However, despite the fact that Mawdudi and especially Qutb simplify their exegeses in order to arrive at a purely Islamic *tafsir* that trims and expels all "parasitic" meanings to focus on a putatively Islamic essence, their commentaries are not insulated from external sources. For

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Dammen McAuliffe, "Assessing the Israiliyyat: An Exegetical Conundrum," in *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder, 345-369 (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1998).

[229] *Al-shawahid* is included in works that are regarding as paradigmatic for the *tafsir al-mathur* tradition, such as the monumental *Jami' al-bayan 'an ta'wil ay al-Qur'an* by al-Tabari.

[230] Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," 125.

[231] As Walid Saleh pointed out, the triumph of the radical hermeneutics, inaugurated by Ibn Taymiyyah's treatise was assured only in the last part of the twentieth century, becoming "the basis for how modern conservative Muslim intellectuals conceive of Qur'ānic exegesis." See: Walid Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics," 26.

instance, Mawdudi uses extra-Qur'anic sources such as the Gospel and Hebrew Bible[232] while Qutb employs modern non-scriptural texts, both Islamic (Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah) and non-Islamic (George Herbert Box and Charles Darwin). This is done in order to augment the impact of apologetics.

Nor does simplification mean the purging of all elements of traditional commentary. An important classical element that is preserved because it serves the imperative of simplification is the "occasions of revelation" (*asbab al-nuzul*). This is done because including the historical context of verses or passages makes it easier to relate to contemporary concerns—to clearly link the context of the revelation with its co-text without exposing the work to accusations of blatant *eisegesis* or theological error.[233] The end result is a successful—at least at the rhetorical level—*aggiornamento*, a recasting of classical Qur'anic concepts in a new context for a new audience. Thus, for example, when equating the social and political context of seventh-century Arabia with modernity by applying the term *Jahiliyah* or comparing the hypocrites (*munafiqun*) described in the Qur'an with modern, corrupted and corrupting pseudo-Muslims, complex contemporary political and social landscapes are explained in a simplified way through the conceptual lexicon and perspective of the Qur'an. Qutb's inclusion of occasions of revelation also makes the revelation a vital dimension of the present and the only possible foundation for the future—a perfectly viable political template as well as the sole salvation available to mankind.

The inclusion of modern non-scriptural sources and classical discipline of occasions of revelation along with the simplification achieved by jettisoning a significant part of the infrastructure of classical Qur'anic *tafsir* make Qutb and Mawdudi better able to use their texts for mobilization (the third formal feature of the *tafsir*s to be compared here). Maximo Campanini argues that all modern types of *tafsir*, whether *Salafi*, traditionalist, scientific, literary or thematic, are unified beyond their obvious differences by a distinct praxical orientation and focus on mobilization and popularization. All types of modern exegesis achieve those objectives by "translating" the Qur'an into a simple language and style accessible to the contemporary reader. This is how Qur'anic exhortations are re-directed to contemporary political and social problems.

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[232] The commentary of *surah* 12, Yusuf, is the place where this type of inter-scriptural comparativism is present in its full extent. This type of extra-textual approach should not be considered an irenic opening towards religious alterity. It is rather a consequence of the strong apologetic tradition of the subcontinental modernism, which is openly assumed by Mawdudi.

[233]Campanini, *The Qur'an.*

In this context, the notes present in Mawdudi's commentary provide modern readers with a key to understanding their present situation in the light of what Mawdudi believes to be the Qur'anic system of meaning. The text is drawn together by being related to the present realities and concerns of the reader.

Qutb's commentary also offers a fluid and accessible reading that amounts to a passionate plea for understanding the Qur'an in ideological and activist terms. As Abu-Rabi puts it: "The Qur'an [in Qutb's view] must be understood, not for the sake of accumulating more knowledge or its artistic beauty, but for the sake of a personal and political revolution."[234] As in most modern commentary, Qutb's and Mawdudi's *tafsirs* are presented as a return to the golden age of pristine understanding the Qur'an "for action and living" rather than for sectarian, doctrinal and partisan juridical concerns. He often rejects such interpretations as unwarranted by the Qur'anic context, logically inconsistent or theologically unsound. Despite the fact that Khurshid Ahmad regards Mawdudi's exegesis as jurisprudential (*fiqhi*), the apparently jurisprudential element of his exegesis is in truth, as Nasr observes, a thinly disguised sociopolitical reading.[235] As such, it is also aimed at mobilization. Although Mawdudi's work emphasizes ethical guidance, its objective remains the formation of a new Islamist intelligentsia which will carry forward his ideal of gradual Islamization. Qutb, on the other hand, expounds an openly radical political theology carrying political *teloi* that aims to mobilize a small vanguard that will translate the Qur'an into immediate political action.

3.4 *Surat al–Fatihah*

We have selected the first *surah* of the Qur'an as the entry point into comparison of *Tafhim* and *Fi Zilal* because their exegeses of *al-Fatihah*[236] reveal the asymmetry of Mawdudi's and Qutb's hermeneutics in a condensed form. Despite the fact that this first *surah* of the Qur'an is essentially liturgical and an integral part of the five daily prayers, it demonstrates the contrast between Qutb's political, ideological reading with its focus on an active political theology and

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[234] Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence*, 181.

[235] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism,* 61. Olivier Carré made a similar observation contrasting the *Tafsir al-Manar* and *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'an*, noticing that "Zilal" is a "long and systematic political meditation on the Qur'an." *Mysticism and Politics,* 15.

[236] Qutb stresses the *surah*'s paramount importance from a devotional perspective (representing the *sine qua non* condition for the validity of *Salat)* and as an essential synthesis of "the central basic ideas of Islam, its beliefs and concepts." See: Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an: Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, trans. Adil Salahi, vol.1 (Markfield, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2008), 2.

Mawdudi's more ethical-legalistic exegesis. Moreover, in the exegesis of *al-Fatihah* we encounter for the first time the central antinomies that constitute the focus of this dissertation. The essential binomial: God's Sovereignty/ human tyranny is also first initially sketched in the exegesis of *al-Fatihah.*

God's Sovereignty is the only alternative to the human tyranny of modernity that will be addressed in exegesis of subsequent *surah*s. Nevertheless, it is already the exegetical center of both Mawdudi and Qutb's commentaries on *al-Fatihah.* Defined as absolute, direct, all-encompassing and indivisible, Divine Sovereignty is regarded as the only protection against oppression, tyranny and injustice. It is also presented as the sole guarantee of rationality and human freedom in a world that suffers from an acute crisis of values. The emphasis on Sovereignty emerges in Mawdudi's treatment of the second verse of the *surah*, "[All] praise be to God, Lord of the worlds." His commentary elucidates the meaning of the word *rabb* (Lord) much in the manner of classical exegesis as Lord and Master, Sustainer, Provider, Supporter, Nourisher, Guardian, Sovereign, and Ruler. But he is more emphatic than the classical *mufassirun*, going on to insist that God is the sole object of prayer and praise, that no other created being, whether humans, angels, or heavenly bodies, possesses the perfection required to make them the object of praise and worship, and that the only genuine devotion is thus that directed towards God alone:

> He is so absolutely powerful, that on the Day of Judgment no one will have the power either to resist the enforcement of punishments that He decrees or to prevent anyone from receiving the rewards that He decides to confer. Hence, we ought not only to love Him for nourishing and sustaining us and for His compassion and mercy towards us, but should also hold Him in awe because of His justice, and should not forget that our ultimate happiness or misery rests completely with Him.[237]

Moreover, since '*Ibadah* is at the same time a) worship and adoration b) obedience and submission and c) service and subjection, Mawdudi stresses that because of man's absolute dependence on God, no other entity could ever be the subject of worship, devotion, obedience and "absolute subjection and servitude." The exclusive definition of Sovereignty as an inalienable and indivisible attribute of God, though much emphasized in the *al-Fatihah*, is merely sketched and will be much elaborated in the remainder of Mawdudi's and especially Qutb's exegeses.

The centrality of God's Sovereignty is also seen in commentary on the fourth verse of *al-Fatihah*, "Possessor of the Day of Judgement" (*maliki yawm al-din*). While keeping to the classical perspective that emphasizes the force of "possessor," Mawdudi stresses that since God is the

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[237] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 36.

ultimate judge of human actions, Muslims should not reduce him to the attributes of "Compassionate" and "All-Merciful." God is thus the embodiment of perfect justice and the master of human destiny: "He has, however, full authority to pardon or punish anyone He pleases, for He has complete power over everything. Therefore we should have full conviction that it lies absolutely in His power to make our end happy or sorrowful." [238] The objective of this interpretation is to stress the all-encompassing dimension of God's Sovereignty. For Mawdudi as well as for Qutb, the traditional pietistic focus on divine mercy voids the praxical, life–structuring force of God's Sovereignty. What is needed is a reconfiguration of God's Sovereignty as a reality that controls and shapes human society so as to leave no area of life untouched.

In this context, for Qutb even more emphatically than for Mawdudi, the words "Possessor of the Day of Judgment" point to absolute Divine Sovereignty. Like the last part of the second verse, "Lord of all the Worlds," it confirms that the One God possesses an undivided and direct sovereignty over the entire universe:

> He is the overall supreme master who has created the world and continues to watch over it, take care of it, and ensure its stability and well-being… Acknowledging God's absolute Lordship makes all the difference between clarity and confusion with regard to God's absolute oneness.[239]

Connecting God's Oneness and his Lordship *ab initio* allows Qutb to introduce an important premise for his political theology: Divine Sovereignty is not simply theological; rather, God as the only Lord of creation has reality and force for the lives of believers and the community. Even more than in Mawdudi's exegesis, Qutb's political theology of God's Sovereignty is not a suppositional exercise in metaphysics dealing with abstruse hypotheticals. On the contrary, in the lens of a militant, praxis-oriented political exegesis, Divine Sovereignty is God's active living authority over his creation placed in a living and dynamic relationship with the world in all its aspects and domains—including, one assumes, the sphere of the political. It is important to note that even in the case of an essentially liturgical *surah* such as *al-Fatihah*, Qutb's perspective actively fuses the theological and the political in an exegesis of faith in action. In Qutb's *tafsir*, unlike that of Mawdudi, there are virtually no areas of exegetical neutrality where the radical perspective is tamed by concern for theological accuracy. The exegesis of *al-Fatihah* is in this regard a good illustration of Qutbian integral political theology, which remains unflinchingly militant and antithesis driven.

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[238] Ibid, 39.
[239] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 3.

Qutb's exegesis of *al-Fatihah* provides an instance of his insistence on the pervasiveness of God's Sovereignty in which he does not oppose the absolute sovereignty and active authority of God to human reason. God's Sovereignty is in effect the only solid guarantee of a full expression of human rationality; this for Qutb is crucial: "the affirmation of the absolute sovereignty and active authority of the One God over all creation was necessary to ensure man's rationality and peace of mind."[240] The definition of Islam as the sole universal and rational alternative to a modernity perceived to be lacking an axiological and epistemological compass is a constant of Qutbian political theology in both its apologetic and polemic dimensions.

Qutb is not, of course, the only or first modern Muslim thinker to connect Islam and reason. Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manar* presents reason as intrinsic to Islam, contrary to a modernity that is seen to have cast off religion as irrational. Qutb, however, is probably the first reformist exegete to consistently claim that God's Sovereignty is the sole source and guarantee of human reason. The very important implication of this perspective is that a political theology of God's Sovereignty is a fully legitimate rational construction. Qutb thus contests the monopoly of modern instrumental reason over the domain of the political. It is important to notice here as well that the various expressions of antithesis theology of God's Sovereignty that are discussed in this dissertation share this perspective on reason and rationality as being benign and positive solely when shaped by Divine Sovereignty.

Our claim is that the dichotomy between God's Sovereignty and human tyranny makes its appearance as a category of an antithesis-based political theology in the exegesis of *al-Fatihah*. Qutb's commentary on the fifth verse of the *surah*, "You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help," allows him to introduce a key proposition related to God's Sovereignty: the stark contrast between the freedom gained from total submission to God and absolute and abject servitude of man to man. "Once man has submitted himself to God and sought help and guidance from Him alone", he explains, "he has achieved total liberation from the tyranny of all religious, intellectual, moral and political powers."[241] The dichotomy between freedom and tyranny will play a pivotal role in Qutb's exegetical system and is repeated throughout the commentary. Constructing a concept of "freedom through total submission to God" that is at once ontological, religious and political allows Qutb to present his radical critique of modernity as a universal

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[240] Ibid, 4.
[241] Qutb, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 6.

emancipatory political theology, clearly as an alternative to the Marxist discourse of emancipation. Qutb then uses the verse to introduce another important dichotomy, between "the rightly-guided power that recognizes God and abides by His directions" and illegitimate power, "arrogant, rebellious…that does not admit to God's Sovereignty and authority."[242] Without actually employing the term *Taghut*, Qutb opens the way for his major antithesis between *Nizam al-Islam* (the Islamic system) and "human tyranny." And again, though not employing the term *Tali'ah*, he points to it by quoting Qur'an 2:249, "Many a small band, by the grace of God, has vanquished a large one." The "small band" clearly refers to the minority of enlightened Muslims who are entrusted with the sacred task of fighting the pervasive and oppressive reign of *Jahiliyah*.

The concept of the "straight way" (*al-sirat al-mustaqim)* in the seventh verse reveals the construction of the non-Islamic other. It also allows us to identify both the non-traditional exegetical strategies employed by Mawdudi and Qutb and the differences in tone and intensity between the two commentators.

For Mawdudi, the straight path is the path of absolute truth, providing "sound principles of behavior" and protecting individuals and communities against the temptations of both heterodoxy and heteropraxy (false doctrines and unsound principles of conduct). The path laid out by the Qur'an represents the only instrument of salvation and the sole source of existential happiness. It is also the path to epistemological and ontological certainly, the safeguard against wandering into what Mawdudi calls the "labyrinth of philosophical speculation."[243] The anti-speculative dimension of Mawdudi's hermeneutics makes its appearance very early and only increases in emphasis in the rest of the commentary. Nevertheless, Mawdudi's anti-speculative perspective is here rather moderate, especially when compared with the virulent anti-intellectualism of Qutb.

Qutb defines the straight path as "the path of happiness and salvation" taken by those who are favored by God as a sign of mercy, generosity and care, implying that the human subject recognizes and fully accepts "God's Sovereignty and dominance over all things and events."[244] It is interesting that Qutb does not yet identify the transgressors who attracted God's wrath referred to in the last verse of the *surah* with any group or type of individual, contemporary or otherwise. This said, his omission is not indicative of irenicism. As we will see, Qutb's perspective on alterity

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[242] Ibid.
[243] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 37.
[244] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 7.

is structured by a profound sense of ethical superiority and forged around a triumphalist and apologetic Islamic exclusivism. In the third verse of *al-Fatihah*, for example, in a very apologetic fashion, Qutb departs from traditional ground and engages in a comparison between God in the Qur'an and in Greek mythology and the Old Testament. Contrasted with these, the God of the Qur'anic revelation is seen to be the epitome of both justice and benevolence: "Islam does not depict God as an enemy who pursues man with relentless vengeance, or plots and schemes against His creation with spite and vindictiveness."[245] Qutb will continue to stress the justice and benevolence of the Islamic God through the entire commentary in order to convince his audience of the absolute superiority of the Islamic model of connection between the Creator and His creation. The emphasis on favourable comparison between Islam and others, expressed in strong apologetic and hierarchical terms, remains, as we shall see, an important dimension of the political theology of Qutb in particular.

Mawdudi comments extensively on those "who incur God's wrath and those who are astray." They are the mirror image of the believing community that "enjoys God's favors," as the verse says. For Mawdudi, worldly prosperity and success are not favours. On the contrary, in many instances they incur divine retribution, since people who achieve worldly success "have lost sight of the true path of salvation and happiness."[246] The ethical undertone here is one of the constants of Mawdudi's commentary, which often places an emphasis on axiology and orthopraxy while downplaying politics. Interestingly, both Mawdudi and Qutb do not identify "those who incur God's wrath and those who are astray" with Jews and Christians, as many classical commentators do. Instead, Mawdudi evokes the symbols of oppression, cupidity and disobedience from scriptural history: the Pharaohs, Nimrods and Qaruns, *Qarun* being the Arabic for *Korah*, the corrupted Levite of the Old Testament.[247] Furthermore, Mawdudi compares the symbols of human tyranny explicitly named in the Qur'an with unamend "people notorious for oppression, evil and corruption" that exist in the contemporary world. This oblique but nevertheless pointed reference sets the tone for the less overt but still radical perspective professed by Mawdudi.

In sum, we have seen that Mawdudi and especially Qutb manage to insinuate their radical antitheses and God's Sovereignty even into a devotional *surah*. Their exegesis of the next *surah*

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[245] Ibid, 5. It should be noted here that this is one of the very few instances where Qutb employs the Bible, in this case the Book of Genesis.
[246] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 40.
[247] See: Qur'an 28:76.

builds on this foundation.

3.5 *Surat al-Baqarah*

Surah Two, "The Chapter of the Cow," is the longest *surah* of the Qur'an and develops almost all the essential themes of the Qur'anic revelation, from legal provisions to metaphysics in the Throne Verse (2:255), which becomes the hermeneutical center for Islamic speculative theology or *'ilm al-kalam*. The second *surah* also regulates the relations of the Islamic faith community with Christians and Jews and offers definitions of *Jihad* and *Taghut.* Thus it is hardly surprising that Mawdudi and even more so Qutb provide lengthy and often passionate commentary on *al-Baqarah.* The *surah* affords Qutb scope to highlight some of the most important concepts punctuating his political theology, including a virulent anti-Semitism (which is also present, though much less so, in Mawdudi's commentary).[248]

For Qutb, the message of *al-Baqarah* revolves around two main lines (*mihwar*). First, the *surah* analyzes the allegedly hostile attitude of the Jews towards Islam and the newly formed Muslim community in Madinah, where *al-Baqarah* is traditionally thought to have been revealed. Second, the *surah* presents, as Qutb says, "the close and unholy alliance that had developed between the Jews and the hypocrites of Madinah, professing belief in Islam, on the one hand, and between the Jews and the Arab idolaters of the rest of Arabia, on the other."[249]

This focus on the Other as represented by the Jews is framed by a collapsing of time that is fundamental to Qutb's sense of the Qur'an. The most enduring feature of Qutb's political theology is fusion between the original context of the Qur'an and the contemporary world. Rather than contextualizing the landscape of the revelation, Qutb reduces a complex modernity to a Qur'anic framework. The original context of the revelation is believed to provide a profound and true understanding of the world of today. Beyond what are considered to be superficial differences, the struggles, opposing camps, stakes, heroes, and most importantly, the villains are always the same. Qutb's political theology as expressed through his exegesis is anti-historical and anti-evolutionary; it is a construction in which everything truly substantial has been already accomplished, in the time of the first Qur'anic generation. Qutbian political theology, as we will see, presents not only a *corsi e ricorsi* perspective on history, but also a mournful gazing on the

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[248] See: Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations*.
[249] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol 1, 10.

ruins, decadence, and ethics of modernity, as seen in these words of *In the Shade of the Qur'an*:

> It is important to point out that, in general terms, what the Muslims had to face in those early days was a miniature of, and a rehearsal for, what has occurred throughout the later history of Islam, albeit with some variations of scope and detail. The setbacks and the achievements, the allies and the opponents have invariably been the same… The battles and the issues and the controversies remain the same. The enemies, and the means and weapons used against the Qur'an and its followers also remain fundamentally the same. To fight and win today's battles, Muslims will need to follow the Qur'anic principles and teachings which shaped and guided that pioneering Muslim community of Madinah.[250]

Since Jews are for Qutb the original archenemy of Islam, their persistent hostility towards Islam naturally also shapes modern *Jahiliyah*. In addition to being "obdurate, materialistic and cynical," the very nature of the Jew is said to have been corrupted by the persecution endured under the Egyptian Pharaoh so that Jews are "submissive when overpowered and subjugated, but vicious and revengeful when not under threat."[251] Qutb describes Jewish history as a record of "merciless killing of prophets and messengers, denials, deviousness, scheming, stubbornness, corruption and flagrant…insatiable desire for revenge, and exploiting other peoples' misfortunes."[252] This synthesis of the tropes of classic anti-Semitism allows Qutb to construct the antithesis of pristine Islam versus the Zionist-Crusaders conspiracy.

Qutb introduces the theme of the unholy alliance against Islam of "world Zionism, Christians, the crusading Churches and international Communism" apropos of verse 109 of *Surat al-Baqarah*: "Many of the People of the Book wish they could return you to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy from themselves [even] after the truth has become clear to them So pardon and overlook until God delivers His command."[253] According to Qutb, the verse is a call to Muslims to rise above their opponents' enmity, which "continues to fill the hearts of the Jews" as "the real force that motivates their plotting and scheming,"[254] by practicing forbearance and forgiveness. The resulting "Zionist-Crusader alliance" is in fact a modern expression of the Jew-Christian-idolaters bloc of the days of the first Qur'anic generation, although Qutb also adds international communism. As in all his polemical writings, Qutb here strongly emphasizes that the antithesis Islam/non-Islam—non-Islam being a hegemonic and agonistic modernity—does not revolve around geo-politics, economics or culture, but rather a clash between two radically opposed worlds of faith. As we will see in the following chapters, this paradigm of an essentially

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[250] Ibid, 20.
[251] Ibid, 75.
[252] Ibid, 100.
[253] Ibid, 84. The verse concludes: "Indeed, God is powerful over all things."
[254] Ibid,117.

metaphysical conflict is at the center of all the political theologies analyzed in this dissertation. The metaphysical cast infuses the various critiques of modernity with a soteriological and eschatological tone, distinguishing them clearly from the analytical aims of political theory.

For Qutb, Qur'an 2:120: "Never will the Jews, nor yet the Christians be pleased with you unless you follow their faith" sums up, *in nuce,* the objective of the perennial and systemic hostility of the two groups against Islam.

> The conflict between the Judaeo-Christian world on the one side, and the Muslim community on the other, remains in essence one of ideology, although over the years it has appeared in various guises and has grown more sophisticated and, at times, more insidious. The confrontation is not over control of territory or economic resources, or for military domination. [255]

Mawdudi's perspective on religious otherness is less radical. He does not focus directly on political-military conflict, but rather the concept of *tahrif* (distortion of the scripture)[256] allegedly perpetrated by Jewish (as well as Christian) scholars. The idea of *tahrif* is a staple of the Qur'anic exegetical tradition, and much of what Mawdudi has to say appears to be entirely traditional. When one reads the material carefully, however, it becomes evident that *tahrif* gains an even more privileged position, as a tool in modern polemics against non-Islamic alterity.

Mawdudi defines distortion as "the attempt to twist a text in such a manner as to make it signify something different from its real meaning, and may also denote tampering with the text of the Scriptures. The Israelite scholars had subjected the scriptures to distortions of both kinds."[257] For Mawdudi, the Jewish communities essentially professed the same monotheistic faith. At the level of orthodoxy, they affirmed the unity of God, the beliefs in the prophethood, the revelation, the after-life and the angels. At the level of orthopraxy, since the Jewish form of life was structured by Moses's religious law revealed by God…"their religion was the same as that being preached by Muhammad (peace be on him)." [258] However, according to Mawdudi, Judaism subsequently suffered continuous "degeneration" that affected both orthodoxy (the dogmatic, scriptural level) and orthopraxy (devotional and liturgical life). Thus *tahrif* is made into a moral and even, apparently, racial fault: "They [Jews] sank into degeneracy. Their history and their contemporary

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[255] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol 1, 124. Qutb follows the same exegetical path while commenting on the 217th ayah: "*They shall not cease to fight you until they force you to renounce your faith, if they can*."

[256] This concept is a *locus classicus* of the Qur'anic exegetical tradition, but it gains a privileged position in the modern polemics with a non-Islamic alterity.

[257] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 86.

[258] Ibid, 45.

religious and moral condition bore out this degeneration."[259] Distortion of the scriptures is also linked with the key imperative of Divine Sovereignty by emphasizing its trespassing on Sovereignty through introducing man-made concepts such as "stories from their national history, superstitious ideas and fancies, philosophical doctrines and legal rules."[260] Thus did *tahrif* mutilate the integrity of the scripture and finally destroy the Jewish faith, reducing it to empty religious formalism and soulless legalism.

Mawdudi also uses the issue of *tahrif* to accuse the Jews of a supposed obscuring of the egalitarian ethos of primal Abrahamic monotheism. Although, in his view, both the elites, i.e. rabbis, and the masses corrupted the scriptures to the point that the integrity of the entire faith was placed in question, he dwells particularly on the former, emphasizing the scholars' pernicious addiction to scholastic speculations and "hair-splitting arguments." Apropos of Q. 2:159, "those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by God", he declares it to be the "biggest failure of the Jews" that they:

> Kept the teachings contained in the Book of God confined to a limited class of people, the rabbis and professional theologians, instead of spreading them. They did not allow this knowledge to filter through even to the Jewish masses let alone the non-Jewish peoples of the world.[261]

Here we see sketched, Mawdudi's notion of the democracy of the scriptures. This will be elaborated in his polemical writings into the seminal concepts of "democratic caliphate" and "theo-democracy." The idea of an Abrahamic egalitariansm and the connection of that to specific type of democracy illustrate Mawdudi's predisposition towards a certain degree of Islamic-Western terminological synthesis within his political theology, something we do not encounter in Qutb's perspective.[262]

In Mawdudi's view the Jewish leaders "resorted to conspiracies and underhanded machinations and acts of trickery" in order to resist the message of Muhammad and to preserve their "formal, legalistic piety." They were concerned with "chauvinism and self-aggrandizement rather than an honest search for and commitment to the Truth."[263] This is obviously a critique of the traditional Muslim *ulema*, which is much sharper in Qutb's commentary than in Mawdudi's. Qutb also

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[259] Ibid, 68.
[260] Ibid, 87.
[261] Ibid, 130.
[262] As we will see Qutb's political theology is geared towards conceptual purism, thus rejecting any non-Islamic lexicon as a dangerous foreign accretion that dilutes and eventually endangers the ideal of Islamic authenticity.
[263] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1. 85.

employs the rhetoric of *tahrif*. *Tahrif* is, as we have said, common in traditional discourse. Different, however, from Mawdudi, whose exegetical construction of alterity remains at the level of scriptures, Qutb extends *tahrif* into the political and ideological realm. *Tahrif*, in short, is an integral part of a grand conspiracy theory.

> They deliberately confused and concealed facts. They adopted a two-faced attitude towards faith and attempted to distort God's words. They cheated, lied and broke faith with the Muslims in the hope of turning them away from their religion. They claimed the exclusive possession of God's trust and a monopoly of righteousness. They became envious of the Muslims and spared no effort to undermine their existence and cause them harm. Last, but not least, they allied themselves with Islam's enemies, the hypocrites and pagan Arabs, and were prepared to conspire with them against the Muslim community.[264]

Qutb also differs from Mawdudi in that he extends his account of *tahrif* to a systematic critique of the religious leadership. Qutb and Mawdudi's treatments of *tahrif* are, on the other hand, similar in their anti-speculative, anti-intellectual tenor. This tone, as we shall see, also colours the thought of Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper.

We now come to Q. 2:190-1, a passage that illustrates both the underlying common ground and important differences between Mawdudi's and Qutb's political hermeneutics. Mawdudi begins his exposition by asserting that Islam—as seen in the words of Q. 2:190, "Fight in the way of God those who fight you but do not transgress, for verily, God does not like transgressors"—controls the use of force by subjecting it to a rigorous system of ethical constraints. Force "should be used only when it is unavoidable and only to the extent that is absolutely necessary."[265] According to Mawdudi, the transgression mentioned in the *ayah* refers essentially to unbecoming conduct on the battlefield such as "indiscriminate killing and pillage, mutilation of the bodies of the dead enemy, destruction of fields and live-stocks" and most importantly, "violence against non-combatants: women, children, the old and the injured." These "acts of injustice and brutality" are prohibited by the *Sunnah* of the prophet as they negate *ihsan* (moral and spiritual excellence).[266]

By portraying Islam, in apologetic fashion, as essentially peaceful, this strong statement against "transgression" prepares the ground for defining legitimate, non-transgressive force. Mawdudi, in fact, uses the imperatives in verses 191 and 192 ("Fight in the way of God those who fight you" and "Kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have

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[264] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol.1,17.
[265] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 152.
[266] Ibid, 151.

expelled you") to make non-transgressive force not only legitimate, but a moral obligation of the believer. The key concept here is *fitnah*, as in the subsequent words of verse 193, "*fitnah* (sedition, upheaval) is worse than killing." *Fitnah* is understood by Mawdudi to have two tiers. At one level, it is active persecution, harassment and intimidation against an individual or a group that accepts as foundational truth "a set of ideas contrary to those currently held." Since such persecution is directed against people who strive for axiological reform by "preaching what is good and condemning what is wrong" (*al-amr bi-al-maʿruf wa-al-nahi ʿan al-munkar*, an essential duty referred to in 3:110 and elsewhere in the Qur'an), defensive use of arms is legitimate. The second level of *fitnah* is defined as a "state of affairs where the object of obedience is someone other than God." This definition of *fitnah* does not just allow legitimate defence, but functions as a necessary and sufficient justification for use of force by any believer who objects to a system or ideology, because in the end, as the verse concludes: "*fitnah* should cease and the obedience should be consecrated to God alone."[267]

Mawdudi goes on to underline the legitimacy of force on the basis of the next part of the verse, "until religion (*din*) is for God [alone]," by drawing a stark contrast between *fitnah* and Divine Sovereignty. *Din* for Mawdudi is a whole system of life revolving around submission based on individual and collective recognition of God as Lord and Sovereign. Recognition of God's Sovereignty necessarily involves a clear commitment to obey and follow "the commands of the Sovereign in all aspects of existence."[268] *Fitnah* is thus God's Sovereignty inverted; it is a system in which "human beings establish their godhead and absolute dominance over others."[269] Islam, declares Mawdudi, is the religion of *Tawhid* (unicity) and *Rububiyah* (divine lordship), which do not tolerate *fitnah*.

The underlying common ground here with Qutb concerns the very concept of *fitnah*. *Fitnah* plays in Mawdudi's exegesis the same role as *Jahiliyah* for Qutb, since both concepts are essentially antinomial to Divine Sovereignty. The difference is that for Mawdudi, *fitnah* remains a mainly non-contextualized signifier, not assimilated in a precise manner to contemporary contexts. For Qutb, on the other hand, *Jahiliyah* is a concrete reality structuring and enforcing an oppressive and hegemonic modernity enforced by powerful ideological configurations and policed

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[267] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol.1, 153.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.

by political regimes. The lack of exegetical fusion of horizons through equating the Qur'anic context with the contemporary world is one of the constants of a hermeneutically informed comparison between Qutb's and Mawdudi's exegeses. For example, in commenting on the hostility of the Jews towards Muhammad's message, Mawdudi, despite the anti-Semitic undertone, seldom engages in conspiracy theories as Qutb often does, nor does he regard here Zionism as the spearhead of a universal offensive against Islam.[270] Despite the fact that Mawdudi contributed substantially to terminology used by Islamists to portray modernity as an anti-Islamic meta-ideology, his Qur'anic exegesis is not finally very radical and geared more toward elucidation than mobilization.

Finally, Mawdudi demonstrates greater respect than Qutb for the established exegetical tradition. For example, commenting on 2:255, the Throne Verse, Mawdudi elaborates upon the meaning of the terms *kursi* ("seat," the word used in this verse) with the more frequent Qur'anic locution *'arsh* ("throne") by giving a brief account of a hermeneutical controversy amongst the classical exegetical authorities about literal and figurative meanings. This display of knowledge is meant to showcase Mawdudi's competence as an exegete and to make his *tafsir* appear more scholarly. Qutb, in contrast, does not mention any previous exegetical authority in his commentary on the Throne Verse. He proceeds straight to his ideological reading, asserting that *kursi* ultimately means the Divine realm or sovereignty. This for him is sufficient for a proper understanding of the message of the *ayah*: "The idea here is that God's Sovereignty and authority extend over the entire cosmos, and the image makes it clear, easy to grasp and comprehend."[271] Qutb harshly criticizes the traditional exegetes for creating false controversies and ignoring the syntax of the Qur'an itself to "lean heavily on alien and absurd philosophies which distort much of the clarity and simplicity of the Qur'an."[272] The *Sunnah*, in Qutb's view, confirms this ideal clarity and stability of meaning, as there are not any "authentic statements of the Prophet that explain precisely the meanings of 'seat, chair or throne' as used in the Qur'an." There is thus no need to "speculate further on their meaning."[273]

One of the most interesting elements of Mawdudi's exegesis of *al-Baqarah* is his

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[270] The difference in radicalism can be explained by exogenous factors (historical geo-political) between Mawdudi's India (a minority situation) and later Pakistan (where Mawdudi's political movement was more or less part of the normal political system) and Qutb's Egypt under Nasser's authoritarian regime.
[271] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol.1, 347.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.

trichotomy of the term *Taghut* offered in relation to the phrase of Q. 2:256, "Whoever has disbelieved in the *Taghut* and believed in God, has grasped the firm handle." The word *Taghut* is generally understood by exegetes as: oppression, oppressive power, or idol. Mawdudi, however, defines *Taghut* as "the creature who exceeds the limits of his creatureliness and arrogates to himself godhead and lordship."[274] Thus *Taghut* becomes an essential element of illegitimate man-made sovereignty, in stark opposition to God's Sovereignty.

Elaborating further, Mawdudi uses a three-level taxonomy of *Taghut* as describing man's transgression and rebellion against God. The first stage is *fisq* (transgression) where the theoretical acknowledgement of the obedience to God is nullified by the practical disregard of this principle. The second stage, *kufr* (unbelief) is represented by a double disobedience of God's lordship in both theory and praxis, which leads to either complete anarchy (refusal of any form of authority) or to the servitude to human masters.

Taghut is the final stage and represents: "That one who not only rebels against one's Lord but also imposes one's own will on God's world and God's creatures. Anyone who reaches such a point is termed *taghut* and no one can be a true believer in God unless the authority of such a *taghut* (evil one) is rejected."[275]

Qutb's exegesis of the same *ayah* reveals very clearly the acute political and ideological edge of his hermeneutical system as well as his capacity to re-contextualize the Qur'anic lexicon for the aim of mobilization. The whole verse reads: "There shall be no compulsion in religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever has disbelieved in the *Taghut* and believed in God, has grasped the firm handle." For Qutb, "there shall be no compulsion in religion" refers to freedom of belief and religion as an essential human right.[276] Thus, denying it represents, in effect, an absolute negation of humanity in mankind. Moreover, as the essence of human emancipation, the Qur'anic principle of freedom of religion is directly opposed to authoritarian and oppressive ideologies and regimes of modernity, by which the human subject is reduced to a status of absolute dependency:

> Modern man has been deprived of the right to choose and live other than according to what is dictated by the state, using the full force of its colossal machinery, laws and powers. People are today given the choice only to adhere to the secular state system, which does not allow for a belief in God as the Creator and Master of the world, or to face annihilation.[277]

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[274] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* vol. 1, 199.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Mawdudi also contrasts "no compulsion" with *Taghut*, but without a particular emphasis or elaboration.
[277] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 349.

Qutb elaborates on his interpretation of *Taghut* or tyranny by arguing that it denotes "anything or anyone that takes hold of the mind or suppresses the truth, or transgresses the laws and limits set by God." This conjunction of ideas, forces, systems and ideologies has one common element: it "disregard[s] the divine religious, moral, social and legal order and operate[s] in this life on values and principles not sanctioned by God or derived from His guidance and teachings."[278]

The casting of Qur'anic concepts in an essentially modern lexicon of human rights expressed through a seductive emancipatory and anti-hegemonic rhetoric creates an anti-modern political theology which never loses its connection to the scriptures. As we will see in the sixth chapter, modern scripturalism in the service of an anti-modern political theology is also a key element in the thought of Abraham Kuyper.

In a typical example of Qutb's favoured principle of intertextual hermeneutics, "interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an" he links the imperative of "no compulsion in religion" in Q. 2: 256 with Q 8:60, "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom God knows." Q. 8:60 is introduced because "power," as the verse says, is a required deterrent against the perennial temptation to compulsion. Thus, the Qur'anic text against compulsion should be translated as a call to acquire power in order to preserve freedom, i.e., to be prepared, as the verse in Qutb's view implies, to wage *Jihad*. As *Taghut* (further on in Q. 2:256) represents the hegemonic force of unbelief and oppression, *Jihad* remains the only instrument to protect believers from the enemies of faith and provide a climate of security and freedom. Consequently, as Qutb argues in commenting on Q. 2:193 ("Fight them until there is no [more] *fitnah* and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for God. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors"), since "the survival and prosperity of the faith take precedence over the preservation of human life itself"[279] and religious persecution is regarded as more dangerous and detrimental than war, *Jihad* is necessary as a self-guarding force of the Muslim *ummah*. Here Qutb, unlike Mawdudi, identifies Christian, Zionist and secular regimes as the forces of persecution ranged against Muslims, providing clear and sufficient justification for

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[278] Ibid, 350.
[279] Ibid, 351.

Jihad as *fard al-'ayn*, i.e. a mandatory for every Muslim.

Jihad for Qutb represents the universal opposing power against worldwide tyrannical and oppressive political regimes. As the power that eliminates barriers between potential believers and God's message in the Qur'an, *Jihad* is the perfect ethical instrument. *Jihad* in Qutb's view allows an active synthesis between the positive and negative dimensions of freedom.[280] In the negative sense, it ensures liberty by eliminating all human compulsion against believers. In the positive sense, it generates a liberty that is axiologically and religiously sound: the self-mastery of the human subject who is an obedient creature of a unique and transcendent master. The connection between *Jihad*, "no compulsion" and liberty and the integration of *Jihad* in a emancipatory, universalist political theology are some of the most important marks of Qutb's legacy and remain extremely influential in shaping contemporary radical Islamist and jihadist thought.

By interpolating Q.8: 60, Qutb also transforms the imperative of "no compulsion," often understood in modern times as mandating tolerance, into an affirmation of *Jihad* as the instrument designed to create, enforce and defend the Islamic order that is God's universally prescribed way for mankind:

> *Jihad* has been, and continues to be, a significant and necessary means for the establishment and protection of Muslim society. Islam, by definition, is a comprehensive order for the organization of human life that must take root in the world, and power is needed to sustain and promote its existence. *Jihad* is the sinew of that power, without which it would not survive.[281]

Here we see how Qutb's political theology remains, even when expressed as Qur'anic exegesis, one of power. That power actively shapes praxis and finally creates an integral Islamic order.

Further reflection on the approach and aims of Qutb's exegesis will throw light on his approach to *Surat al-Baqarah* before moving on to the next section. Despite his lack of analytical precision (a characteristic of political theology in general), his project retains its seductive power due to its rhetorical force and ability to re-contextualize classical concepts—as exemplified in 2:256, discussed above—in a contemporary political and social landscape. In a context where "perception of the Qur'an has died, or at least has gone into a coma, and its true original image has faded from Muslim minds"[282] the Qur'an itself must be radically recast. Qutb's ultimate aim is to recapture the direct force of the Qur'an by radically displacing its reception, internalization, and

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[280] The classic formulation of this distinction was provided by Isaiah Berlin in his influential essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." See: Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[281] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 353.

[282] Ibid, 367.

externalization. Thus is it transformed from an object of formal, pious worship (as it functions for the uneducated and apolitical masses) or subject of sophisticated yet sterile scholastic investigations (as in the case of the conservative *ulema)* into, as Qutb says, "a living dynamic agent in society, the force that once shaped Islamic life and society… the source of the daily orders that Muslims used to receive and act upon."[283]

Thus—again taking the example of 2:256—for Qutb the answer to the tyranny or *Taghut* of the present is the rediscovery of the Qur'anic revelation as a counter-hegemonic force able to profoundly affect individual and collective consciousness and actively shape the political, cultural and social landscape. In formulating *tafsir haraki* (combat exegesis) as a response to hegemonic and oppressive modernity, Qutb and Mawdudi are the first modern Muslim thinkers to rediscover the potential of a distinctively Sunni political theology to answer to the master discourse of secularized modernity. At the same time, Mawdudi's political theology of gradual Islamization and Qutb's radical political vision of a revolutionary re-Islamization seem to complete each other, generating together a coherent anti-modern Sunni Islamist political theology.

3.6 *Surah Al 'Imran*

We have selected the third *surah* for comparison of the exegeses of Qutb and Mawdudi both because it showcases the differences between their exegetical perspectives and introduces essential Qutbian concepts and dichotomies such as nominal versus authentic Muslims, the imperative of Islamic conceptual purity, the superiority of the Muslim *ummah,* the Islamic "program" (*manhaj*), and the paradigmatic value of the first Qur'anic generation. The concept of *Taghut* (tyranny) is also expanded on in *Surah Al 'Imran* as as negation of human nature.

Mawdudi's commentary of the same *surah* is, on the other hand, almost completely devoted to elucidation and mainly concerns the seminal event of the Battle of Uhud and its aftermath. Thus it lacks the sharp ideological-political tone present in Qutb's exegesis, the polemical edge against Judaism and Christianity being justified by the text itself.

Commenting on the opening phrase of the nineteenth verse of the *surah*, "Indeed the [true] religion (*din*) with God is Islam," Mawdudi defines Islam and non-Islam in the light of God's Sovereignty. Consequently Islam for Mawdudi, just as for Qutb, is the only all-encompassing *din*

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[283] Ibid.

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or system of life prescribed by God, because it is "in accord with reality and moral right."[284] The *sine qua non* foundation of this system, its driving force and the only criterion of legitimacy remains God's Sovereignty, which Mawdudi defines as "man's acknowledging God as his Lord and the sole object of his worship and devotion; of surrendering himself unreservedly to God in obedience and service."[285] In the light of this radical exclusivism, all other expressions of ideological or religious alterity—"every doctrine…whether it be atheism or idolatry"[286]—are nothing less than rebellion against God.

Qutb's commentary on Q. 3:19 also preaches theological exclusivism, defining Islam as "willing submission *('ubudiyah),* obedience and conscious following of the Prophet."[287] But Qutb also emphasizes the dynamic, activist dimension of religion as "the divine method" *(manhaj).* For Qutb, submission to God must be practically implemented, and this takes the form of establishing God's Sovereignty in all aspects and affairs of life through complete and exclusive obedience to "all God's laws."[288] One can easily notice that Qutb's political theology permeates his exegesis more than in Mawdudi's case, changing the aim and impact of the hermeneutical act.

In this context, Qutb's definition of the Qur'an itself (with which he opens his usual lengthy preface to the *surah*, apparently because some of the opening verses extoll the Qur'an) is highly relevant. The Qur'an is defined as "the soul of the Islamic mission; the backbone and edifice of its existence; its guardian and protector; its constitution and way of life."[289] The Revelation is said to be the only source and reference point "from which Islam and Muslims draw the ways and means of their actions, their systems and approach, and the provisions for their journey in this life."[290] This view of the Qur'an sets the parameters of Qutb's *tafsir haraki*. Qutb goes on to state that his aim—like that of Abraham Kuyper in a different context and with different instruments— is to reject simply pious, ultimately powerless devotion of the Revelation, "as it were a collection of fanciful religious hymns, totally disassociated from the realities of daily life facing this being we call man, and this community we call Muslims."[291] Rather, the Qur'an was revealed to "living

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[284] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 242.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol.2, 39.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid, 1.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.

souls, actual realities and events, with real meaning,"[292] functioning as a guide for a tangible community facing practical political and social problems. Thus, in Qutb's view, a genuine fusion of horizons is needed for contemporary Muslims to genuinely understand the power, vitality and continued relevance of the Qur'an.

Continuing with his discussion of the Qur'an in the preface to *Surah Al 'Imran*, Qutb recommends a systemic and comprehensive *imitatio al-salaf al-salih,* both at the epistemic level of understanding of the world, history and society and ideological level of praxis. "We need," he writes, "to perceive the Muslims of that generation as they went about their daily lives, facing up to events and developments in Madinah and the rest of Arabia, dealing with their enemies as well as their allies, and struggling against their own passions and desires."[293] As in the case of the Qur'anic lexicon, Qutb's rediscovery of the *Weltanschauung* of the first Qur'anic generation does not, however, involve pious contemplation of the past or a simple nostalgia for the Golden Age of Islam. Rather, as we see in Abraham Kuyper and even in the modern American Christian Right, this profound homology between the scriptural and the political—between the dawn of revelation and the dusk of contemporary history—is enhanced and instrumentalized by pragmatism and activism.

Qutb builds one of his most radical antinomies on Q. 3: 23-25. Q. 3:23 reads: "Do you not consider, [O Muhammad], those who were given a portion of the Scripture? They are invited to the Scripture of God that it should arbitrate between them; then a party of them turns away, and they are refusing," while the following two verses go on to depict the place of "those who are deluded in their religion" in the Fire. Here Qutb conflates the people of the earlier revelations mentioned in the verse—who in his perspective practiced only a superficial religiosity—with contemporary Muslims who divorce religion from the practical side of human life such as: economic, political, social and family relations. "These people of earlier revelations," he declares, "stand in the same position as those whom we meet today claiming to be Muslims but who turn their backs when they are called upon to implement God's laws in their lives."[294] Consequently, nominal Muslims are basically placed in the same category as idolaters (*kuffar*), heretics

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[292] Ibid, 2.

[293] Ibid, 43.

[294] Ibid, 48. It should be noted here that Rashid Ridah is one of the first modern Muslim authors to conceptualize this putatively soft, superficial religiosity, introducing the derogatory term "mere geographic Muslims (*muslimun jughrafiyyun*)" in his *tafsir al-Manar*. See Emmanuel Sivan, "Enclave Culture," in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12.

(*malahidah*) and *ahl-al-Kitab* (people of the earlier revelations): "They are all alike in the essential fact that they do not submit to God in their lives."[295] This is certainly exclusivist in the extreme; but it should be noted that Qutb does not yet recommend a complete *takfir* or "excommunication" of the entirety of Egyptian society as non-Islamic.[296] Qutb's interpretation here represents preliminary steps—a type of exegetical of build-up—toward his master antimony of *Jahiliyah* versus Islam, which he fully develops, as we shall see, in *Surat al-Ma'idah*.

In contrast, Mawdudi's exegesis does not sharply mark off genuine from inauthentic believers. When a narrow theological maximalism does appear, it is usually expressed in a more subtle ways and it does not go the very core of the *tafsir* as it does in the case of Qutb.

Qutb uses Q. 3:68 to give this division of humankind larger, universal dimensions and includes it in an emancipatory rhetoric. Q. 3:68 reads: "Indeed, the most worthy of Abraham among the people are those who followed him and this prophet, and those who believe [in his message]. And God is the ally of the believers." The verse implies the existence of a universal community defined by faith alone. Starting from this standard of excellence, Qutb further divides humanity into two opposite camps, using God's Sovereignty as the criteria: "those who worship God alone, submit to Him and do not enslave one another… living as human beings united by what nourishes their spirits and refines their feelings"; and those who reject God's Sovereignty, oppress each other and "live like cattle, confined within the boundaries of race, color and place."[297] Here we see at work one of the most seductive traits of Qutb's exclusionary and monopolistic hermeneutics of Islamic authenticity: the ability to employ an antithesis driven, yet emancipatory rhetoric that effectively hijacks the lexicon of anti-hegemonic critique from Marxism and socialism.

In his *tafsir*—unlike his ideological texts—Mawdudi is less inclined to collapse the present with the past and usually avoids using the lexicon of contemporary ideologies, even for the purpose of appropriation. This is abundantly clear in his treatment of Q. 3:110, which is seminal overall to Islamic apologetics and polemics, and reads:

> You are the best community that has ever been raised for mankind; you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God. Had the people of earlier revelations believed, it would have been for their own good. Few of them are believers, while most of them are evildoers.

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[295] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 48.

[296] He does not directly use this loaded term, despite the accusations of *kharidjism* brought forward by the conservative *ulema*.

[297] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 99.

Mawdudi's exegesis is here very brief. It focuses on describing the Muslim *ummah* as the successor of the Israelites to "guidance and leadership of the world." The criterion setting the Muslim *ummah* apart and making it competent to lead is its "character and morals, spirit and practical commitment to promoting good and suppressing evil and the acknowledgement of the One True God as their Lord and Master."[298] Mawdudi does not discuss the excellence of the Muslim *ummah* in the light of contemporary contexts and does not engage in sustained polemics or apologetics in regard to this topic, despite the fact that it will do that in his other works.

Qutb, on the other hand, trumpets Islamic superiority in a manner that will be sustained through the rest of the commentary. Alternation between triumphalism and diatribe is, in fact, one of the stylistic and conceptual marks of Qutb's *tafsir*. Far from inconsistent, this alternation augments the rhetorical force of his commentary, allowing him to reach a wider audience and create a different type of committed reader. By using a discourse that combines triumphalism and apologetics, Qutb simultaneously contests the monopoly of the *ulema* over Muslims who feel superior to other religions and brings his message to radicals and the disenfranchised who do not feel represented by the *ulema's* "rosy" apologetic.

As Mahmoud Ayoub notices, the controversy in traditional exegesis of this *ayah* (Q. 3:110) revolves around the meaning of the word *"kuntum"* (you are). Some commentators read *kuntum* literally in the past tense as "you were," thus locating excellence in the time of the first Muslim community. However, the vast majority of commentators consider that the verse refers to the entire Muslim *ummah*, of all historical periods and all geographic locations.[299] Qutb agrees with the classical consensus regarding the trans-historical excellence of the Muslim *ummah* as God's chosen leaders of mankind. This, however, is valid as long as Muslims act as a force of good, for "God wants the leadership in this planet of ours to be assumed by the forces of goodness, not the forces of evil."[300]

In order to be force for good and thus qualified to fulfill its divine mandate, the Muslim *ummah* must never allow any form of acculturation or even the slightest amount of cultural transfer. Qutb here introduces a strongly normative and very restrictive ideal of Islamic authenticity. The Muslim community must not only never place itself in the position of being the

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[298] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 278
[299] See: Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, vol. 2, 294.
[300] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 142.

receptor of other nations' values, concepts and systems. It must itself remain the sole provisioner of "sound ideology, philosophy, morality and knowledge." According to Qutb, this is the duty of the Muslim nation, imposed on it by its unique position. It is the purpose of its very existence, so that it can "assume the leadership of mankind at all times."[301]

If the condition of absolute purity of values, morals, and ideology is met, the Muslim *ummah* will be fit to fulfill its mission of leadership, which is axiological, consisting of "the preservation of human life from evil and the promotion of what is right, in addition to implementation of the faith which defines what is right and what is wrong."[302] Like Cortés and Kuyper before him, Qutb regards the mission of a community of believers as primarily involving ethical guidance in the midst of a modernity lacking a distinct moral compass. Politics is taken to be an instrument for installing, enforcing and protecting a set of antinomies such as good versus evil, virtue verses vice, and right versus wrong, in a world of metastasizing anomie. The very center of the universal mission of the Muslim *ummah* is faith (*iman*), defined as complete and active belief in God. However here, as well as in many other instances, Qutb emphasizes that belief in God implies more than simple devotion and individual piety. Faith is conceptualized as a veritable *axis mundi*, the sole provider of "a correct concept of the universe and the relationship between the Creator and His creation… the correct concept of man, the purpose of his existence and his true position in the universe."[303] Moreover, as the unique source of moral values and universal principles, faith remains the main weapon against tyranny in both the collective and individual realms. At this point, Qutb quotes numerous *hadith*s (which he usually does not do) from the canonical Sunni collections of Muslim, Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi that emphasize the necessity for the Muslim community to continuously maintain and enforce the moral standards prescribed by the Qur'anic revelations.

Qutb's exegesis of Q. 3:118, which begins "Take not as intimate friends those outside your own people; they will not fail to corrupt you"[304] relates the superiority of the Islamic community to inter-religions dynamics. According to Qutb, the *ayah* warns against the perennial enmity towards Islam professed by a hostile religious otherness. Taking, as always, a trans-historical

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[301] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 143.
[302] Ibid, 143.
[303] Ibid.
[304] The rest of the verse reads "They only desire your ruin: Rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths: What their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made plain to you the Signs, if ye have wisdom."

perspective, he emphasizes that the "machinations of its [Islam's] natural enemies" are not limited to the period of history in which the warning was uttered. On the contrary, the prohibition in the verse against taking "those outside your own folk" as friends applies to "all times [and] deals with a situation which may exist at any time, as it does indeed in our present time."[305] Despite this warning, however, and the obvious disparity in excellence between the Islamic community and the rest ("all other people are inferior to the Muslims in their way of life, methods and nature"[306]), Muslims today continually subject themselves to acculturation, uncritically accepting foreign philosophical systems and models. We should note that Qutb's critique of what he sees as the evanescence of Islamic authenticity is not singular. It is, for instance, perfectly congruent with Jalal Al-e Ahmad's concept of *Gharbzadegi* (usually translated as Westoxification or Occidentosis) and Nathan Birbaum's *Assimilationgesucht* (assimilation mania).[307]

As Sivan points out, the enclave culture is an important component of the fundamentalist response to an oppressive and morally defective modernity. However, surrounding the small community of "virtuous insiders" with "a wall of virtue," as Sivan terms it,[308] does not, as we have seen, prevent Qutb from developing a universalistic emancipatory political theology. In contrast with isolationist radical Islamists such as the Takfir wa-al Hijrah (an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood active in Egypt in the 1960s), Qutb envisions retreat from the modernity only as a propaedeutic for action and radical political and social change. Thus we see that Qutb's hermeneutic of Qur'anic purity, though designed to create a counter-polis and counter community, is but the first step in creating a universal Islamic community governed exclusively by *Hakimiyah*. The universality (*'alamiyah*) of the Islamic revelation requires rejection of isolationism and defensive entrenchment. We will discover the same universalism in Donoso Cortés and, even more surprisingly, in Abraham Kuyper, who regarded Calvinism as the only pure expression of Christian universalism able to withstand an equally Universalist modernity.

Mawdudi's exegesis of the same *ayah* (Q. 3:118) stays strictly within the historical context of the Qur'anic revelation. Basically replicating traditional exegesis, he touches on inter-confessional relations between the Jews, *Ansar* (other tribes) and emigrants in Medina, placing special emphasis on the "hypocrisy" of the Medinan Jews who, under the pretext of false

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[305] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 2, 151.
[306] Ibid.
[307] See Emmanuel Sivan, "Enclave Culture," 12.
[308] Ibid, 18.

friendship, "remained constantly on the look-out for opportunities to create schisms and dissensions in the Muslim body-politic, and to draw out the secrets of the Muslims and pass them on to their enemies."[309] He does not expand or further contextualize his commentary. His exegesis remains, as in many other places, purely focused on translation, clarification and edification of meaning.

The radicalism of Qutb's exegesis increases with *ayah*s 149 to 150.[310] The passage reads: "O you who have believed, if you obey those who disbelieve, they will turn you back on your heels, and you will [then] become losers. But God is your protector, and He is the best of helpers." Qutb's discussion of the verse adds to the account of *Taghut* in *Surat al-Baqarah* by emphasizing contemporary tyranny, contrasting it with Islamic order, which is described as "a practical system that exercises control over their (believers') consciences, money, property and way of living…a system which is upright, just and good."[311] In direct opposition, modern tyrants exploit and oppress others, rejecting justice, equality and dignity and upholding evil and falsehood. They are dominated by hubris and corruption, and they openly profess vices. For Qutb, as for Donoso Cortés, tyranny—meaning all non-religious ideological and cultural configurations—is more than a systemic pathology of power affecting the political systems of modernity. It is in effect a metastasis, affecting all the tissues of reality from the epistemological to the ontological and from economy to education and arts.

The true enemy of the modern variety of *Taghut*, Qutb emphasizes, is religion, and more specifically Islam as the most perfect expression of monotheism. In the same binary fashion as Juan Donoso Cortés, Abraham Kuyper and Mawdudi, Qutb looks at the present as structured by an implacable conflict between two incommensurable civilizations, one religious and the other anti-religious. The battle is universal and eternal, and since it is a zero-sum game, it demands constant vigilance:

> They all [tyrants] wage a campaign of extermination against the message of Islam. The believers must face up to all these enemies, and must equip themselves with patience and perseverance which can never be exhausted. They must always be on the alert for any aggression launched against them so that the Muslim community can never be taken unawares by its natural enemies who can be found everywhere and in all times.[312]

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[309] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 281.
[310] "Believers, if you obey those who have rejected the faith, they will cause you to turn back on your heels, and you will be the losers. Indeed, God alone is your Lord Supreme and He is the best of all who bring succor."
[311] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, 291.
[312] Ibid.

Qutb understands this perpetual vigilance to mean that the authentic believer must choose not only clearly and definitively but also continually between the rigorous monotheism of the Qur'an and all other alternatives. If the correct choice is not made and fully enforced, believers will already have lost their identity, and more importantly, their faith:

> It is not possible for a believer to take an in-between attitude, trying to maintain neutrality while at the same time hanging on to his faith… He may even imagine that he can withdraw from battle against a mightier power, and establish peace with that enemy, and, at the same time, retain his faith. This, however, is a great delusion. [313]

Authentic Islamic identity is not a comfortable datum. Rather, it is the result of a radical choice between Islam in all its aspects and the non-Islamic other. This choice also needs to be affirmed through action in every area of life, especially politics. This is expressed clearly in Qutb's exegesis of *ayah* 165: "Why is that when a disaster struck you, although you had struck the enemy with one twice as great, you said "from where it this?" Say, "It is from yourselves. Indeed, God is over all things competent." The verse concerns the Battle of Uhud, in which the Muslims were disastrously defeated. The lesson Qutb takes from the episode of Uhud and the verse is that the Islamic order, even though it is fully described in the revelation, is not automatically implemented. For Qutb—as for Kuyper and Mawdudi—human action is required; since the lack of action leads inevitably to disastrous loss. More precisely, implementation of revelation as a living reality is the sacred task of an elite group or "vanguard" (*Tali'ah*) of individuals fully committed and willing to dedicate "their life, energy and aspirations to sustain it, to persuade others of it and build their lives according to its teachings."[314] Here we see how spiritualization of politics is by default a form of elitism, placed in direct opposition to the "massification" of politics that has prevailed since the French Revolution. This aristocratic perspective on faith in action as the monopoly of the elite of enlightened vanguard also resonates fully with Donso Cortés's concept of the aristocracy of faith and has a parallel in the more acute Shi'a political theology developed by Ali Shariati as a blueprint for the revolutionary Shi'ism. For Shariati, the task of creating the ideology of Islamic revolution is the attribute of an elite of enlightened, engaged intellectuals (*rowshanfekran-e mota'ahedin*) placed in a direct opposition to the naïve and uneducated masses, carriers of a deformed "black Shi'ism" focused on empty rituals and mourning, devoid of power, and appropriated by a corrupt

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[313] Ibid, 205.
[314] Ibid, 254.

clergy which has surrendered the living force of Islam to secular authority.[315] In the Sunni context, Sayyid Qutb's concept of the vanguard, which is very different from the populist perspective of Hasan al-Banna, represents a seminal expression of this spiritualization of politics.

3.7 *Surat al-Ma'idah*

Qutb uses this *surah* to introduce one of the seminal antinomies of his political theology: *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah*. His commentary on the fifth *surah* develops the definition of *Jahiliyah*[316] as a perpetual, ahistorical negative counterpart to *Nizam al-Islam* and develops a conceptual framework for a theory of Islamic resistance to tyranny. As William E. Shepard convincingly demonstrates, *Jahiliyah* has always been a distinct presence in the Islamic tradition, carrying a political sense along with the classical, epistemological one.[317] Qutb's tone becomes increasingly radical as his exegesis progresses. His very restrictive and exclusionary definition of faith as the monopoly of an enlightened elite, for instance, becomes more and more evident. In this context, the commentary on the fifth *surah* is key to the conceptual structure of the Qutbian political theology.

According to Khatab's chronology, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* marks the beginning of the fourth and final stage between 1995 and 1966 of Qutb's doctrine of *Jahiliyah.* The fifth *surah* is said to be the exact point of origin for this final stage.[318] *Jahiliyah* will henceforth function not only as a seminal political concept, but also a central interpretive notion in Qutb's radical hermeneutics of the Qur'an. Commenting on a key phrase of Q. 5:3 ("This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion"), Qutb

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[315] See Ali Shariati, *What Is To Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers And An Islamic Renaissance* (Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986).

[316] For an in depth analysis of the development of Qutb's doctrine of *Jahiliyah,* see Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*. Against the dominant scholarly trend which regards Qutb as the main source of the new reading of the term *Jahiliyah*, Khatab argues that the concept of *Jahiliyah* was in effect a free floating signifier, present in Egyptian public discourse before Qutb's radical conversion to Islamism.

[317] "What Qutb did was to take it [*Jahiliyah*] further than others have done." See Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyyah," 524.

[318] Khatab identifies four distinct chronological stages of Qutb's doctrine of *Jahiliyah:* the first stage (1925-1939), the second stage (1939–1948), the third stage (1948-1955), and finally the forth stage (1955-1966), and emphasizes that Qutb employed the term *Jahiliyah* or variations of it as early as 1930s under the influence of al-'Aqqad. Khatab's claim implies on a quasi-complete conceptual independence of Qutb in relationship with Mawdudi in the development of his major concepts, especially *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah*. I partially subscribe to his analytical position, but I consider the employment of *Jahiliyah* in the forth stage, especially in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* to be influenced by Mawdudi's works from the 1930s-1940s and more importantly marking the transition of Qutb from a social critic of modernity to a full fledged radical political theologian. In this process, the exegesis of the 5th *surah* could be regarded as a watershed moment.

begins by simply identifying *Jahiliyah* with any and all systems not based on the Revelation. He notices that only individuals who have directly experienced the "oppressive concepts and chaos" of *Jahiliyah* can truly understand the full measure of God's blessings embodied in Islam.[319] We see that *Jahiliyah* is not only the necessary mirror image of *Nizam al-Islam* as the "perfect religion" referred to in the verse under consideration, but the necessary premise, for a genuine understanding of faith as the negation of darkness, corruption and chaos. Simply put, without a real appreciation of the nature and power of *Jahiliyah,* its opposite cannot be fully understood. Consequently, *Jahiliyah* cannot be explained away as an out-dated historical era without impact on the present world. On the contrary, it is a particular condition rooted in the perennial human hubris which replaces God's Sovereignty with human desires, objectives and principles.

Taxonomies of the various expressions of *Jahiliyah* are in Qutb's view purely academic. In the end, "it is immaterial whether these desires are those of an individual, a class, a nation or a generation", for "they remain human desires."[320] In this respect, Olivier Carré's observation is useful: Qutb sees *Jahiliyah* as simply as one thing, a natural political expression of *Taghut* that breaks the covenant between God and men, replacing God's law with human legislation and generating a system based on oppression and exploitation of men by men.[321] Commenting on Q. 5:50 ("Do they desire to be ruled by the law of *Jahiliyah*? But for those who are firm in their faith, who can be a better lawgiver than God?"), Qutb characterizes *Jahiliyah* straightforwardedly as any system where "people are ruled by people, because this signifies that they submit to one another."[322] Refusing God's Sovereignty by accepting any form of man-made sovereignty inexorably leads individuals and communities to *Jahiliyah*, regardless, Qutb reiterates, of the historical or geographical context. *Jahiliyah*, he writes, "does not refer to a particular period of time, but to a certain situation which may come into existence at any time. Whenever it exists, it must be described as Jahiliyyah which is in contrast to Islam."[323]

Contemporary *Jahiliyah*, furthermore, destroys the very fibre of Muslim religious and cultural identity, invalidating the worldwide leadership entrusted by God to the Muslim *ummah*. Ergo, a post-Islamic political and religious landscape generated by the advance of Western

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[319] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* vol. 4, 25.
[320] Ibid, 94.
[321] Carré, *Mystique et politique*, 184.
[322] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 4, 112.
[323] Ibid.

modernity creates set of new essential questions:

> What can anyone say in justification of setting God's law aside and substituting for it a law of *Jahiliyah*, placing in the process his own desires, or those of a particular community or generation, above God's law? What can he say if, in spite of this, he still claims to be a Muslim? What is his justification: circumstances, events, people's unwillingness, or fear of the enemy? Were all these not known to God when He commanded Muslims to implement His law and follow His way of life and never be tempted away from any part of His revelations? Or does he justify his attitude by claiming that God's law does not cater for new needs and new situations? A non-Muslim may say anything he wants, but what can those who claim to be Muslims say of any of this and imagine that they continue to be within the fold of Islam?[324]

As we saw in the exegesis of *Surah Al 'Imran*, the radical choices between Islam and *Jahiliyah*, *Iman* (faith) or *Kufr*, and *Hakimiyah* or *Taghut* are not academic, theoretical or even ideological. There are essentially axiomatic, involving the question of survival of the Islamic system as a living reality. Qutb stresses that the Qur'an instilled in the first Muslim generation a sense of identity that set them apart from all other communities. Commenting on the well known Q. 5:51, "O you who have believe, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies; they are [in fact] allies of one another," Qutb stresses that despite the basic tolerance required in relations with others, the Qur'an bans alliances or close contact with non-Muslims: "All Muslims, in all generations, have this awareness and feel this distinction: "Believers, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies.""[325]

Separation from the world of unbelief, however, is just a preparatory step. This refusal of the world or of history made necessary by the dominance of *Jahiliyah* is temporary, a time in which to retreat, purify oneself, and ask essential questions that were not asked before. Following this necessary interlude, the community shall return to shape the world according to the prescriptions of the Qur'an. Here we see again how Qutb's political theology is consistently affirmative and offensive, rather than defensive and apologetic. Faith is defined as an active way of life of which formal worship is just one aspect. It is, more importantly, not a taken-for-granted identity, passed from generation to generation in the manner of custom:

> Faith is not merely a banner or a slogan or something we inherit from our parents. It is a fact instilled in people's consciences and has practical implementation in life. It is a belief held deeply in a person's heart, combined with acts of worship, and a code of living.[326]

It is clear that Qutb's perspective on religious and ideological alterity is highly Manichaeistic. He regards Islam not only as the true monotheism, but as the sole religion in

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[324] Ibid, 113.
[325] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 4, 122.
[326] Ibid, 163.

existence that can actually be regarded as a religion. All alternatives, even those based on faith, are by default non-religions:

> From the Islamic point of view, there is a religious faith, which is Islam, and a non-religion which includes everything other than Islam. "Non-religion" may take many forms including a faith of Divine origin, if distortion has crept into it, or a pagan faith, or an absolute denial of faith altogether. These doctrines may have their disagreements, but they are all in conflict with Islam and there can be no alliance between them and Islam.[327]

Discussing Q. 5:60, which refers to "those whom God cursed… and made apes and pigs and slaves of *Taghut*," Qutb stresses that since the non-Islamic Other lacks the key element of faith, it is of necessity structured by *Taghut*, defined in this particular context as "every authority that is not derived from God's own authority, every system of government that does not have God's law as its basis, and to every aggression exceeding the boundaries of what is right."[328] In his usual maximalist fashion, Qutb points out that one does not have to actively worship *Taghut* to be an apostate. The simplest act of obedience towards a non-Islamic power automatically expels individuals and entire communities from the ranks of the believers. He who obeys *Taghut* is lost, religiously and ontologically. He/she is condemned to an existence without principles and dogmas and without faith or law.

Jahiliyah, Qutb admits, has ridden on the hegemonic forces of modernity to acheive worldwide dominance. Q: 5:56, however, in which God declares that "the party of God" will "be victorious," makes it clear that its seemingly unstoppable expansion does not warrant flexibility or compromise:

> A Muslim cannot overlook this concept when he establishes his relations with other people of different creeds and religions. He cannot try to reduce the pressure of ignorance by coming to terms with the followers of other creeds or doctrines, giving them the privilege of having "a faith" acceptable to God and constituting grounds for mutual support.[329]

In *Surat al-Ma'idah*, Qutb conceptualizes *Jahiliyah* not only as a trans-historical reality, but as chameleon—like, with a pathology of power that can take different shapes and forms while remaining essentially unchanged. It takes many forms, including:

> Submission to other people or different creatures, without limits or controls and rejecting the total submission to God and to His total authority, 'addressing all actions, emotions, thoughts and intentions to Him and deriving all values, standards, concepts and laws from Him and setting all systems and situations on His guidance.'[330]

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[327] Ibid, 128.
[328] Ibid, 143.
[329] Ibid, 166.
[330] Ibid, 230.

Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper also view modernity as a shape-shifting configuration that structures seemingly different or even opposing ideologies such as liberalism and socialism. Anti-modern political theology overall perceives ideological expressions of modernity to be quasi-religions, sharing the same basic common essence: a definition of sovereignty in exclusively human terms.

One of the most interesting features of Qutb's exegesis of *al-Ma'idah* is his discussion of legitimate resistance to an oppressive ruler. Any political theology organized around the meta-concept of God's Sovereignty must address this issue. Here it is placed at the very center of Qutb's interpretation of the key thirty-third and thirty-fourth *ayahs*: "Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against God and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land...." Qutb begins his exegesis by reiterating the classic position that identifies unlawful rebellion as violent action against "a Muslim ruler who implements the laws of Islam."[331] He then proceeds to heighten the scope and consequences of that rebellion. It is aggression against the entire Muslim *ummah*, even war against God and His Messenger. The verse links rejection of God's law with "corruption on earth" since "there is no worse corruption than the attempt to prevent the implementation of Divine law and to spread fear in a land where Divine law is applied." [332] Qutb is concerned to point out, as classical Sunni political theory does, [333] that only legitimate leaders can punish such rebels, thus excluding nominal (in his view) Muslim rulers who do not fully implement God's law. Thus does Qutb avoid opening the door to persecution of lawful resistance against a tyrannical power:

> It must be understood that no authority has the backing of God's law in its suppression of its enemies unless it implements God's law. Why should an authority seek endorsement of its actions by God's law anyway, when it rejects its implementation, thus claiming for itself certain qualities of Godhead?[334]

Qutb's answer to Francois Laruelles's question—"How to make of rebellion something other than a reaction of auto-protection against aggression?"[335]—would be: by making rebellion total and perpetual, starting from the transcendental principle of God's Sovereignty rather than

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[331] Ibid, 75.
[332] Ibid, 77.
[333] See, for instance, Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultania w'al-Wilayat al-Diniyya* (The Ordinances of Government) (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd. 2000), 27-29.
[334] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 4, 76.
[335] François Laruelle, *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 7.

narrow, contingent reasons. Further employing Laruelles's frame, genuine rebellion is *for* the world and not merely *against* it. Meaningful rebellion, sanctified by close contact with the Revelation, will not yield to the facile temptation of exchanging one human sovereignty for another. Rather, it seeks to provide a universal topology of salvation. Consequently, Qutb dedicates many pages to divorcing *Jihad* from mere defence of Islamic territory and making it a universal instrument of the liberation and salvation of mankind.

Another interesting element of Qutb's exegesis of *al-Ma'idah* is his quotation from Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's *Islam and the World: The Rise and Decline of Muslims and Its Effect on Mankind*. This little studied Islamist work is an important source for Qutb's doctrine of *Jahiliyah*, as mentioned above.[336] Qutb introduces Nadwi in the context of the approach of the first Qur'anic generation to pre-Islamic civilization, and particularly the use of intoxicants mentioned in verse ninety. He begins by emphasizing that the Islamic method of reform is concerned with "complete eradication of the social, economic, moral and behavioral traces of ignorance" rather than merely "correcting the deviations and abominations of *Jahiliyah*," and then goes on to quote Nadwi in support of his concept of *mufasalah shu'uriyah* "complete mental and emotional separation" from *Jahiliyah* beliefs, traditions, customs and loyalties.

Qutb concludes his exegesis of *Surat al-Ma'idah* with a series of rhetorical questions addressing the crucial issue of sovereignty in the contemporary Age of Ignorance:

> Who is the ultimate judge in human life? Is it God alone, as He has stated? Or are there other judges, as people may decide for themselves, setting their own values, standards, systems, laws and rituals? In other words: To whom does Godhead belong? To God alone, or to some of His creatures, whoever they may be?"[337]

Surah 5, *al-Ma'idah,* along with the ninth *surah*, *al-Tawbah*, clearly displays the differences between the hermeneutics of Mawdudi and Qutb. Mawdudi's aim is primarily pedagogical. He engages in apologetic, but using rather tame topics of small scope and without reaching the level of radical diatribe. The analysis renders visible a political edge more evident in *al-Ma'idah* and *al-Tawbah* than elsewhere, but it is not overt or systematic but merely implied.

We can see the nature of Mawdudi's apologetic aim in his treatment of the mainly dietary interdictions found in the first half of the *surah* (which in fact comprises most of his exegesis of the verse). Commenting upon Q 5:4, which allows believers to eat game brought down by hunting

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[336] Qutb's preface for the second Egyptian edition of this work is regarded as one of the first theoretical signs of Qutb's turn to Islamism in the early 1950s.

[337] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 4, 230.

animals even though it would not then have been slaughtered according to the Islamic standard, Mawdudi condemns what he calls "the prohibitionist mentality" professed by many Muslims that makes them "excessively fastidious, over-suspicious, and inclined to ask for a complete list of all that is lawful and permitted."[338] The Qur'an, he says, is in fact opposed to narrow-minded ultra-legalism, as it provides the believer with a well-defined list of prohibited things, thus placing the rest into the lawful category. Mawdudi asserts that this pragmatic perspective is "a complete reversal of the old religious outlook according to which everything that has not been declared lawful is considered prohibited."[339] Thus, the Qur'an actually liberates humanity from narrow-minded formalism. Mawdudi goes on to reinforce his point, on the basis of Q. 5:5, which declares that "[all] good foods have been made lawful" and allows believers to partake of the food and marry women of "those who were given the Scripture before," by offering a brief summary of legal positions on inter-religious marriage.[340]

Thus does Mawdudi represent Islam—apparently in contrast the "old religion" of Judaism and possibly in answer to Christian critique—as reasonable and flexible. His target also seems to be the modern *ulema*, though his reference ("many Muslims") is oblique, avoiding a potentially risky open condemnation of the religious establishment. We see how Mawdudi's critique of the *ulema*'s sterile pietistic-legalistic reading of the Qur'an is developed not systematically as Qutb does, but exemplarily. Qutb's exegesis of Q. 5:5, though thoroughly apologetic, is overtly political. He represents the interdictions referred to in the verse as "a genuine manifestation of Islamic tolerance when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim communities living side by side with Muslims in the land of Islam."[341] The ruling on lawful food, for instance, creates a genuine common ground between Islamic and non-Islamic communities where tolerance, friendship and hospitality can flourish."[342] What Qutb is claiming here is that Islam is the only order that can create a universal system of cooperation and universal peace. He starts his perspective from an issue of limited scope (marriage or dietary provisions) and expands it into a universalistic discourse

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[338] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* vol. 2, 135.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid, 138. More precisely, the issue is the marriage of Muslim men with women of ahl-al-Kitab. The disagreement among the *fuqaha* revolves firstly around the meaning of the term *muhsanat* (i.e. 'well-protected women'), considered by some scholars as the normative criterion for the legality of an inter-religious marriage. The second area of disagreement focuses on the unlawfulness of an inter-religious marriage involving Jewish and Christian women living in the Domain of War (*Dar al-Harb*) or in the Domain of Disbelief (*Dar al-Kufr*).
[341] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* vol.4, 30.
[342] Ibid.

that refers to the present contexts, in this case the ills of conflict and oppression.

The commentary on the thirteenth *ayah* of *al-Ma'idah,* which reads: *"So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good"* is an unusual instance in which Mawdudi does expand his scope in an uncharacteristically lengthy meditation on the relationship between the individual and society. Despite its generality and tame tone, the discussion bears comparison with Qutb's more radical critique of human hubris and the absolute necessity of God's Sovereignty. Starting from the observation that man is a "microcosm of society," a complex site of "innumerable powers and potentialities, myriad desires, feelings and inclinations, and a host of divergent urges,"[343] Mawdudi defines social life as a network of intricate relationships that forces individuals to vacillate between an increasing number of alternatives and choices. According to Mawdudi, this puzzling complexity of social existence—parallel to the enigmatic complexity of purification for prayer—combined with the limitations of the human mind result in an utter incapacity to conceptualize or even comprehend existence. Thus are humans condemned to generate incomplete and unbalanced ideological and social models, despite material progress and conceptual sophistication. In Mawdudi's terms, they lack "a built-in capacity to harmonize the multifarious strains and stresses of social life; in which material resources are fully exploited in the best interests of both the individual and society and within the framework of equity, justice and righteousness." [344] Furthermore, when the human subject assumes the right to legislate, his narrow perspective cannot accommodate the universality and comprehensiveness required for the existence of a genuine system of laws.[345]

This brings Mawdudi to the subject of man-made systems of legislation. All such systems, regardless of their ideological or cultural background, result in an acute deficit of justice. For Mawdudi as well as for Qutb, Cortés, Kuyper, and virtually all anti-modern political theologians, human sovereignty translated into positive legislation is unbalanced and alienating. It inevitably produces destructive pathologies of power. In such conditions, the human subject, though

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[343] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 143.
[344] Ibid, 144.
[345] Ibid.

apparently in control of his social and ontological destiny, is perpetually adrift, decentered and confused. As Mawdudi dramatically puts it:

> Man continues to stumble hither and thither; from one form of self-destruction to another. All courses of life charted by man himself are winding and crooked. They move in the wrong direction, reach the wrong end and then turn back in another wrong direction… Left to himself, man is incapable of charting this way.[346]

Mawdudi continues to hammer his point home by attacking one of the seminal concepts of the modern philosophy of history, dialectics. According to Mawdudi, the thesis and antithesis represent dangerous, erratic "stumbling, which again and again obstruct the true progress of human life."[347] The antithesis is seen as a revolt that pulls life in the opposite direction. Synthesis is defined as a "kind of mutual compromise" that is benign in itself, but bound to be destroyed by the instability of a new antithesis since it lacks the inner stability guaranteed only by the divine guidance of the prophets.[348] Thus for Mawdudi—as for Qutb and Cortés, and Kuyper to a lesser degree—only the direct action of the divine in human history can assure genuine and lasting human progress by putting an end to the endless cycle of dialectical conflict. God's prescribed way for humankind, described in the Qur'an as *sawa' al-sabil* ("the right way," a phrase referred to in the fifth *ayah* of the *surah*) and *al-sirat al-mustaqim* ("the straight way," a phrase well known because of its appearance in *al-Fatihah*), represents the only universal, balanced and salvific path.

It may be superfluous to remark that Mawdudi's simplistic understanding of the concept of dialectics exposes his limited knowledge of Western political philosophy. He may have read some Marxist texts, but there is little to no evidence of serious familiarity with Hegel or modern Marxist reinterpretations. Ali Shariati is probably the only Islamist thinker of the period to produce a quasi-systematic treatment of the concept of dialectics using an Islamic framework. [349]

As in the case of Qutb, Mawdudi's exegesis of the fiftieth verse of *al-Ma'idah*, which reads, "Do they desire to be ruled by the law of *Jahiliyah*? But for those who are firm in their faith, who can be a better law giver than God?" introduces the stark contrast between Islam and

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[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid, 145.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Under the indirect influence of Sartre and direct influence of his professor, Georges Gurvitch, Shariati forged a perspective where the dialectical model fundamentally structures both history and society, but more importantly, religion and the interior world of the human being. The dialectical battle impregnates the entire social tissue by forging a strict dichotomy between the exploiters (kings, aristocracy and the corrupted religious clergy) and the exploited (the poor masses). See Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution*,*" in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, eds. Edmund Burke and Ira Lapidus (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 289-297; Ali Shariati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980).

Jahiliyah. In his case, however, the emphasis is on the epistemological rather than political or ideological dimension of *Jahiliyah*. At this level, *Jahiliyah* is the antonym of Islam simply because it represents the "ignorance" opposed to the divine, ultimate, true "knowledge" (*'ilm*, a word that implies sound religious knowledge) prescribed by God for all mankind. Therefore, as is the case in many other places in his *tafsir*, Mawdudi remains quite close to the traditionally literal treatment of the text*:*

> The pre-Islamic period in Arabia is designated as *Jahiliyah* because this was the era when human beings derived their norms from either superstitious beliefs, conjectures and imagination or from their desires. Whenever such an attitude is adopted, it is bound to be designated as Ignorance. The appellation *Jahiliyah* will apply to every aspect of life which is developed in disregard of the knowledge made available by God, based only on man's partial knowledge blended with imagination, superstitious fancies, conjectures and desires.[350]

The quotation vividly illustrates the difference, despite similar themes, between Mawdudi's cautious and Qutb's radical political hermeneutics. Despite this difference, however, it can be argued that the anti-modern political theologies of the two Islamists are finally congruent in that they share the same distinctive desiderata and a comparable conceptual range.

3.8 *Surat al-Anfal*

In this *surah* along with the ninth *surah*, which is often regarded as its pair due to both addressing fighting, the seminal concept of *Hakimiyah* is developed as the oppositional term to *Taghut* and *Jahiliyah*.[351] *Surat al-Anfal* is believed to have been revealed after the Battle of Badr, which took place in the year 13 AH, and it lays out the ethics of Islamic combat and the theological justification for *Jihad*. Qutb employs this text as the basis for a radical critique of defensive *Jihad*, a view that had become prominent or predominant in his time. The effect of this exegetical move for radical contemporary Islamism and Jihadism would be lasting. Qutb's commentary on *al-Anfal* also illustrates how he anchors his exegesis in the tradition.

Qutb, as usual, begins his exegesis of the *surah* with a lengthy prologue. The prologue expounds what is essentially a theory of universal *Jihad* along with a radical critique of all alternative readings. He links the context of the Battle of Badr and its aftermath with a specific understanding of the nature and essence of *Jihad*, seen as a seminal expression of Islam itself. The

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[350] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 171.
[351] Interestingly, Qutb's exegesis of the 67th *surah* titled *al-Mulk* (The Dominion), which represents an obvious choice for a discussion of God's Sovereignty, is virtually completely apolitical. Qutb is focusing instead on an apologetic of God's creative omnipotence expressed in lyrically infused language that carefully avoids any politicization.

Zad al-Ma`ad (*Provision for the Hereafter*), a work on the model practices of the Prophet Mohammad by the Hanbali jurists and exegete Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 751/1350), which is a consistent inspiration for the contemporary jihadist and radical Islamist discursive orders, is also important for Qutb's exegesis.[352] Qutb frequently uses Ibn Qayyim as an exegetical anchor. In this instance he focuses on a chapter from *Zad al-Ma`ad* titled "The Progress of the Prophet's Guidance on Dealing with the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites from the Start of His Mission to the End of His Life" in which the Hanbali scholar offers a template for *Jihad*. Qutb expands on Ibn Qayyim's work by presenting a fourfold definition of the Islamic movement.

Firstly, Qutb emphasizes the realism *(al-waqi'iyah)* of the Islamic approach to modernity by emphasizing Islam's definition as a movement *(harakah)* which reacts to a specifically "human situation," that being *Jahiliyah.* As we have seen in previous instances*, for Qutb,* the new Age of Ignorance is not a mere theological concept. It represents a hegemonic configuration which controls ideas, beliefs and opinions while creating "practical systems that are by political and material authority."[353] Based on this realist, pragmatic understanding of modernity understood as global, hegemonic power Qutb is convinced that the Islamic movement must combine argument and rhetoric with direct action:

> It [the Islamic movement] strives with power to remove the systems and authorities that prevent people from adopting the right beliefs, forcing them to follow their errant ways and worship deities other than God Almighty. The Islamic approach does not resort to the use of verbal argument when confronting material power.[354]

The second essential element of the Islamic movement according to Qutb is its pragmatic orientation. Qutb seems to construct the movement as an algorithm which progresses from one stage to the next, developing appropriate strategies for each while taking into account the changing variables of the political and social contexts in which it operates. Mawdudi's argument in his ideological works that a continuous and praxis-aware Islamization from above is necessary for

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[352] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah remains a rather understudied figure, despite the fact that he, along with Ibn Tayimiyyah and Ibn Kathir, represent the most significant sources for the contemporary radical jihadist discourse from Al-Qaeda to ISIS and al-Shabab. For more on Ibn Al-Qayyim, see: Livnat Holtzman, "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the Fitra Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," in *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, eds. Ahmed Shahab and Yossef Rapoport (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010) 163-188; Birgit Krawietz, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah: His Life and Works," *Mamluk Studies Review* 10, no.2 (2006): 19-64. To understand the influence of Ibn al-Qayyim for the contemporary discourse of The Islamic State Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) see the English language propaganda magazine Dabiq: http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq

[353] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 7, 5.

[354] Ibid, 6.

Islamic revolution is somewhat similar.[355]

Continuing with his prologue, Qutb mounts an attack against the *ulema*, described as a product of "the sorry and desperate state of contemporary generations who have nothing of Islam other than its label."[356] Prisoners of a dead formality, they are incapable of understanding the real challenges of the present. According to Qutb, the official *ulema* misinterpret and abuse the Qur'an, generating "insupportable rules and principles, treating each verse or statement as outlining final Islamic rules" and finally justifying religious and political defeatism. The *ulema* make the revelation a political instrument through a subservient made-for-measure exegesis that attempts to legitimzize the powers that be.[357]

In Qutb's perspective, defeatism is epitomized in what he deems to be the spurious doctrine of defensive *Jihad*. For Qutb, *Jihad* as the perfect instrument to create the space for God's Sovereignty is universal and perpetual. Its sole objective is to abolish "oppressive political systems," by which Qutb means all non-Islamic, man-made systems, which deprive people of "the complete freedom to choose to believe in Islam if they so wish."[358] In other words, for Qutb as well as for an entire generation of those influenced by him along with later radical Islamists, *Jihad* is geographically and culturally unbounded. It is the necessary condition of an anti-modern Islamic political theology on the march.

The third element of the Islamic movement as laid out in Qutb's prologue to *Surat al-Anfal* is the principle of God's Sovereignty or *Hakimiyah*, which was transmitted from God first to the Prophet, then to his clan, then to the Quraysh, subsequently to the Arabs, and finally to all mankind. As clearly established in the Qur'anic revelation, God's Sovereignty simply means worshipping God alone and submitting only to him. As Qutb emphasizes in his discussion of *Hakimiyah*, "there can be no compromise over this essential rule. It moves towards [its] single goal according to a well-thought-out plan, with progressive stages, and fitting means." [359]

The fourth and last element of Qutb's "Islamic movement," which is taken directly from Ibn Qayyim's *Provision for the Hereafter,* concerns the legal framework for relations between

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[355] A.A. Mawdudi, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, trans., Khurshid Ahmad (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1980), and *How the Islamic State is Established* (Lahore: Islamic Publication, n.d.).
[356] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 7, 6.
[357] Here we also see the difference in tone between Qutb and Mawdudi on the topic of providing a critique of the mainstream, pietistic ulema. The later as we have seen does not directly attack the interpretative community if his time. His critique is oblique and avoids asperities.
[358] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 7, 6.
[359] Ibid.

Muslims and other religious communities. According to Qutb, this framework is structured around the same imperative of God's Sovereignty (*Hakimiyah*). Therefore, the principle of *Hakimiyah* must be allowed to freely permeate all societies on earth without any political, ideological or religious impediment: "Every individual must remain free to make his or her absolutely free choice to accept or reject it, feeling no pressure or opposition. Anyone who puts such impediments in the face of the message of complete submission to God must be resisted and fought by Islam."[360]

Here we see again that *Jihad*, as the universal force carrying the meta-concept of *Hakimiyah*, cannot be merely defensive. As Qutb stresses on many occasions, *Jihad* is not even actual war. Since it is rooted in both the nature of Islam and the revelation of its Prophet, it has nothing in common with any form of war in the present or the past and lies, indeed, entirely outside the narrow categories of wars devised by man. Thus he writes:

> We will further recognize that *Jihad* was never defensive, in the narrow sense that the term `defensive war' generally denotes today. It is this narrow sense that is emphasized by the defeatists who succumb to the pressure of the present circumstances and to the Orientalists' wily attacks.[361]

Qutb goes on to condemn the defeatism and isolationism of the concept of *Jihad* in defence of the Islamic homeland against an external aggression has no valid grounds other than a tradition that became entrenched in its own powerless *forma mentis*. The main flaw of this doctrine is placing the concept of homeland above the intrinsic universalistic message contained in the Qur'anic revelation:

> People who try to justify Islamic *Jihad* on the grounds of protecting or defending the land in itself has no significance. It acquires its value when the Islamic way of life is implemented in it, so as to become the cradle of the faith, the practical model, the homeland of Islam, and the starting point for the liberation of mankind.[362]

In sum*, Jihad* is for Qutb a positive movement that aims to liberate humanity from the bondage of man-made oppression and the tyranny of ungodly powers that structures today's *Jahiliyah*, just as it did in the ancient Age of Ignorance confronted by the first Muslim community. Since oppression and sustained effort to silence the message of Islam are a constant of human history, *Jihad* must be waged universally and perpetually until *Hakimiyah* rules supreme and "all submission is made to God alone." [363] As we have seen, the essence, scope, and—most importantly—justification for *Jihad* set it apart from all forms of warfare. *Jihad* is spiritually pure,

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[360] Ibid, 7.
[361] Ibid, 10.
[362] Ibid, 17.
[363] Ibid, 12.

serving only God's plan for mankind. Its scope is truly universal, without any geographical, ethnic or cultural limitations. It is justified by nothing less than the universal liberation of humankind from servitude to any creatures so that the Creator alone may be freely worshipped.

Qutb insists that God's Sovereignty cannot be the monopoly of any particular group of people, race or even religion. The sphere of God's Sovereignty is the entire earth: "God is not the Lord of the Arabs alone, nor is His Lordship limited to Muslims only. God is the Lord of all worlds. Hence, Islam wants to bring all mankind back to their true Lord, liberating them from servitude to anyone else."[364] Nor can it belong solely to those who engage in powerless scholastic debates, for it is a comprehensive dynamic politico-theological framing device for an ideological critique and for a political action against modernity.

Since Qutb defines Islam as a universal system and complete way of life prescribed by God in order to enforce the fundamental principle of His Sovereignty, *Hakimiyah* is the only justified reason for *Jihad*.[365] Every other reason and motivation for *Jihad*, including defence of a territory, are at best epiphenomena and in many cases derail it from its genuine, intrinsic rationale. Understanding *Hakimiyah* as the real focus of *Jihad* will also lead to a complete emotional, psychological and even physical separation (*'uzlah shu'uriyah*) of believers from the environment of *Jahiliyah*. In this context, God's Sovereignty represents for Qutb the *sine qua non* of Islamic identity, the cornerstone of authentically living in the world as Muslims:

> Those who want to be Muslims should not be deceived by the thought that they are [already] Muslims in belief and practice. This is not sufficient for people to become Muslims unless they acknowledge that all sovereignty belongs to God alone. This is represented in practice by rejecting all claims that sovereignty belongs to anyone else and until they have no loyalty whatsoever to *Jahiliyah* societies and their leaderships.[366]

Throughout the prologue to the *surah* (as in many other parts of his exegesis), Qutb's discourse invokes revolution. In Qutb's view, Islam provides the only path towards universal freedom by fighting against the root of all political, economic and racial oppression: man-made systems of sovereignty, regardless of their institutional or ideological embodiments. This universal revolution does not seek to change the regime in one particular state or territory, but rather to

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[364] Ibid, 8.
[365] "It is only when we begin to lose sight of this fundamental truth of God's absolute sovereignty and people's servitude to Him that we try to find external reasons to justify jihad. No one who is fully cognizant of this basic Islamic principle will need to look for any other justification for jihad" (Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* vol. 7, 19).
[366] Ibid, 89.

"embrace the whole world,"[367] putting an end to the oppression and alienation which plague the entire human race. Qutb is attempting here, as he will do in many other instances, to break the monopoly of the socialist-Marxist-nationalist lexicon—of the intelligentsia and ruling Egyptian regime—over the emancipatory concept of revolution.

Qutb's exegesis of *Surat al-Anfal* largely elaborates key concepts of the perspective developed in the prologue. One such term is *Hijrah* or "exile." Qutb discusses *Hijrah* in connection with Q. 8:72-75, which contrasts "those who believe and emigrate" with those who did not emigrate. Apropos of Q. 8:75, "And those who believed… and emigrated and fought with you - they are of you," Qutb argues that the imperative of *Hijrah* is even more important in a contemporary context in which *Jahiliyah* structures the entire world*,* since God's Law is not implemented in any place and "sovereignty is usurped by tyrants everywhere where one group of people submit themselves to another." [368] In this context, Qutb argues that the believing minority must apply the rules and strategies of the first *Hijrah* and identify a safe space where "Islam is implemented and to where Muslims should migrate." Then at a later stage, "the rule of Islam will, by God's will, stretch over a wide area when migration will no longer be required." [369] This perspective on *hijrah* will eventually be transformed into Qutb's concept of the radical psychological separation (*'uzlah)* from all aspects of modern *Jahiliyah*. This is a complete repudiation of modernity, and most important, modernity within the Islamic world.

Hijrah thus involves a stern condemnation of contemporary Islamic identity, defined as diluted, formalistic and inauthentic. Although Qutb does not openly employ the term *takfir* (which he was accused of doing by both mainstream *ulema* and, in a more veiled manner, by the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood), his concept of *Hijrah* does verge on excommunication of the entire political, social and religious *status quo*. This wholesale excommunication of modernity as an essentially ungodly world of sin and corruption encapsulated in political and economic ideologies brings Qutb close to the perspective of Juan Donoso Cortés.[370]

As we have seen, Qutb's exegesis of the eighth *surah* is one of the most conceptually rich of his whole *tafsir*. Mawdudi's commentary has much less to offer. Most of his exegesis consists of lengthy descriptions of the historical and political context of the Battle of Badr, combined with

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[367] Ibid, 31.
[368] Ibid, 180.
[369] Ibid.
[370] We will elaborate on this point in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

a legalistic analysis of the concept of treaties in the Qur'an. His commentary does nevertheless contain two interesting discussions that can be regarded as tame versions of the more radical and direct critique of his non-exegetical works. These elements are important for our ongoing comparison between Mawdudi and Qutb's political exegesis.

The first discussion concerns war. Mawdudi's argument for a paradigm shift in the concept of war brought about by Islam in opposition to the tribal warfare of the pre-Islamic period is central to his apologetic comparison of Islam with modernity. Using the Battle of Badr as an example, he emphasizes the essentially moral nature of Muslim warfare. War is portrayed as a force for social reform applicable when persuasion and preaching cannot achieve needed radical change. This perspective on combat as an ethical instrument has parallels in Qutb's vision of *Jihad*. Mawdudi, however, does not engage in fiery rhetoric or strongly emphasize universalism. His tone is relatively mild and his scope smaller. Thus, for instance, he argues that the system of redistribution of the spoils of war, which is one of the concerns of the *surah*, is the mark of a superior value system "that put an end to the evils inherent in the old system."[371] Like Qutb, he describes Islamic war as the instrument of justice purged of any material aim, but in a less sharp tone and with emphasis on the moral result: "If the attention of Muslims is not diverted from material benefits to their true mission, it is likely that material benefits would become an end in themselves."[372]

We have seen that Qutb describes *Jihad* as the dynamic principle of God's Sovereignty across all racial, ethnic, geographic and religious limitations: "it is not possible that Islam will confine itself to geographical boundaries, or racial limits, abandoning the rest of mankind and leaving them to suffer from evil, corruption and servitude to lords other than God Almighty."[373] Mawdudi's brief exegesis of Q. 8:39, "Fight them until there is no more sedition (*fitnah*), and all submission is made to God alone," showcases the same emancipatory scope. As for Qutb, the aim of Islamic war is both positive and negative: negative in the sense that it involves the eradication of *fitnah* in all contexts and positive in that it aims to "establish a state of affairs wherein all obedience is rendered to God alone.3[374] Mawdudi, however, seems to be referring in his exegesis to quelling *fitnah* wherever it might occur, rather than excommunicating an entire world of *Jahiliyah*. *Jihad* is not exactly a universal instrument of revolutionary change. *Jihad* as an ethical

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[371] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an,* vol. 3*,* 136.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 7, 18.
[374] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an,* vol. 3*,* 153.

expression remains at the front on Mawdudi's mind. Thus he stresses that Muslims as individuals or a community that enjoins the right and forbids the wrong cannot wage war for narrow worldly aims such as politics or the nation. *Jihad* is also ethically disciplined; it is not, as some Orientalists portray it, indiscriminate, fanatical violence committed by "a horde of religious fanatics surging forward, swords in hands, beards tucked under their lips, and chanting Allahu Akbar."[375]

The second element of Mawdudi's exegesis of *al-Anfal* that is important for our comparison is the notion of *Jahiliyah*. Mawdudi offers a clear definition of *Jahiliyah* as an ahistorical, perennial condition in the same way as Qutb does. This is one of the very few places in Mawdudi's *tafsir* where modernity is explicitly defined as the new Age of Ignorance. He adduces two arguments for what he sees as the perenniality of Jahiliyah.

The first argument is based on the forty-seventh *ayah* of the *surah*: "And do not be like those who came forth from their homes insolently and to be seen by people and avert [them] from the way of God." Mawdudi stresses that the directive contained in the verse remains applicable today as it will be in the future. This is due to not only the eternal status of the Revelation, but also the fact that the past and the present are structured by same forces and actors, as Mawdudi clearly points out: "The forces of Unbelief today are no different from those in the time of the Prophet (peace he on him), for the moral state of the present-day armies is no better than of armies in the past."[376] In his typically moralistic fashion, Mawdudi argues that the consumption of alcohol and rampant prostitution associated with wars in the West are signs of the moral decay of modernity.

The second argument is developed around Q. 8:58, "And if you fear treachery from any people (with whom you have a covenant) then publicly throw their covenant at them." Mawdudi argues that there is no justification for Muslims to unilaterally break a truce, even to launch a preemptive strike. They are required by the Islamic ethics of war to first inform the other party that the treaty is dissolved. In the essentially amoral civilization of ancient *Jahiliyah*, in contrast, breaking of a truce and attack without warning was a common practice. Mawdudi then goes on to remark how "the civilized *Jahiliyah* of the present day" has the same disregard for the ethics of warfare, the German invasion of the USSR and action of Russia and Britain against Iran being given as examples.

Though Mawdudi's arguments for continuation of *Jahiliyah* in modern times, based as they

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[375] A. A. Mawdudi quoted in Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 7, 21.
[376] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an,* vol. 3, 157.

are on superior morals and keeping truces, are evidently much smaller in scope than those of Qutb, the conclusion is significant for the architecture of his commentary. They give the commentary an axiological understructure, however legalistic and politically restrained it may be. Thus, although Mawdudi's commentary is more controlled and less radical in its condemnation of modernity, the similar meta-concept of *Jahiliyah* and same basic antithesis of *Nizam al-Islam / Jahiliyah* make Qutb and Mawdudi's perspectives commensurable, though the Egyptian's political theology is clearly more capacious, elaborate, and radical.

Before moving on to *Surat al-Tawbah*, it will be interesting to note an example of conceptual cross-pollination between the two thinkers compared in this chapter. In his prologue, Qutb directly quotes Mawdudi (describing him as "a great Muslim scholar") on the essence of *Jihad,* emphasizing that Mawdudi's perspective is very important for providing a clear understanding of this central element of the Islamic movement.[377] The quotation is extracted from an Arabic translation of one of Mawdudi's speeches given in Lahore in 1939 on the topic of the difference between *Jihad* and Western warfare. The main focus was lack of any equivalence between *Jihad* and holy war, a topic that, as we mentioned before, remained a theme of Mawdudi's apologetics in the late 1930s and 1940s. The quotation is too lengthy to be fully reproduced here, but Mawdudi's perspective of *Jihad* will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.9 *Surat al-Tawbah*

The last *surah* analyzed in this chapter is key for Islamist hermeneutics. The famous Verse of the Sword, the fifth *ayah*, and the equally important twenty-ninth *ayah* are central to the radical reading of the relationship between Islam and religious alterity. In addition, the concept of *Jihad* plays a very important part in this seminal Qur'anic text.

Qutb's commentary on this *surah* is extensive and contains perhaps the best examples of radical exegesis and anti-modern rhetoric in his entire *tafsir*. It is no accident that, along with the commentaries of the eighth, third, sixth, and seventy-first *surahs*, the ninth *surah* provides the core of Qutb's most radical and well known work: *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq.*[378] As Jeffry R. Halverson

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[377] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 7, 25.
[378] Olivier Carré identifies the following excerpts from the commentary in detail, used in *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq:* Q. 2: 104-160; Q. 3: 65-179; Q. 4: 15-104; Q. 5: 51-66 and 85, Q. 8: 55-65. Our study selected these *surahs* for the same reason: they provide the best expression the radical carceral hermeneutics and political theology present in Qutb's commentary.

demonstrates in the analysis of Islamist extremist texts mentioned above, *al-Tawbah* is the most quoted *surah* of the Qur'an in such texts, followed by the third, fourth, second, fifth, and finally, the eighth.[379]

The exegesis of this central *surah* allows Qutb to expand on his essential concepts of *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* while deepening his radical reading of *Jihad.* Qutb also uses the *surah* to sharply criticise what can be called the exegetical Other. He openly attacks Rashid Ridah and Muhammad 'Abduh's rationalism expressed in the other major modern Egyptian *tafsir*, the *Tafsir al-Manar*.[380] Qutb also directs his diatribes against the irenic interpretation of *Jihad* offered by the Palestinian nationalist and modernist Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah (d.1984) and against the "Orientalist" Wilfred Cantwell Smith, stressing what he sees as the pernicious influence of Orientalism on modern Muslim intelligentsia overall. Qutb's exegesis of the Sword Verse showcases his holistic approach to the Qur'an as the perfect universe. Finally, the key institution of the caliphate is treated in relation to radical Kemalist reforms of Turkish society and politics.

Mawdudi's exegesis of the ninth *surah*, on the other hand, continues the ethical-juridical direction of his commentary. His exegesis, for instance, expresses his perspective on poll tax (*jizyah*) and "protected peoples" (*ahl al-dhimmah*) as the two pillars of an Islamist model of inter-confessional relations founded on ethics. However, unlike in most of his commentary where he refrains from fusing horizons, he insists that the *ahl al-dhimmah* and *jizyah* are perfectly applicable to contemporary societies. He also draws a distinction between inauthentic and authentic believers that is comparable to that of Qutb, despite not being nearly as radical. Finally, Mawdudi's commentary on *al-Tawbah* reveals his proclivity to criticize the exegetical establishment obliquely, rather than directly and radically as Qutb does.

The so-called Sword Verse or *ayat al-sayf* reads: "And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give alms-tax (*Zakat*), let them [go] on their way. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful." Qutb's commentary starts from the premise that the Sword Verse contains *in nuce* the essence of the

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[379] Jeffry R Halverson, Bennett Furlow, and Steven R Corman, *How Islamists Quote the Qur'an*, report no. 1202 (Phoenix, AZ: Center for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University, July 9, 2012), 4. See also Jeffry R., Halverson, H. L. Goodall and Steven. R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[380] For the only systematic comparative analysis between *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an* and *Tafsir al-Manar* see Olivier Carré, *Mystique et politique: lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, frère musulman radical* (Paris: Cerf, 2004).

relations between two radically opposed types of society: the Islamic order (*Nizam al-Islam*) built around *Hakimiyah*, "which attributes the Godhead, Lordship sovereignty and the authority to legislate to God alone," and *Jahiliyah*, structured around *shirk* (association of other things with God) and man-made sovereignty.[381] Between these, there can be no compromise. The twenty-ninth *ayah* reads*:* "Fight those who do not believe in God or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what God and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled." The two verses together provide a clear template for interaction between the Muslim community and the non-Islamic Other, be they idolaters (*mushrikun*, referred to in the fifth verse) or People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*, generally taken as the referent of verse twenty-nine)*.*

Qutb's intransigent interpretation of both verses sets the parameters for a clear and non-negotiable attitude towards the non-Islamic other. Qutb's stresses, for instance, that the uncompromising attitude seen in *ayah* five represents a clear *hukm* (legal ruling). Thus it must be understood as a lawful reaction to aggression and persecution rather than sheer vengeance or political violence.[382] Most important, the rulings of the two verses are *final* (because they were revealed when the Muslim community was finally powerful) and are thus the rules and action that Muslims must strive to fulfill. Qutb admits that due to practical necessities, modern Muslims may be unable to fully implement such rulings, and may thus depend on "rules pertaining to interim stages" (*ahkam marhaliyah*) also found in in the Qur'an. However, such rulings are only a by-product of a particular set of circumstances and cannot be presented as genuinely normative.[383] No matter how powerful *Jahiliyah* is, there is no justification for taking a defeatist attitude, and presenting the "interim" rules as definitive.

Qutb now goes on to deconstruct the proposition, which has been at the very center of irenic Islamic discourse since the end of the nineteenth century, that Islam is a religion of peace. He attacks the irenic interpretation on two fronts. Firstly, he argues that if even if it is admitted that Islam is at its core a religion of peace, that notion has been abused as a justification for

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[381] Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 8, 40.
[382] Ibid, 54.
[383] "They may resort to the provisional rulings, approaching them gradually, until such a time when they are able to implement these final rulings. But they may not twist the final texts in order to show them as consistent with the provisional ones. They may not impose their own weakness on the divine faith, which remains firm and strong." (Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 8, 22).

defeatism and paralysis of will. Islam remains "the code God has given to mankind," aimed at saving the human race from all forms of submission other than submission to God. Ergo, "religion of peace" effectively means the active destruction of "all forces that stand in its way of liberating mankind from any shackle that prevents the free choice of adopting Islam."[384] Islam is defined, unapologetically, as a universal force, actively engaging and transforming praxis according to God's revelation. "Soft" definitions of Islam as a religion of peace that only engages in confrontation when it is subjected to aggression constitute, according to Qutb, dangerous bastardizations of the correct model for encountering non-Islamic alterity.

Qutb openly declares his disagreement here with the direction of Rashid Rida and Muhammad 'Abduh's exegesis. In Qutb's view, the rationalist school of *tafsir* founded by Rida and 'Abduh is strongly influenced by the alien philosophy of Descartes—by which he probably means the primacy of instrumental reason. This, he thinks, leads them to misunderstand relations between Islam and non-Islam. Although Rida and 'Abduh claim that Islam and non-Islam can co-exist only on the basis of a treaty, they are unwilling to go so far as to accept that a clash is inevitable. Rather, they see peace through treaty as the norm, unless Muslims are victims of aggression in their own territory. In order to facilitate this view, modernists claim that the fifth and twenty-ninth *ayahs* are applicable chiefly, if not exclusively, to the idolaters living in Arabia during the era of the Prophet. Qutb rejects this narrow restriction, arguing that the model of relations with the Other laid down in the two verses is a perennial one, applied to "all idolaters everywhere" and responding to a systemic hostility against Islam. Qutb then goes on to criticize Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah's vision of an irenic, defensive Islam, confined within its borders and lacking any universal dimension,[385] in an even harsher tone. [386]

Qutb's critique against what he regards as the eisegesis of the Sword Verse involves

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[384] Ibid.

[385] Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah (1888–1984) was a Palestinian born educator, writer, politician who was one of the noted partisans of Arab nationalism and advocate of the political union between Egypt and Syria. Along with works on the history of the Arab people, Darwazah wrote a commentary of the Qur'an, titled *At-Tafsir al-hadith.* Interestingly, this commentary can be regarded—at least partially—as prison *tafsir*, being started during Darwazah's five years prison term in Damascus (1939-1944) under the accusation of revolt against the French authorities. A comparison between Qutb's and Darwazah's commentaries is outside the scope of this study, but there are some areas of convergence between them: both reject the scientific exegesis of the Qur'an and are skeptical towards the massive employment of the *ahadith* in the commentary. However, Darwazah's tafsir is more or less a mainstream work, lacking any ideological radicalism. For a biography of Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah, see 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Jabr: Yaḥyá, *Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah (1888–1984)* (Nabulus: Yutlabu min Maktabat al-Jam'iyah al-'Ilmiyah, 1994).
[386] See Sayyid Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol.8, 35.

revision or rejection of the doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*). Q. 9:5 is traditionally said to abrogate other more irenic or less aggressive verses. While the number of verses supposedly abrogated varies widely,[387] by some accounts, it cancels the prescriptive force of up to one hundred and forty.[388] For instance, Ibn Kathir cites an opinion that the Sword Verse "abrogates every agreement of peace between the Prophet and any idolater, every treaty, and every term."[389] Like classical scholarship, radical Jihadist thought deems the Sword Verse the most important abrogating verse in the Qur'an, as seen, for example, in the low-level ideological exegesis in Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salam Faraj's famous or rather infamous tract *Jihad, The Neglected Duty*.[390] Qutb, on the other hand, rejects abrogation—for which he was criticized even by his admiring biographer Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi.[391] Instead, he maintains his perspective on the integral perfection of the Qur'an by saying that even if some portions of the text are temporarily inactive due to practical constraints, they are still fully present and can be activated if the situation demands it. His exegesis of Q. 2:240, which allows that a widow can stay in the home of husband for one year, is one example. Q. 2: 234 makes it obligatory for a widow to stay in the house for four months and ten days and is usually considered to abrogate 2:240. Qutb, however, argues that the existence the two different rulings in the text of the Qur'an is due not to one having abrogated the other, but rather the presence of two injunctions applying to different contexts or sides of one topic.[392]

Qutb employs this perspective in relation to the crucial Verse of the Sword, which he addresses in the course of a critique of Darwazah's interpretation. According to Qutb, by focusing only on the irenic verses, Darwazah ignores the pragmatic and cumulative nature of the Islamic method/ideology or *manhaj* which employs different strategies according to context and objective. Qutb argues that such verses are not fully abrogated, but only "in the sense that would make them

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[387] There is no exegetical consensus among classical commentators, regarding the actual number of verses abrogated by the verse of the sword. Ibn Hazm (994 -1064) identifies 94 verses, Ibn Arabi identified only 94, while Al-Tabari significantly reduces the number to only 15 verses. For a study of the concept of abrogation in general and a brief analysis of the verse of the sword in this context, see Louay Fatoohi, *Abrogation in the Qur'an and Islamic Law*: *A Critical Study of the Concept of Naskh and its Impact* (London: Routledge, 2012), 120.

[388] There are cases of scholars both classical, such as the Mu'tazili scholar Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (d. 933), and modern, such as Muhammad Asad (1900-92) and Süleyman Ateş (b. 1933), who reject the entire concept of abrogation. For a more elaborate analysis on this topic see: Thameem Ushama, "The Phenomenon of Al-Naskh: A Brief Overview of the Key Issues," *Jurnal Fiqh* 3, no.4 (2006): 101-132,

[389] See: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adhim*.
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2581&Itemid=64

[390] See J.G. Johannes Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

[391] Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Al-Manhaj al-Haraki fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (Jeddah: Dar al-Manarah, 1986), 351.

[392] Ushama, "The Phenomenon of Al-Naskh," 20.

inapplicable to any situation [since] they remain in force …to face new situations that are largely similar to the ones they originally addressed."[393] Q. 9:5 and 9:29 remain, of course, the "normal" situation Muslims must strive for.

Abrogation or *naskh* is a technical (though crucial) detail of Qutb's exegesis of the block of *ayahs* extending from Q. 9:1 to 9:28, which he treats together. The essential topic of the exegesis of the passage overall is relations between the Islamic community and Others (with verses twenty-nine to thirty-five addressing relations specifically with Christians and Jews). Thus he embarks on a lengthy discussion of the essential, transhistorical opposition between *Nizam al-Islam* and *Jahiliyah*. He accomplishes this exegetical move by bringing into play some of the strongest anti-irenic verses of the Qur'an, namely 2: 217 ("They shall not cease to fight you until they force you to renounce your faith, if they can"); 2:109 ("Many among the people of earlier revelations would love to lead you back to unbelief now that you have embraced the faith. This they do out of deep-seated envy, after the truth has become manifest to them") and 2:120 ("Never will the Jews nor yet the Christians be pleased with you unless you follow their faith"). These verses are furthermore related to the precise circumstances of Qutb's times, creating a powerful exegetical fusion of horizons. In order to drive the point home that hostility against the Islamic revival movement is universal regardless of different ideologies, he lists a bewildering array of nations: USSR, China, Yugoslavia, Albania, India, Kashmir, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, Cyprus, Kenya, South Africa and the United States.[394] Nor is persecution of the Islamic movement the monopoly of the non-Islamic world. Persecution within "the world which used to be Muslim" (certainly including Egypt, though it is never openly named as a post-Islamic space) recalls the atrocities perpetrated by the Mongols in the 13th century:

> Nor was what happened in Baghdad at the hands of the Tartars an isolated case. Indeed that statement describes a typical attitude that we meet everywhere, whenever a community of believers (*ummah*) who submit themselves to God alone are confronted by idolaters or atheists who submit to beings other than God.[395]

This comparison with perhaps the most traumatic event in the history of Islam serves two purposes. First, it augments the persuasive force of Qutb's definition of modern *Jahiliyah* as a perennial systemic hostility to Islam by providing a reference that is painfully familiar to Muslims.

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[393] Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 8, 40.
[394] Ibid, 93. Qutb also claims that Communist Russia and China exterminated 26 million Muslims and Communist Yugoslavia killed one million Muslims since 1945. Evidently he does not provide any sources for his claims, but the rhetorical effect achieved is significant. See: *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 8, 66.
[395] Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 8, 66.

Second, the comparison gets Qutb closer to the figure of Ibn Taymiyyah by equating modern Egypt with Damascus under the invasion of Mongols. At a symbolic level, this equation renders visible Qutb's preoccupation for creating a connection with Ibn Taymiyyah, with whom he feels close kinship.[396]

We will now turn to Qutb's exegesis of the twenty-ninth *ayah*, the other verse of the *surah* crucial for the jihadist thought. His interpretation exemplifies his intransigent political theology. In Qutb's view, the Christian and Jews ("those who were given the book") do not, as it says in the verse, follow the "religion of truth" and are therefore subject to the command in the verse to be fought against. They assign sovereignty and lordship to a human person or to an institution instead of God alone. They reject God's Law and implement human legislation instead, and they submit to the authority of creation rather than the Creator. Qutb's definition of the religion of truth (*din al-haqq*) is strongly restrictive: "Religion of truth means submission to God alone …taking its final form in the message of the Prophet Muhammad"[397] Ergo, individuals and communities that diverge from this normative model are by default outside of faith. Most importantly, there is essentially no difference between the People of the Book of the time of the Prophet and their modern counterparts:

> As described in these verses, the people of earlier revelations belong to *Jahiliyah* in both beliefs and practices. History also proves the nature of conflict, and the impossibility of coexistence between the two codes. The people of earlier revelations were determined in their opposition to the Islamic faith in the period preceding the revelation of this verse, and in the period following it, up to the present day.[398]

Consequently, no real, permanent cohabitation is possible between the Islamic community and the non-Islamic Other, unless Islam is totally dominant. Non-Islamic alterity must always be subordinate. Even when subordination is enforced, in fact, it is at best a temporary solution, since the entire world must in the end conform completely to God's Sovereignty and Law.

Continuing with Q. 9:29, Qutb once again employs his favoured strategy of intertextuality (*tafsir al-Qur'an bi-al-Qur'an*) by referring to Q. 5:68, Q. 5:64, Q. 5:72, Q. 5:73 and Q. 98:1. These verses depict the Other as hostile, hypocritical, wicked and malign. Hypocrisy is important in describing not only Jews and Christian, but also quasi-Muslims. Qutb emphasizes that formal, outward Islamic appearances given by the forces of *Jahiliyah* to regimes, movements, values,

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[396] Ibn Taimyyah remains for Qutb and for the entire radical Islamist current of thought, the archetype of imprisoned scholar who sets the standard of intransigence in the face of oppression.
[397] Qutb, *Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 8, 112.
[398] Ibid, 98.

traditions and philosophies are a clever and perfect way of masking hostility against the Islamic revivalist movement. For Qutb as for Donoso Cortés, Kuyper and Mawdudi, modernity is a Janus-like force which alternates manifest violence and oppression with seduction and ideological deceit.[399]

Thus, Qutb sees the essential objective of the Islamic movement to be creating "in any generation and any place" a high degree of awareness that can counter seduction and deceit and see *Jahiliyah* as it really is. Awareness of one's Islamic identity as an universal declaration of freedom from all man made-systems and realization of the complex reality of *Jahiliyah* as a hegemonic anti-Islamic civilization go necessary together. To unmask *Jahiliyah* is to understand true Islam:

> Indeed the first duty of the advocates of Islam is to remove these masks so that the reality of regimes and set-ups hostile to Islam and determined to crush it is laid bare. Indeed the starting point for every truly Islamic movement is to remove the false attire of *Jahiliyah* and expose it for what it is: unbelief and idolatry. It must describe people as they really are. Only then can the Islamic movement go onwards to achieve its goals.[400]

Ripping off the mask of *Jahiliyah* and gaining a renewed Islamic self-awareness also leads to an understanding of *Jihad* as the universal instrument to remove man-made tyranny, liberate mankind from submission to oppressive systems and establish God's authority over the entire Earth. Qutb discourses on the the aims and necessity of *Jihad* a final time in *al-Tawbah* apropos of verse one hundred and twenty-three: "O you who believe, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness" as follows:

> It does not wish to establish a kingdom for any one of God's servants, but to establish God's own kingdom. Hence it has to move forward throughout the earth in order to liberate the whole of mankind, without discrimination between those who are within the land of Islam and those who are outside it. The whole earth is populated by human beings, who are being subjected to different types of tyrannical authority wielded by fellow human beings.[401]

Mawdudi's exegesis of the ninth *surah*, much in contrast to Qutb's fiery hermeneutics of faith in action and universal *Jihad*, is focused on plain explanation of the original context of revelation. There is contemporary ideological dimension to his hermeneutics, and the overall tone is generally not radical. There is no better illustration of the difference between Mawdudi and Qutb

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[399] "Some Muslims, including many of those who advocate the need for an Islamic revival, are deceived by this 'Islamic' appearance which is portrayed by present-day *Jahiliyyah*. Hence they are reluctant to unmask these hostile regimes and show them as they truly are. All this impedes an open confrontation with *Jahiliyah*. Thus the false 'Islamic' appearance exercises a sedative influence on the Islamic revivalist movements. It creates a barrier that prevents the launching of a determined effort to stand up to contemporary *Jahiliyah* which tries to pull out the last remaining roots of this faith." Ibid, 119.

[400] Ibid.

[401] Ibid, 243.

than exegesis of the Verse of the Sword. Mawdudi's commentary is very brief and revolves around two elements: the "sacred months" mentioned in the verse following which one may engage the idolaters, and the minimal conditions for accepting the repentance of the idolators (*mushrikun*).

Mawdudi simply identifies the sacred months, arguing that they are not those reserved for the pilgrimage and lesser pilgrimage to Makkah (*Hajj* and '*Umrah*), but rather certain months (which he names) governed by pacts of non-aggression that were allotted to the idolaters to decide between war, accepting Islam, or emigration.[402] His straightforward explanation here illustrates the difference between his pedagogical vocation and Qutb's hermeneutics of mobilization and action. As for the repentance referred to in the verse ("If they should repent, establish prayer, and give *zakat*, let them [go] on their way"), Mawdudi, like Qutb, discusses the conditions for the idolators' repentance. The example of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, in the "Wars of Apostasy" he prosecuted against tribes who had begun to abandon Islam following the death of the Prophet is offered as the best illustration of the Qur'anic ruling. Repentance from *kufr* and *shirk* (unbelief and association of others with God) is not sufficient without performing the prayer and paying the alms-tax (*Zakat*). Thus Mawdudi affirms, as Qutb does, the maximalist position of the interpretative tradition that regards both devotion (prayer) and practical action (paying the *Zakat*) as the necessary conditions for the suspension of violence against idolaters. Mawdudi's commentary does not, however, elaborate further. More importantly, unlike Qutb and other radical Islamists, the Pakistani does not place the Sword Verse in a contemporary context. There is no clear fusion of horizons at play here. Mawdudi's exegesis, as always, is structured by conceptual frameworks and discursive strategies different from those of his politically oriented works. In contrast to the exegesis of Qutb, which is integrated with and essential to his political theology, Mawdudi's commentary is configured differently from his non-exegetical writings, though they do complement each other.

Mawdudi's exegesis of the twenty-ninth *ayah* involves rhetoric much sharper than usual. His aim is to demonstrate that the people of the earlier revelations cannot be considered true monotheists. He says that although they must be subject to *Jihad*, because they refuse to implement God's Law and thus establish His Sovereignty, like Qutb, he stresses repeatedly that such *Jihad* is really non-coercive. The essential objective of *Jihad* against the Jews and the Christians is not to force conversion to Islam (explicitly banned by Q. 2:256), but the elimination of all non-Islamic

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[402] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, 191.

forms of authority and sovereignty. Thus Mawdudi's vision of *Jizyah,* which is much for important for him than for Qutb, focuses on the elimination of all forms of non-Islamic sovereignty:[403]

> They should be forced to pay *Jizyah* in order to put an end to their independence and supremacy so that they should not remain rulers and sovereigns in the land. These powers should be wrested from them by the followers of the true Faith, who should assume the sovereignty and lead others towards the Right Way, while they should become their subjects and pay *Jizyah.*[404]

Thus, aside from guaranteeing the security and protection for the non-Muslims who have the legal status of *ahl al-dhimma* (protected people), the *Jizyah* has an important symbolic dimension: it signifies that the non-Muslims (by paying "*Jizyah* with their own hands") fully and freely accept the status of subjects of a community of believers who act as vicegerents of God on earth. Mawdudi strongly rejects the apologetic, irenic discourse which considers the concepts of *Jizyah* and *ahl al-dhimma* to be rather embarrassing remnants of the past, inapplicable and even inconceivable in contemporary contexts. On the contrary, Mawdudi places *Jizyah* and *ahl al-dhimma* at the very center of his model of inter-confessional relations, presenting it as the only alternative to *fitnah*, the chaos and the disorder produced by allowing competing sovereignities and sectarian allegiances to operate within a Muslim territory.[405] Ergo, *Jizyah* is presented as a corrective designed to protect both minorities and the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of Islamic societies. Furthermore, it represents a constant reminder of the fallen state of the people of the previous revelations who "have been deprived of the honor of paying *Zakat* in the Way of God, and forced to pay *Jizyah* instead as a price of following the ways of error."[406] Commenting on Q. 9:33 ("It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with God (*mushrikun*) will be adverse to it"), Mawdudi augments his exegesis of the term *Jizyah* by contructing a special connection between this concept and the arch-concept of *Hakimiyah*. The only genuine sovereign put Muhammad as His Prophet and Messenger on a specific path in order to make His system rule supreme all over the world of creation. Deviation from the rule of Islam is tolerated only as a limited and discrete phenomenon, under the protection offered by the payment of *Jizyah* and restricted to the legal

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[403] See: A. A. Mawdudi, *The Rights of Non-Muslims in Islamic State*, trans. Ahmad Khurshid (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd. 1982); A. A. Mawdudi *Let Us Be Muslims*, ed. Khurram Murad (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1985).

[404] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, 202.

[405] "Instead of offering apologies on behalf of Islam for the measure that guarantees security of life, property and faith to those who choose to live under its protection, the Muslims should feel proud of such a humane law as that of jizya" Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, 202.

[406] Ibid.

category of *ahl al-dhimma.*

Mawdudi connects the attack on the people of earlier revelations with his anti-intellectualism. Thus, when discussing the Q. 9:34 ("O you who have believed, indeed many of the rabbis and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert [them] from the way of God. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God - give them tidings of a painful punishment") he rails against "religious leaders" (rather than specifically rabbis or monks) who "devour the wealth of others" by creating empty formalistic rituals, forcing people to buy "their salvations and fortunes in life" and making them dependent on their technologies of the sacred. Religious leaders, the "monopolists of Paradise," engage in material corruption, "selling false decrees, and taking bribes" while peddling doctrinal corruption that produces dangerous deviation under the guise of learned doubts and pious suspicions.[407]

Later in the *surah* apropos of Q. 9:122, "And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once; for there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious," he launches an even more direct attack, by deconstructing what he deems a major misunderstanding generated by the word "*fiqh*" (the Arabic of the phrase in the verse "obtain understanding of religions" is *yatafaqqahu*, thus related to the word *fiqh*). *Fiqh*, he says, is not "the science of the details of external form," but rather "the spiritual aspect," by which he means unmediated understanding of the religion in its entirety, rather than just law. This confusion based on exegesis damaged the Muslim *ummah* by reducing the religious education to formal, scholastic dimensions of Islam without focusing on the inner spirit of Islam. The end result is "making lifeless formalism the ultimate goal of the life of the Muslims."[408]

That said, the Pakistani does not engage the *ulema* directly. He rather speaks about about them indirectly by criticizing religious hierarchy in general as a source of doctrinal pollution and breeding ground for corruption and abuses of power. The radical anti-clericalism professed by Qutb and (even if more obliquely) Mawdudi, which is a common feature of Sunni political theology, is also present in Kuyper's political theology.[409] Qutb and Mawdudi regard the religious establishment as a creation of modernity and one of its principal legitimizing forces. Functioning

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[407] Ibid, 205.
[408] Ibid.
[409] The anti-clericalism is obviously not present in the perspective of Donso Cortés, who is a devout Catholic.

as the religious arm of corrupt and oppressive political regimes, the professionals of the sacred are seen as a great obstacle to achieving an Islamic consciousness and transforming Islam once again into a fighting, revolutionary *manhaj*.

Another theme of Mawdudi's exegesis of the ninth *surah* is the distinction between the man of the world and the man of God. His commentary on Q. 9:51 ("Never will we be struck except by what God has decreed for us; He is our protector; And upon God let the believers rely") provides him with the context to introduce two radically opposed ontological types. The man of the world is selfish, self-centered, unstable, and focused on material things, whereas the man of God is willing to sacrifice his life and wealth in the way of God. The man of God places all his faith in God's plan, thus achieving perfect inner peace and psychological stability: "His entire trust is in God Who is the controller of all the resources; therefore he goes on doing his duty even under the most adverse circumstances with the same courage and perseverance that is shown by worldly people in favorable circumstances alone."[410]

This ontological antinomy gains even more substance when it is cast as a dichotomy between believers and hypocrites, as seen in Mawdudi`s commentary on verses seventy-one and seventy-two. Despite worshipping in a similar manner, the differences between a believer and hypocrite are evident from even a cursory glance at "their morals, conducts, habits, attitudes and ways of thinking." For Mawdudi as for Qutb, hypocritical Muslims form, in effect, a counter-*ummah* distinct from and opposed to the community of authentic believers.[411]

> The hypocritical Muslims, men and women, form a separate community with those who have similar characteristics. They all are neglectful of God, take interest in evil things and deviate from all that is good and never co-operate with tare Believers and, in short, they are allies to one another and practically dissociate themselves from true Believers and form a group of their own.[412]

On the other side of the antithesis, within the community of authentic believers, individuals are organically connected. They naturally practice "what is good, and abhor what is evil." They also "remember God day and night and cannot think of life without the constant remembrance of God; they are very generous in spending in the Way of God, and obey Him and His Messenger without any mental reservation".[413] The implication of the distinction between the man of God and man of the world, and the true believer and hypocrite, is that an axiologically structured community

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[410] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (1985), vol. 9, 201.
[411] James Barr notices that the distinction between nominal and true Christians are basic to all fundamentalist thought and action. See James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1981).
[412] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (1985), vol. 9, 215.
[413] Ibid.

cannot tolerate any form of hybridization or dual allegiance and will expel any and all members who fall short of the normative ideal of faith.[414]

Two observations have to be made here. Firstly, Mawdudi, unlike Qutb, does not openly excommunicate the entire Muslim *ummah* as a community that has failed to fulfill the ideal of the first Qur'anic generation. Even in his more ideologically oriented works such as *Let Us be Muslims*, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, *Four Qur'anic Terms*, and *Jihad in Islam*, Mawdudi seems reluctant to apply the concept of *Jahiliyah* to the entire Muslim world. Granted, modernity is defined as a godless juggernaut affecting the entire world of men, and Islamic political and religious identity are seen as continuously fading. However, despite this reality, Mawdudi considers that spaces of Islamic resistance are available. Engaging modernity on its own terrain is not merely wishful thinking.

It may be that the different contexts in which Mawdudi and Qutb worked impacted their perspectives. Mawdudi remains rather optimistic and seems to believe that it is possible to renew Islam within the frameworks of existing Muslim societies. Qutb, on the other hand, excommunicates the entire Muslim world as part of modern *Jahiliyah* while advocating separation of the religious vanguard as the *a priori* condition for re-Islamization.

Finally, Mawdudi's focus on education as the essential instrument of progressive re-Islamization of the public sphere stands in some contrast to Qutb's emphasis on re-Islamization via separation and direct action. Qutb did speak about full Islamization of education after his American voyage, and he attributed his leaving the Ministry of Education following the 1952 Revolution to non-Islamic elements of the Egyptian educational system. But his political theology focuses much more on mobilization and direct action.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide a tailored comparison between Mawdudi and Qutb's radical hermeneutics of the Qur'an as reflected in their seminal Qur'anic commentaries, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* and *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. More precisely, we applied the analytical framework of

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[414] "Therefore, the one who claims to be a Muslim but dots not sincerely devote himself to God, His Way and the Islamic Community, should be severely dealt with, if there is a clear proof, from his conduct, that he lacks sincerity; or if he offers anything in the Way of God, it should be rejected forthwith: or when he dies the Muslims should neither join his funeral prayer nor beg God's pardon for him, even though he be one's father or brother." (Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (1985) vol. 9, 229.

comparative hermeneutics to the antitheses *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah* and *Taghut* versus *Hakimiyah* as reflected in the exegesis of the six key *surahs al-Fatihah*, *al-Baqarah*, *Al 'Imran*, *al-Ma'idah*, *al-Anfal* and *al-Tawbah*. These appear to be the chapters of the Qur'an that are most important for Qutb's political theology as well as radical Islamist exegesis in general.

We attempted to demonstrate that, despite a common underlying ideology, Qutb and Mawdudi created rather different exegetical perspectives, congruent with dissimilar, yet complementary political theologies. Qutb's hermeneutics is geared towards mobilization and radicalization, whereas Mawdudi's exegesis is aimed at clarification and edification. In addition, Qutb employs a strategy of reversed ideological contextualization in which the predicament of the present is understood and engaged with through a lexicon and methodology drawn from the Revelation. Mawdudi is more descriptive, appearing on many occasions to refuse to engage in any fusion of horizons between modernity and the context of the Qur'an. For both Mawdudi and Qutb, the Qur'anic revelation must be made relevant again for the present generations, but in the Egyptian's case virtually every aspect of modernity is seen exclusively through the lens of the Qur'anic text. The integral, virulently critical attitude towards the *status quo* and openly political hermeneutics professed by Sayyid Qutb is consistent with his militant and radical political theology. This is quite different from Mawdudi's oblique and explicitly pedagogical exegesis.

Chapter 4: Qutb and Mawdudi as Critics of Modern Ideologies

4.1 Methodological Preamble: Critical Discourse Analysis and Radical Islamism

This chapter will continue the comparison of Qutb and Mawdudi by focusing on their critiques of political and religious modernity in their polemical and ideological works. Critical discourse analysis will be the main tool employed to analyze this lower level exegesis. The dichotomies of *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut* will remain the focus, but they will be viewed through discourse analysis and discussed via the master-concept of ideology. In other words, the chapter will examine Mawdudi's and Qutb's critiques of modernity as a specific discursive order that is relational, in that it directs its radical polemics at a hegemonic ideological non-Islamic alterity. As Jacob Torfing has aptly noted, discourse theory asserts that the identity of its subject is neither self-reproducing nor stable. Rather, it is performative and continuously shaped through a relation with alterity in a relational fashion.[415] Thus we cannot fully comprehend radical Islamist discourse unless we understand its complex relation with its ideological rivals. Freed from the constraints of the *tafsir* genre, Qutb and Mawdudi fully engage modernity by critiquing and discarding its seminal ideological configurations. The end result in both cases is a coherent and persuasive discursive order.

Mawdudi and especially Qutb's critiques of modernity are thus not mere pulpit excommunications of modernity. They represent systematic, antagonistic engagements with modernity`s master ideologies: socialism-communism, nationalism, capitalism, and democracy. In this chapter, we will treat Mawdudi first, since some of his works were published before Qutb's Islamist turn and influenced his radical perspective.

In order to apply the pragmatic-discursive turn in the study of religion[416] as is done in this chapter, we will employ the concepts of ideology and discourse, which have rarely been applied to the study of radical Islamism. As these are central to the field of critical discourse analysis, I will begin by briefly discussing each in turn.

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[415] David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[416] Hans Kippenberg, "Diskursive Religionswissenschaft," in *Neue Ansätze in der Religionswissenschaft* eds., B. Gladigow, and Hans Kippenberg (Munchen: Kösel-Verlag, 1983), 9-28, and Jensen, *The Study of Religion in a New Key*, constitute a good example in this regard.

The essentially modern concept of ideology is massively present in the discussion below. By "ideology" we mean, as the term has been reconfigured in critical discourse analysis, a constellation of articulated discourses connected by conceptual, rhetorical, exegetical and linguistic "anchors" in social reality. More precisely, we will use Calvin McGee's definition of ideology as "political language preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decisions and control public beliefs and behaviors." [417] Thus ideology is examined as a comprehensive, structured expression of a collective *Weltanschauungen* based on shared interpretations of social, religious and cultural truths, collective memory and, last but not least, a dichotomy between "us" and "them." Calvin McGee's concept of "ideographs" is also central for our analysis. Ideographs are "high order abstractions" which function as guides, warrants, reasons and justifications for collective beliefs and behavioral patterns. Ideographs are the cornerstones of all ideological discursive constructions.[418] The argument of the chapter is that Mawdudi and Qutb strategically designed their discursive orders to contest and eventually deny the monopoly of modern secular ideologies over key ideographs such as equality, freedom, universality, sovereignty, justice and revolution. We will further argue that at the level of discourse, Mawdudi and Qutb's political theologies successfully Islamize the ideographs just named, hence creating an alternative lexicon to the master narratives of Western modernity.

As for the concept of discourse, the definition in operation here is derived from Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau**'s** reconfiguration of Michel Foucault's theory of discourse. Mouffe and Laclau define discourse as relational—and often agonistic—systems of significations combining language, interpretation and action in a historically significant and logically coherent configuration.[419] Mouffe and Laclau are useful to the analysis because they place the concept of discourse at the centre of political theory, ideology, hegemony, and counter-hegemony. They also understand discourse as a carrier of action. Their emphasis on the relationality of discourse as being antagonistic and naturally creating similarity and difference also fits the cases we are addressing. In the same way, Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl point out that a double dynamic is at play when the term discourse is introduced. Therefore, particular fields of action, "situations, institutional frames and social structures," influence and structure discourses, at the same time that

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[417] McGee, "The 'Ideograph,'" 4.
[418] Ibid, 6.
[419] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 2001).

"discourses influence discursive as well as non- discursive social and political processes and actions."[420] We will see that Mawdudi's and Qutb's radical discursive orders both shape and are shaped by the modernity they oppose. The Catholic and Calvinist political theologians discussed in this dissertation engage in a critique of modernity focused on the same ideologies of nationalism, liberalism, and socialism/communism.

4.2 Ideological Alterity and the Discursive Other

Following the model of Mouffe and Laclau, we will in this section compare the discursive orders of Qutb and Mawdudi as polemical, exclusionary instruments targeting a modernity perceived as a hegemonic and threatening non-Islamic Otherness. As Jacob Torfing notes, this antagonistic vocation generates inner stability in a discourse while also keeping the configuration dynamic and open.[421] Qutb and Mawdudi's discursive constructions also address a double hegemony: on the one hand, the mainstream *ulema*, and on the other, the language of Western modernity which inflicts trauma by replacing traditional Islamic discourse and identity. As in the previous chapter, we apply a methodological perspective that has little precedent in the literature on religious radicalism. As in the case of comparative hermeneutics, which is a field in development, critical discourse analysis has been little applied to the topic of religiously justified radical thought, despite its now established status[422] as a pluralistic, interdisciplinary, and creative theoretically coherent paradigm. The few examples that do exist will now be briefly reviewed.

Kathleen C. Boone's study *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* and Sharon Crowley's *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism* are two systematic works focused on fundamentalism as a specific discursive order.[423] Boone's analysis of the writings of the seminal twentieth-century Protestant fundamentalists: Benjamin B.

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[420] Wodak and Reisigl, eds. *Discourse and Discrimination,* 36.

[421] Howarth and Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, 16.

[422] The critical discourse analysis model has been successfully applied in the study of modern anti-Semitism and racism see: Van Dijk, *Discourse, Racism and Ideology*; Wodak and Reisigl, eds. *Discourse and Discrimination*. It has also recently been applied to the concept of Islamophobia; see: Paul Baker, Costa Gabrielatos, and Tony McEnery, *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[423] Kathleen C. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism (*London: SCM Press, 1990); Sharon Crowley, *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006). See also: Noel Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis: Ideology and Identity in Christian Discourse Today,* (Oxford: Peter Lang Pub Inc., 2000); Bernhard Kettemann and Georg Marko, "But what does the Bible Really Say? A Critical Analysis of Fundamentalist Discourse," *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanist* 30, no. 1-2 (2005): 201-226.

Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Carl F. H. Henry and Francis Schaeffer is conducted via the concept of impersonal power of the fundamentalist discourse. Her work is centered on the preeminence of discourse over individual charisma, which she identifies as the chief reason for the remarkable persistence of fundamentalism in North America.

Jacob Høigilt's recent work: *Islamist Rhetoric*: *Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, systematically employs Michael Halliday's notion of functional grammar to selected works of the three contemporary influential Islamist thinkers Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Amr Khalid and Muhammad Imara.[424] By focusing on the link between rhetoric, religion and social action seen through three linguistic areas (pronoun use, mood choices and configurations of processes and participants), Høigilt investigates how Islamism was forged as a dominant ideology in Egyptian society.

Lastly, Robert Grausam's article "The Language of Islamic Fundamentalism," Mansoor Moaddel's *Islamic Modernism*, *Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*: *Episode and Discourse*, and the very recent piece by Carool Kersten and Susanne Olsson entitled, *Alternative Islamic Discourses and Religious Authority* [425] map the discursive landscape of fundamentalism, identifying both the "denotation" and "connotation" of the Islamic radical discursive order.[426] This chapter expands on this body of work by adding a comparative, cross-religious perspective.

4.3 Political Theology as Polemics Against the Ideological Other

The complex and traumatic encounter between Islam and Western modernity generated an extensive reconfiguration of politics, theology and culture in the Muslim world, to which Qutb and Mawdudi reply by forging a new Islamic political consciousness and creating an anti-hegemonic Islamic ideology. It is important to understand that Qutb's and Mawdudi's critical rejection of modern ideologies do not imply a rejection of ideology itself, but rather a deconstruction in which ideology, with positive connotations, is consciously integrated in an Islamist system. Islam is presented the perfect revolutionary ideology, capable of purifying and intergrating Western

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[424] Jacob Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric*: *Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[425] Robert Grausam, "The Language of Islamic Fundamentalism," *Arbeiten Aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 30, no. 1-2 (2005): 227-241; Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism*, *Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*: *Episode and Discourse* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005); Carool Kersten and Susanne Olsson, eds., *Alternative Islamic Discourses and Religious Authority* (Farnham, CA: Ashgate, 2013).
[426] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power,* ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

ideological imports. This move is prompted by the fact that Qutb and Mawdudi wrote from within a hegemonic and seductive modernity, which pushed the concept of ideology towards the center of Muslim definition of the self. The absorption of the concept of ideology among the educated strata of Muslim societies then changed traditional reflection on Otherness.[427] In this section, we will deconstruct the conceptual architecture of Qutb and Mawdudi's critique of modernity from the point of view of ideological appropriation. We will see that, despite both making this move, Qutb is more concentrated on asserting Islamic purity, while Mawdudi is more inclined to absorb and Islamize material derived straight from Western political thought.

The context in which Islamist political theology developed in this manner is the postcolonial era, in which the traditional Islamic collective and individual *Weltanschauungen* were challenged by non-Islamic—and more importantly, non-religious—social, political, economic and cultural alternatives. As a result, the Muslim world was pushed to the periphery of modern configurations of power and relations between Islam and religious and non-religious alterities evolved towards a fundamental asymmetry where modern ideologies became hegemonic. Consequently, nationalism, communism, socialism and democracy gained a symbolic capital at the expense of the Islamic tradition. The vertical solidarity of the Muslim *ummah* was gradually replaced by the horizontal solidarity of the modern nation, with religious identity becoming just one of several elements of a nation-based collective identity.[428]

In this new landscape, the purely theological polemics of the traditionalist *ulema* was no longer sufficient or even relevant. In a world in which the influence of other monotheisms was severely diminished in their own historical and geographical areas, religious polemics lost its practical, mobilizing importance. Enter the theorists of the Islamic renewal movement, who identify new terms for their activist vision of Islam and forge a new critical paradigm by internalizing and Islamizing the modern concept of ideology. Ideology, of course, has multiple meanings. A short excursus is necessary to understand precisely which understanding of ideology was taken up by our two Islamist political theologians.

As John B. Thompson notices, the term ideology "has a long and complex history,

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[427] The classical and medieval Islamic theology had a clear polemical vocation, which despite the fact that it was not the sole feature of Islam, it remained a pivotal element in relation to religious alterity. Contrasting with the modern period, in the medieval period the polemical dialogue was structured in a context where Islam had a strategic position of relative political and intellectual superiority.

[428] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

appearing in the writing of many authors and infiltrating nearly every modern discipline in social sciences and humanities."[429] Within this widespread dissemination process, the concept of ideology was employed in just two fundamentally antagonistic ways. The critical, negative definition of ideology, which was derived from the Marxist critique, was first expressed in Marx and Engels' seminal text, *German Ideology*.[430] In this view, ideology is rejected as the embodiment of an illusion, a mechanism created by the hegemonic class and maintained through alienation and political oppression. Ideology appears to have a sole function: the distortion of the real world in order to create and enforce a false consciousness. As Paul Ricoeur noted, this definition of ideology as "distortion-dissimulation"[431] which implies a massive falsification of the praxis, can be grounded in Feuerbach's thesis of religion as a paradigmatic *camera obscura* of reality.[432]

The neutral or positive definition of ideology stands in direct contrast.[433] At this level, ideology is best defined by Theun Van Dijk as a "dynamic system of social representations that defines a certain social identity of a group or community based on shared believes about fundamental conditions of existence, reproduction and dissemination."[434] Here the term "ideology" is stripped of its negative connotations. It is no more the malign term of the classical dichotomy reality versus ideology or defined as the harbinger of a systemic falsity. Once accepted as a social or cultural binder, which can produce and justify values, norms or beliefs, ideologies go beyond hegemony based on a relation of pure domination. In this reading, ideology's basic objectives are the integration of differences in a unified collective mainframe and justification of any type of authority through universal norms and principles.[435]

4.4 Islamization of Ideology in Mawdudi's Discursive Order

Mawdudi is without doubt one of the major intellectual sources of Islamic radicalism. His ideological and polemical discourse remains paradigmatic even beyond the geo-political and linguistic boundaries of the Indian subcontinent. His vision of Islam as a comprehensive

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[429] John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1984).
[430] Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, Inc, 1939), 13.
[431] Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 276.
[432] "Religion is the dream of the human mind. But even in dreams we do not find ourselves in emptiness or in heaven, but on earth, in the realm of reality; we only see real things in the entrancing splendor of imagination and caprice, instead of the simple daylight of reality and necessity." See: Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* 2nd ed., (London: Trubner & Co., 1881), xiii.
[433] Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*; Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.
[434] Theun Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998), 32.
[435] Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 279.

"revolutionary ideology"[436] is marked by a trait common to the entire current of Islamic radicalism, namely ideological acculturation. Though aiming at "intellectual independence"[437] by reinforcing Islam as the sole locus of cultural and religious authenticity, Mawdudi's affirmation of *homo islamicus* does not finally translate into the insularization of the Muslim thought. As Nasr notices, he constantly draws, despite defining Muslim identity in terms of differences from Westerners and Hindus, on "the intellectual repertoire of the West," that tendency being "characteristic of movements that encounter ideas regarded as superior to their own."[438] Very different from the conservative mainstream *ulema*, Mawdudi fully acknowledges the force of the Western *episteme*. Thus he infuses his theory of Islamic revivalism (*tajdid*) with modern concepts such as revolution, ideology, democracy and social justice. As he regards the *ulema*'s vision of traditional Islam as an important cause of the political and economic backwardness of Muslim societies, his polemics against modernity is also an attempt to Islamize the modern space by modernizing the Islamic discursive order itself.[439]

It is essential to notice that for Mawdudi, as for Qutb and other anti-modern political theologians, all modern ideologies have a religious understructure and all religions have an ideological component. Mawdudi's definition of *din*, which will influence Qutb, is important here. *Din* is usually translated as "religion," though a better rendition is "comprehensive way of life." In his seminal work *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms*, published in the late 1940s and translated in Arabic in 1955, Mawdudi defines *din* as a complete way of life structured around the four principles of sovereignty and supreme authority, obedience and submission to such authority, the system of thought and action established through the exercise of authority, and finally, retribution by the authority, for either loyalty and obedience or rebellion and transgression.[440]

Mawdudi elaborates on the term *din* with more precision in his very popular collection of Friday congregational addresses from the late 1930s, translated in English as *Let Us Be Muslims*. Designed to persuade and inform a less educated audience from Punjab, this work is written in a very direct and colloquial style; but it essentially contains all the major themes of Mawdudi's pre-

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[436] A.A. Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, ed. Huda Khattab, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Birmingham, UK: UKIM Dawah Center, 1995), 7.
[437] Nasr, *Mawdudi and The Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 49.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Leonard Binder analyzed Mawdudi's political creation, Jamaat-e-Islami, as showcasing both a "desire for reform" and a similar "desire for modernity." See Leonard Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 73.
[440] A.A. Mawdudi, *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms*, trans. Abu Asad (Lahore: Islamic Foundation, 2000).

Partition perspective. *Let Us Be Muslims* clearly and univocally defines *din* in political terms: "*Din*, therefore, actually means the same thing as state and government; *Shari'ah* is the law of that state and government; and '*Ibadah* amounts to following and complying with that law."[441] The equivalence between politics and religion is complete. Thus accepting the authority of God is tantamount to full religious conversion, and submitting to the sovereignty of any being other than him is apostasy:

> Whenever you accept someone as your ruler and submit to his orders, you have entered that person's *Din*. If you accept that God is your ruler, you have entered God's *Din*; if your ruler is some particular nation, you have entered that nation's *Din*; and if it is your own nation or your people, then you have entered the people's *Din*. To whatever you submit yourselves, you have entered its *Din*; and you are performing the *'Ibadah* of the one whose laws you are following.[442]

In zero-sum fashion, Mawdudi stresses that no ambivalence, hybridity, or pluralistic identity is possible when an individual submits to a specific *din*. Thus, for instance, submission to the sovereignty of a nation state, even if that is one's motherland, cannot be combined with Islam: "In reality, when you are adherents of God's *din*, there will be no room for any other *din*."[443]

Mawdudi also sees *din*s of any kind as powerful structures. A powerless *din* is a contradiction in terms, for religions and quasi-religions (meaning ideologies) are totalistic and monopolistic at their core:

> A total *din*, whatever its nature, wants power for itself; the prospect of sharing power is unthinkable. Whether it is popular sovereignty or monarchy, communism or Islam, or any other *din,* it must govern to establish itself. A *din* without power to govern is just like a building that exists in the mind only.[444]

These passages from *Let Us Be Muslims* show Mawdudi to be the first modern Islamist thinker to forge an Islamist political theology centered, like all political theologies, on religion as the carrier of genuine political power enforcing real sovereignty. Mawdudi's objective is threefold. First, he attacks the pietistic, politically neutral definition of religion professed by the *ulema.* Second, he counters the pervasive ethos of modern nationalism, which had pushed religion to the periphery by replacing it with a secular yet equally binding civil religiosity. And lastly, his reinterpretation of *din* as a comprehensive way of life combining reflection with action and piety with authority is intended as the first step in a larger strategy of Islamization of modern ideographs.

Sovereignty is the most prominent of these ideographs. The *din* of Islam is defined as a

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[441] Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims*, 296.
[442] Ibid.
[443] Ibid, 297.
[444] Ibid.

system in which "God alone is the Lord of everything on earth and He alone is the Sovereign…and His *Shari'ah* alone must govern all affairs of our lives."[445] Mawdudi's political construction of God's Sovereignty is clear and strong:

> What does God's sovereignty imply? That His writ must run supreme in the world: legal judgments must be based on His *Shari'ah*, the police must operate according to His commandments, financial transactions must be carried out in conformity with His laws, taxes must be levied as directed by Him and spent as specified by Him, the Civil Service and the army must obey His code, people must devote their abilities, capacities, and efforts to fulfilling His desires. Further, God alone must be feared, His subjects must submit to Him only, and man must not serve anyone but Him.[446]

4.4.1 The Ideological State

The framework in which God's Sovereignty is fully applicable is what Mawdudi conceptualizes as the Islamic state. The concept of the Islamic state is at the core of Mawdudi's political theology and also the place where much of his absorption and Islamization of Western ideological concepts is rendered visible. His construction here is rather novel, as Abdul Kader Tayob notes, "it seems to represent the ultimate and original idea of the Islamic state."[447] The most important characteristic of Mawdudi's Islamic state is that it embodies a clear ideology, as he himself says, "another character of the Islamic state is that it is an ideological state"[448] Mawdudi's state "ideology" (*nazariyat)* functions at two levels. On the one hand, it is axiologically pure and politically stable. On the other, it represents a perfect technology of the Muslim self, designed to create the space in which free but responsible individuals thrive. This vacillation between holism and what might be called super-individualism[449] is also present in Qutb's political theology and it remains important in the discourse of contemporary Islamism overall.

The "ideological" Islamic state represents an all-inclusive community that is both religious and political and transcends nation and race, for "its approach is universal and all embracing [and] its sphere of activity is coextensive with the whole of human life." The ideological Islamic state "seeks to mold every aspect of life and activity in consonance with its moral norms and program of social reform… [so that] no one can regard any field of his affairs as personal and private.[450]

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[445] Ibid, 299.
[446] Ibid.
[447] Abdulkader Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 116.
[448] Mawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans., Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 146.
[449] We borrowed this term from Kenneth Burke. See Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" in *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 210.
[450] A.A. Mawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans., Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications,) 1980, 126.

The principles of the ideologically-driven Islamic state are simple and non-negotiable.[451] The first principle, divine government or *Hukumat-i-ilahiyah*,[452] denotes a politico-theological configuration in which God is the only real sovereign and any other person, group, class, or nation mere subject. The *Hakimiyah* or Divine Sovereignty that is sketched in Mawdudi's *tafsir* is at the very centre of his discourse in his polemical works, and it is in fact here that we find its original expression.[453]

God's Sovereignty is not symbolic or metaphysical. It is a real force with absolute monopoly over creation and especially law. No independent legislation can subtract from or add to God's law, regardless of the consent of the subject. Thus it is *Shari'ah* that governs the Islamic state exclusively, without the presence of any separate positive law,[454] for government remains legitimate and can demand obedience only as long as it enforces God's law directly, continuously and comprehensively. The moment a government creates a space of exception outside the divine order, loyalty is no longer owed and its subjects must actively resist. Employing Jürgen Moltmann's seminal distinction,[455] we can argue that the vision of Mawdudi (as well as that of Qutb) is commensurable with a covenantal political theology, centered on the doctrine of *Hakimiyah* (God's Sovereignty). This model is forged as a radical resistance against man made absolute sovereignty embodied in the multifaceted political theology of the modern Leviathan and in what Alexander T. Schulman aptly termed "the secular contract."[456] It is clear that Mawdudi's objective is to Islamize the modern ideograph of popular sovereignty by wresting away its

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[451] A.A. Mawdudi, *Political theory of Islam,* trans., Khurshid Ahmad (Delhi: Taj Company, 1969), 60.

[452] The literal translation is: "the government which is ruled exclusively through God's legislation."

[453] As Shahbaz Ahmad Cheema observes, one of Mawdudi's main critics, Wahid-ud-Din Khan rejects Mawdudi political perspective as limitative and patently confrontational, reducing everything to the concept of *hukumat-i-illahiya*. For a comparative analysis between Khan and Mawdudi, see: Shahbaz Ahmad Cheema*, "*Problematizing the Religious Basis of Maududi's Political Theory," *Studies on Asia Series IV* 3, no. 2 (October 2013): 52-82.

[454] S. A. Arjomand claims that Mawdudi showcases a "persistent and pervasive confusion between law-finding by individual legal experts and law-making by collective bodies, between legislation and jurisprudence." See: S. A. Arjomand, "Religion and Constitutionalism in Western History and Modern Iran and Pakistan," in *The Political Dimensions of Religions,* ed. S. A. Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 94. Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr as well shares this theoretical standpoint.

[455] Jürgen Moltmann regards the dichotomy between the state centered theology of the Leviathan (originating in Thomas Hobbes's epoch making political treaty) and the people centered covenant theology (derived from the Monarchomarcs's critique of Catholic absolutism) as the essence of classical political theology. See Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 24-71.

[456] Alexander T. Schulman defines the secular contract as based upon the seminal idea "that humans can in some sense create their own political universe on this earth, un-predetermined by a law-giving *theos* and constrained only by certain natural conditions." See: Alexander T Schulman, *The Secular Contract: The Politics of Engagement* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 2. Qutb reaction is exactly against this type of human contract to which he opposes the divine covenant.

egalitarian and participative core. God's Sovereignty, as Qutb will also incessantly declare, is the only guarantee of perfect equality and complete freedom, because it completely eliminates any form of human dominance.

Mawdudi's ideological Islamic state with its fusion of politics and religion could easily be mistaken for a theocracy.[457] However, the Pakistani thinker adamantly rejects the term, claiming that it cannot be applied to his model since the source of sovereignty is God himself and His will expressed through *Shari'ah* rather than any living, breathing human being. Moreover, real control over the application and interpretation of God's law is not monopolized by a restricted caste of specialists. Rather, it is in the hands of "ordinary Muslims":

> It [the Islamic state] would grant limited popular sovereignty to Muslims under the paramount sovereignty of God. In this [state], the executive and the legislature would be formed in consultation with the Muslims. Only Muslims would have the right to remove them. Administrative and other issues, regarding which there are no clear orders in the *Shari'ah*, would be settled only with the consensus of Muslims. If the law of God needs interpretation no special group or race but all those Muslims would be entitled to interpret (*ijtihad*) who have achieved the capability of interpretation.[458]

Mawdudi calls this construction 'theo-democracy," a concept unprecedented in modern Islamic thought. He includes the word "democracy" in order to provide his ideological state with an Islamic version of the ideograph, essential since the French Revolution, of popular sovereignty by combining it with "theo," he draws at the same time on God's Sovereignty, another concept with a great symbolic capital and persuasive power. Thus "theo-democracy" is essentially used as an alternative to the modern and seductive notion of "power to the people."

As a mirror image of the nation-state (the political matrix of modernity), Mawdudi's ideological state also takes up its ideals in its own way, and finally exceeds them. It is presented as a genuinely open community where the only criterion for admission is adherence to its ideology, as Mawdudi confirms:

> It is a dictate of this very nature of the Islamic state that such a state should be run only by those who believe in the ideology on which it is based and in the divine law which is it assigned to administer… The Islamic state is based on a particular ideology and it is a community which believes in the Islamic ideology that pilots it [459]

Mawdudi is aware that he has to differentiate his ideological state from communist and fascist models, these being the other two well-known types of ideological states in his time. He thus seeks

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[457] See: Jackson, *Mawdudi and Political Islam*, 131.
[458] A.A. Mawdudi, *Islamic Rule*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (London: Islamic Publications Ltd, 1969), 130.
[459] A.A. Mawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans., Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1980), 146.

to differentiate it using the very modern concept of individual liberty.[460] This he does by emphasizing the nature of the state as an ethical community of faith which nurtures that very liberty. An ethical state guaranteed by the complete sovereignty of God, virtuous leadership (*imamat-i-salihah*) and divine government (*hukumat-i-ilahiyah*) is perfectly able to preserve the liberty and integrity of each human being. Mawdudi's accommodation of liberty allows him, not incidentally, to construct an ideal middle term between the collectivism of communism and individualism of liberal democracy.

This Islamic alternative to the modern nation state is finally presented as the only formula capable of unifying the world and establishing an axiological space in which humanity can regain the status conferred by God (as per Qur'an 2:30) of "authority [conferred by God] on earth," as Mawdudi says: "From the dawn of history, down to modern days, Islam is the only system in the world that seeks to organize the state on the basis of an ideology free from all traces of nationalism and invites mankind to form a non-national state by accepting its ideological basis."[461]

What of those who reject Islamic ideology? Mawdudi's answer is that they fall into the traditional category of *ahl al-dhimmah.* This is a loaded theological and legal term, conferring a second-class citizenship with no right of political action. We saw in the previous chapter that Mawdudi, unlike Qutb, is very preoccupied with the status of minorities.[462] By incorporating the concept of *ahl al-dhimma* into the rhetoric of tolerance and democracy, Mawdudi answers to the accusations of liberals that the *dhimmah-jizyah* system is a non-democratic means to dominate minorities.

The Pakistani thus portrays *ahl al-dhimmah* and *jizyah* as the normal outcome of the very democratic principle of majority rule. Comparison with communist totalitarianism is rejected as invalid because Islam is not a system of oppression and dominance that forces its social and political principles on others.[463] In addition, political exclusion is not doubled by economic exclusion, given that the right to private property remains secure and unrestricted. Finally non-Muslims do have the choice of leaving behind their "protected" status and becoming full members of the *ummah* through conversion.

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[460] A.A. Mawdudi, *Political Theory of Islam*, in Khurshid Ahmad, ed., *Islam: Its Meaning and Message* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1976), 159–61.
[461] Mawdudi, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, 4.
[462] For a more extensive presentation of Mawdudi's perspective on non-Islamic minorities, see A.A. Mawdudi, *Human Rights in Islam*, 13th ed., trans., Khurshid Amad (Ann Arbour, MI: New Era Publications, 1981).
[463] Mawdudi*, Political Theory of Islam* (1960), 147.

For Mawdudi, the exclusion of non-Muslims from exercise of power is essentially a safety precaution that allows the purity of Islamic ideology to be maintained. Thus despite this apparent exception, he is still able to present the Islamic state as the perfect alternative to both socialism and capitalism. The ideological Islamic state offers equal access to power, regardless of race, nationality or class. Islam is once again confirmed as the only system in the world capable of building an axiological frame that "combines all the virtues of democracy, capitalism and communism, rejecting at the same time the negative feature of that system."[464]

Notice how Mawdudi emphasizes the superior syncretism of Islam, which is defined as a *summa* of all positive attributes found in ideological alterity. This syncretic vocation of the Islamic state can be considered a modern version of supercession. Islam is perfectly able to purify, internalize, and finally supersede all modern ideologies. One might go so far as to say that, in Mawdudi's view, Islamic ideology is in fact the end of all ideologies.

A final observation must be made about utopianism. Mawdudi does not regard his Islamic state as theoretical or utopian. Rather it is a reconfiguration of an already perfect archetype proven to function in an empirical space wihich was the Islamic polity created by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina. As we shall see in the case of Qutb, the radical Islamic discursive order is always anti-utopian in its discourse. The rhetoric of pragmatism and political realism provides Mawdudi with a structure for a comprehensive theory of Islamic revolution, seen as the practical instrument to realize Islamic ideology.

4.4.2 Islamic Revolution

In Mawdudi's view, the Islamic state as the divine Caliphate cannot be realized in the midst of a modernity infected with materialism and mutilated by modern tribalism. Consequently, the existing un-Islamic social and political order should be completely erased from the Muslim world. As Nasr puts it, Islam in Mawdudi's vision is "a revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary practice which aims to destroy the social order of the world totally and rebuilding it from the scratch."[465]

The main obstacles for the success of this Islamic revolutionary project are not social, economical or even political, but axiological: immorality, *bid'ah* (unauthorized, inauthentic

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[464] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 106.
[465] Ibid, 70.

innovation within Islam) and *munkarat* (moral vices). It is because of this strong ethical focus that Islamic revolution is viewed not as a violent rupture of the existing order, but rather a "gradual and evolutionary process of cultural, social and political reforms" which alters the ethical fiber of society by shaping practice according to Islamic norms and values.[466]

Unlike Qutb's elitist vision of a small revolutionary vanguard of "born again" Islamic warriors, Mawdudi's perspective is focused on the action of masses under the command of a large Islamized intelligentsia. Newly minted Muslim scientists, historians, economists, jurists and politicians will take over intellectual and political leadership, thus creating the landscape for the action of the masses:

> The Islamic Revolution can be brought about only when a mass movement is initiated based on the theories and conceptions of the Qur'an and example and practice of Muhammad (peace be upon him) which would, by a powerful struggle, effect a wholesale change in the intellectual, moral, psychological, and cultural foundations of social life.[467]

The moment when the mentality of the masses is completely structured by the concept of Divine Sovereignty is when the Islamic revolution can begin. At this zero hour, full understanding of God's Sovereignty will make loyalty to any other system *de facto* unbearable. This vision of revolution is less an expression of Islamized Marxism than the classical doctrine of political conservatism that envisions the organic growth of society around an axiological axis. Mawdudi does frequently invoke Western revolutions: the French Revolution, by bringing up names such as Voltaire and Rousseau, the Russian Revolution by mentioning Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, and the National-Socialist revolution by referring to Hitler. He rarely, however, goes beyond superficial juxtaposition, and his organic, evolutionary "revolution" is finally similar only in the formal sense of involving a movement, a particular type of leadership, a special type of consciousness and a particular ethical background.

Nevertheless, the presence in Mawdudi's thought of the concept of a revolutionary vanguard shows that he is far from immune to the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution.[468] Marxist influence is clearly visible in the preeminence of terms such as system, revolution, party, vanguard and ideology. These concepts somewhat justify accusations of inauthenticity brought forward by some of Mawdudi's critics. The Indian modernist Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (b. 1925), for

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[466] Ibid, 77.
[467] Mawdudi, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, 10.
[468] Mawdudi was more fluent in Western political theory than Qutb was, and his textual references illustrate this difference.

example, rejects Mawdudi's concept of *Nizam al-Islam* as completely non-Islamic, accusing him of parroting Marxist discourse by placing an invented "totalitarian 'Islamic system'" at the centre of "a political interpretation of Islam, which has no precedent or warrant in the Islamic tradition."[469] Despite the undeniable presence of non-Islamic concepts, however, the archetypal model of the revolutionary leader and supreme bearer of a pure, universal revolutionary ethos in Mawdudi's thought remains the Prophet Muhammad, and prophecy itself is interpreted as the most revolutionary message ever presented to mankind:

> There is no doubt that all the Prophets of God, without exception, were Revolutionary Leaders, and the illustrious Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was the greatest Revolutionary Leader of all. But there is something which distinguishes these Revolutionary Leaders, who worshipped God alone, from the general, run-of-the-mill, worldly revolutionaries: these worldly revolutionaries, however honest and sincere their intentions may be, can never attain to a perfect level of justice and moderation.[470]

In contrast to the Prophet Muhammad, all worldly revolutionary leaders have been prisoners of their *Zeitgeist,* condemned to disseminate an incomplete message based on class conflict, resentment and hatred. Because of these limitations, their efforts will fail, resulting only the replacement of an oppressive minority with the tyranny of the majority. Social conflict will continue. The Islamic revolution, in contrast, is the real world revolution capable of unifying all of humanity around Divine Sovereignty. The universalist principle, again, is not theoretical or utopian. Rather than an abstract claim extracted from an artificial theory, it is a normal outcome of the Qur'anic revelation, which communicated the universal and trans-historical message of the Creator to the whole of His creation. In other words, the Islamic revolution is universal by definition because the universality of religion guarantees the universality of its revolutionary message: "Islam does not intend to confine this rule to a single state or to a handful of countries. The aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution."[471]

Mawdudi's vision of ideology, the Islamic state and Islamic revolution can be summed up in two points. Firstly, his objective is to gain the control over the ideographs of revolution, ideology, sovereignty and equality. As these were regarded as the monopoly of Marxism, nationalism and democracy, Mawdudi realized that he could compete with modernity and its seductive ideologies only if he could, as far as possible, Islamize them. Secondly, Mawdudi aimed

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[469] Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Political Interpretation of Islam*, 7.
http://www.cpsglobal.org/sites/default/files/Political%20Interpretation%20of%20Islam.pdf
[470] Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 12.
[471] Ibid, 17.

to Islamize the very concept of ideology. Ideology, as we have seen above, gains a positive sense by being associated with Islamic classical concepts. It comes to represent a comprehensive system of beliefs and political concepts that serve as a frame for collective identity and shared ethical norms. Islamic ideology, despite its hybridity, is forged not as the expression of "false consciousness" produced by hegemonic power. On the contrary, it is a genuinely anti-hegemonic force that provides the new Islamic intelligentsia with a framework for resistance, opposition and revolutionary change. As formulated by Mawdudi, Islam is the perfect divine ideology in terms of universality, ethical normativity, political realism, and last but not least, eschatology and soteriology. The choice between the incomplete and fallacious ideologies of modernity and the Islamic model should thus be an easy one.

4.5 Islam and Ideological Alterity: A Perpetually Comparative Model

Religious and non-religious Otherness has always been a challenge for Islamic thought. Otherness is also, however, a catalyst for self-reflexivity and self-definition. This dialogical vocation is fully present in Mawdudi's political theology. It will be clear by now that Mawdudi's appropriation of ideology is the outcome of a continual dialogue with modernity and its ideologies, which serves to affirm the superiority and uniqueness of Islamic system.

Some scholars have judged Mawdudi's appropriation and hybridization to have gone so far that the Islamic content of his state theory became almost non-existent.[472] In fact, the super-structure of all of Mawdudi's political throught is built around the Qur'an and remains basically Islamic. His engagement with modernity is indeed dialogical, but it is in no way a conversation between equals. His theological and political argument is rather aimed at proving Islam's absolute superiority in all realms.

Nevertheless, his discourse is not merely apologetic. Rather, it is thoroughly modern. His vision is very different from that of the *ulema*, who tend to simply excommunicate modernity without any differentiation and on the basis of tautological arguments, i.e. modernity is a priori rejected because it is modern. Wholesale rejection of modernity is not an option for Mawdudi because the Muslim youth he hoped to reach had been already thoroughly exposed to non-Islamic systems that shaped their understanding of the world. Ergo, a more refined and conceptually apt Islamic critique would be needed to gain control over essential ideographs. Thus he countered the

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[472] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 88.

seduction of Western ideological alterity by matching its strong concepts with ideographs extracted from a reinterpreted Islamic tradition. The most prominent of these ideographs are: universality, internal coherence, protection from anomie (*fitnah*), and closeness to the ideal of *Tawhid*. Of these, universality is the master ideograph, since it is the necessary condition for the others. Mawdudi thus enters in a sharp polemical dialogue with the main ideological expressions of political modernity—communism, imperialism, nationalism, capitalism, and democracy—using the ideograph of universality as criterion.

Mawdudi—and, as we will see, Qutb and Cortés—regard the pretended universalism of communism, Marxism, and socialism as mutilated and inconsistent. Medieval accusations against Christianity and Judaism of partiality—which Mawdudi, as we shall see below, repeats—are now applied to socialism and communism. This is no doubt partly because all ideologies are considered religions of a kind; both socialism and communism are thought to be ethos-based models preaching the message of universal brotherhood, but in effect originating from and, in truth, replicating a fundamental sectarian structure. Marxism, for instance, damages the universality of social and economic equality by enforcing a narrow vision based on the sectarian ideal of the proletariat as the "chosen class." The following passage from Mawdudi's *tafsir* draws together medieval Islamic mythology of the Jewish conspiracy against Islam with its modern version that focuses on the alleged Jewish roots of atheism and Marxism:

> The Jews on the whole are not satisfied with their own deviation from the path of God. They have become such inherent criminals that their brains and resources seem to be behind almost every movement which arises for the purpose of misleading and corrupting human beings. And whenever there arises a movement to call people to the truth, the Jews are inclined to oppose it, even though they are the bearers of the Scriptures and inheritors of the message of the Prophets. Their latest contribution is Communism, which is the product of a Jewish brain and which was developed under Jewish leadership.[473]

Behind the communist states universalist rhetoric of freedom and equality, says Mawdudi, it creates an oppressive order in which force is the main instrument and private property is denied, resulting in "a reign of terror by mass executions of the people and their transportation to the slave camps of Siberia."[474] Mawdudi's constant objective is to destroy the seductive power of Marxist-communist universalist and egalitarian discourse so that he can erect a potent Islamic ideograph of a just order in its place.

In order to attain this goal, Mawdudi uses a combination of apologetic and diatribe to create

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[473] Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, 111.
[474] Mawdudi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, 147.

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a discourse that mirrors the opposing ideology. Thus, in direct opposition to the grim reality of the communist state, Islam is presented as a system which tolerates minorities, protects difference of opinion and guarantees private property, all the while maintaining a "fine distinction… between justice and injustice and good and evil."[475] As Cortés did a century before, Mawdudi, and as we shall see Qutb as well, construct their radical critique of socialism by portraying it as Islam's specular opposite: dangerous, seductive, and powerful. Liberalism, on the other hand, is an opposite mirror image of Islam remaining weak, artificial and evanescent.

4.5.1 Imperialism

Mawdudi understands the aim of imperialism to be the unification of humanity on the basis of Western civilization, progress and reason. However, as in the case of the *ersatz* universality of communism, this seemingly benign message masks a "universalism of moral decay," not least because imperialism is a vehicle for secularism and nationalism. Imperialism may succeed in the short term, but its purported universalism has an innate defect: it is sectarianism based on racial domination of white man. In other words, as Qutb will also argue, modern imperialism is nothing more than hegemonic, expansionist, institutionalized racism. Moreover, as it is based on power, conquest and domination, imperialist ideology has no ethical principles. This is why modern warfare, the natural instrument of imperialism, institutes a system of oppression, exclusion and inhumane violence. Mawdudi's polemic against imperialism is in fact largely aimed at its wars.

The specular Other of modern imperialist war is Islamic *Jihad* as an axiologically pure form of combat in the way of God.[476] Though it may appear that "imperialism and Islam alike conquer countries, there is an essential difference between the two…as vast as the space between the heaven and the earth."[477] As we noted in the previous chapter, *Jihad*, the literal meaning of which is said to be "to exert one's utmost efforts in promoting a cause,"[478] was prominent in Mawdudi's apologetics from the beginning of his career with the appearance of his work on *Jihad* published at the age of twenty-three. More than for Qutb *Jihad* for Mawdudi is an ethical yardstick in an ongoing comparison with modern forms of warfare. The objective of the ethically pure

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[475] Ibid.

[476] "You have no right to start fighting for power until you have cleansed your hearts of all selfishness. You should develop such purity of heart that when you fight you do not fight for personal or national aggrandizement, but solely to secure God's pleasure and to improve the lot of His creation" See: Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims*, 291.

[477] Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 21.

[478] Ibid, 7.

combat of *Jihad* is ultimately to guarantee the welfare of humanity by actively eliminating all un-Islamic systems by "abolishing the lordship of man over man and bringing him under the rule of the One God."[479] Mawdudi is one of the first, if not the first, modern Islamist thinker to reject defensive *Jihad*, as he does in the following passage while also managing to retain a positive veneer of defence:

> Islamic *Jihad* is both offensive and defensive, at one and the same time. It is offensive, because the Muslim party attacks the rule of an opposing ideology and it is defensive because the Muslim party is constrained to capture state power to protect the principles of Islam in space-time forces. [480]

Mawdudi's conceptual shift of *Jihad* greatly influenced Qutb's idea, so important in his *tafsir*, of offensive, universal *Jihad*.

Jihad is described not just as a political instrument designed to produce a radical regime change, but as a bringer of ethical and economic justice. Mawdudi describes modernity as a space of oppression, injustice, inequality and corruption, in which taxes, the justice system, banks, and the religious elites "ruin the life, wealth, honor and morality of God's creation and there is nobody to stop them."[481] Muslims, whoever and wheverever they may be, must thus "strive to change the wrong basis of government, and seize all powers to rule and make laws from those who do not fear God,"[482] and a properly Islamic leadership must be established so that it can create an environment in which all political decisions are in perfect accord with God's law. The name of this effort is *Jihad*. Here we see that *Jihad* is double-edged. On the one hand, it is an anti-hegemonic, emancipatory, and revolutionary force aimed at toppling all non-Islamic political regimes. On the other, it is a creative and constructive energy or "striving" employed to generate and govern a purely Islamic *polis*.

An additional observation must be made at this point. Even if the ideological reading of *Jihad* in Mawdudi's 1939 *Jihad in Islam* seems to imply a predominantly military definition of *Jihad*, his vision is, as Nasr says "more conservative than those of other revivalists."[483] Mawdudi distances *Jihad* from Christian religious war by portraying it as a pure ethical instrument, a perpetual "struggle" (the root meaning of *Jihad*) "in the path of God" (as per the oft-repeated phrase in the Qur'an). *Jihad* has nothing to do with violence, irrational behavior and fanaticism,

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[479] Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims*, 285.
[480] Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 19.
[481] Mawdudi*, Let Us Be Muslims,* 287.
[482] Ibid, 290.
[483] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 74.

with "crazy faith …blood-shot eyes, shouting *Allahu Akbar*, decapitating an unbeliever wherever they see one, cutting off heads."[484]

Mawdudi's discourse on *Jihad*, which continued to evolve during his long career, is closely connected to the geo-political context of India and Pakistan. During the pre-Partition period of his career from 1930 to 1947, military *Jihad* was seen in Islamist circles as a possible instrument for establishing an Islamic state. In the 1950s through to the 1970s, however, a more institutional approach developed in relation to the newly created Muslim majority state of Pakistan. *Jihad* was then interpreted more as defence of the homeland applicable to a state of war. Mawdudi's thus eventually returned to a more conservative, defensive understanding,[485] while maintaining the concept of *Jihad* as the engine of emancipatory Islamic ideology in his polemical discourse against imperialism and communism.

4.5.2 Nationalism and Capitalism

While all modern ideologies are rejected both as moral fallacies and sectarian, materialistic expressions of *shirk* (associationism), the main ideological rival of Mawdudi's Islamic state remains nationalism. Nationalism seems to be regarded by Mawdudi as the dominant political philosophy of modernity. It is very relevant that in pre-Partition India, Mawdudi faced and opposed Muslim nationalism in India, distancing himself in the late 1930s from the influential Deobandi-based Jamaat Ulema-e-Hind, (Association of Muslim Scholars in India) which advocated a "composite nationalism" in which an independent India would be composed of separate Muslim and Hindu communities. Mawdudi considered this vision to be both defeatist and unrealistic. He also rejected Muhammad Ali Jinnah's hybrid Islamic-nationalism and Muhammad Iqbal's geo-political nationalism, as inconsistent and potentially dangerous for the integrity of Islamic identity.[486] Mawdudi's resistance against the creation of Pakistan is the logical outcome of his critique of nationalism.

For Mawdudi, the triumph of the nation state is so complete that no individual identity other than that of subject-citizen is conceivable and politics becomes its monopoly. Through worship of the nation state as the apex of progress and political excellence, nationalism invades

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[484] Ibid.

[485] Qutb will never go through such conceptual reconfiguration, remaining adamant in his condemnation of the defeatist doctrine of defensive jihad.

[486] See: Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 372.

and finally destroys every other ideological project produced by modernity:

> In the French Revolution we discover a faint glimpse of the idea of a state founded on a set of principles, but it soon disappeared in the darkness of Nationalism. Communism of course preached this gospel with deep fervor and did even attempt to form a state on this basis, so that the world began to take interest in the Great Russian experiment. But the evil spirit of nationalism soon possessed the Communist state and injected its poison down to its roots. [487]

In the light of the terrible destruction wrought by two World Wars, which Mawdudi understands to be due to the expansionism of the nation state, he condemns nationalism as the harbinger of "injustice and ruthlessness, cruelty and brutality, falsehood and fraud, treachery and hypocrisy, breach of trust, self-aggrandizement, exploitation and other crimes…which have become an integral part of the national policies of -certain countries."[488] It is interesting in the context of World War II to note that Mawdudi does not focus his critique on National Socialism and fascism as major ideologies of his time. These were actually never much of an object of interest for Mawdudi. Aside from a widely criticized and much debated comparison between the prophet Joseph (Yusuf) and Mussolini in the context of the emphasis on the political dimension of prophecy, Mawdudi does not focus on far–right ideologies, apparently because the essential racial component makes them automatically unfit for universalism.

In the end, despite their professed ideological super-structure, modern nation states engage in large-scale deception and hypocrisy, preaching morality and freedom while acting as "robbers and bandits" under the guise of imperialism and colonialism, regardless of their ideological principles.[489]

The painful decline of the Muslim world is precisely coordinated with the advent of nationalism, a concept that is completely alien to the Islamic model of universal community of believers. The fault lies with Muslims who adopted this alien ideology, so that "the nation to whom the idea of territorial nationalism was simply foreign…that was raised as, to quote the Qur'an, 'the best of people; raised unto mankind' adopted the non-believers' cult of nationalism and tore to pieces the precious mantle of international brotherhood that it had inherited and which others cannot get for any price."[490] As a result of this voluntary acculturation, Muslims gradually forgot the revolutionary legacy of Islam, exchanging unity, cooperation and friendship for suspicion,

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[487] Mawdudi, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, 3.
[488] A.A. Mawdudi, *Ethical Viewpoint of Islam*, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, Pakistan, 1974), 3.
[489] Ibid.
[490] A.A. Mawdudi, *Unity of the Muslim World*, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, Pakistan, 1967), 26.

hatred, and hostility wrapped in a materialistic, narrow-minded doctrine.[491] Far from a panacea for social ills and vehicle for progress, secular nationalism is the ideology of "colonial masters" who use it to divide and control the *ummah.* Mawdudi's diatribe against nationalism has a high moral tone; he speaks, for instance, of "the festering sores" of moral depravity marking nation states.[492]

Mawdudi's views on capitalism are far more nuanced and showcase his ability to synthesize Western and Islamic concepts in a coherent discursive order. Mawdudi actually coined the terms "Islamic economics" and "economic system of Islam," initially in writings appearing in the early 1940s and later in a lengthy treatise entitled *Islamic Economics (Ma'ashiyat-i-Islami)* which collected all his previous work on the topic. [493] Mawdudi is also the first Islamist thinker to speak of usury (*riba*) and (*sud*) interest, a link that became seminal in contemporary Islamic economics.[494] The Pakistani's writings on economics are too voluminous to be treated at length here, but a brief analysis of the differences between capitalism and the Islamic "economic system" is necessary in order to understand his discursive strategy of Islamization of essential ideographs such as social justice, equality, and private property.

In the same vein as Qutb in his *Social Justice in Islam*, Mawdudi concentrates particularly on justice, claiming that the Islamic economic ideal is the only system that can genuinely guarantee it.[495] For Mawdudi, liberalism, capitalism and secular democracy are above all, and to an even greater degree than communism, "contrary to social justice." [496] Capitalism is described as completely individualistic and materialistic, focused on private property, free enterprise, search for profit, competition, minimal state intervention and the primacy of capitalists over the working class. Unrestrained accumulation of wealth, limiting exchange of wealth and draining the public purse through usury, hoarding, and focus on selfish *homo oeconomicus* make social justice a

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[491] Ibid*,* 42.

[492] "The virus has spread all over the body-social, and governments and parliaments, courts and chambers of law, radio and the press, universities and educational institutions, banks and commercial combines have, in different degrees, become infected with its venom." See: Mawdudi*, Ethical Viewpoint of Islam,* 4.

[493] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 103. The most recent translation of Mawdudi's treaty is titled *First Principles of Islamic Economics*, ed., Khurshid Ahmad, trans., Ahmad Imam Shafaq Hashemi (Leicester: UK, The Islamic Foundation, 2011). Along with Mawdudi, two other Islamist thinkers set the premises for the development of the field of Islamic Economics: Anwar Iqbal Qureshi and Mahmud Ahmad.

[494] A.A. Mawdudi, *The Economic Problem of Man and its Islamic Solution*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1974), 37. Originally published in Urdu in 1947.

[495] As we will see in the next chapters, Cortés and Kuyper will argue in the same vein in their critiques of socialism from the Catholic and Calvinist perspectives.

[496] "In truth communism is the worst form of social tyranny such as was unknown even in the times of Nimrod, Pharaohs or Chenghis Khan." See: A. A. Mawdudi, *Economic System of Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., n.d.), 145.

practical impossibility. Moreover, interest, which is understood by Mawdudi to be the backbone of the capitalist financial system, is by default oppressive and unjust. As for private property, free enterprise and profit, they are in themselves perfectly benign, says Mawdudi; but they must operate in a framework of moral principles and ethical structures. Without an axiological compass, there is no distinction between benign and pathologic methods of wealth accumulation and narrow individual interests that will eventually destroy the foundations of any community.

Islam presents a mirror image of capitalism. Where capitalism allows unrestricted individualism, Islamic economics favours a balance between free economic agency and the welfare of the community. Where capitalism stresses wealth accumulation, Islamic economics encourages free circulation of resources. Whereas capitalism is essentially amoral, the Islamic economic system includes the most perfect ethical instrument available to mankind in the form of *Zakat.* In the same manner as Qutb and the prominent theorist of Islamic economics Khurshid Ahmad,[497] Mawdudi forges his model of Islamic economics around this fifth pillar of Islam. In a massive process of conceptual reconfiguration continued by Qutb in his *Social Justice in Islam*, *Zakat* is eventually transformed from a religious term associated with piety into a major ideograph structuring the entire field of Islamic economics.

Exactly like Qutb, Mawdudi shows little to no interest in discussing or even mentioning Western economic theories. The two Islamist thinkers obviously have no training in the field, or even social sciences overall. But this is probably not the only reason for not engaging enonomic theory. Purging their discourse of non-Islamic theory and models facilitates access to their audience, who are after all to be shaped by "pristine" Islamic values and concepts. Relating the abstract subject of economics to the economic content of traditional *fiqh* is also easier without introducing foreign elements. The ultimate aim of Mawdudi and Qutb's Islamic economics, in any case, is not to lay out the technicalities of a theoretical system, but rather to showcase the realism, pragmatism, and contemporary validity of the trans-historical message of Islam.

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[497] Arshad Zaman, among others, considers that Khurshid Ahmad should be regarded as the creator of Islamic economics. Khurshid Ahmad (b. 1932) is one of the closest associates of Mawdudi and he is responsible for translating and disseminating Mawdudi's works. Ahmad is an important politician and a *bona fide* academic (he has a doctoral degree in economy from the University of Leicester and a professorship at the University of Karachi). See Arshad Zaman, "Review: Sayyid Abu'l A'la Maududi on Islamic Economics: First Principles of Islamic Economics by Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi" *Islamic* Studies 50, no. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter 2011): 320.

4.5.3 Liberal Democracy

One of the most interesting features of Mawdudi's discursive construction of ideological otherness is his peculiar use of democracy. Democracy is employed in a very instrumental manner. It is not even read as a full-fledged ideology, whether positive or negative, but rather as a non-ideological, ethos-free structure belonging to all humanity. It is regarded not as a normative theory of government, but rather a "neutral ideal that could be Islamized without surrendering any grounds to the West."[498]

Why does Mawdudi take democracy to be merely an attribute of the Islamic state rather than an actual ideology and viable solution for the Muslim world? The basic answer is that Western definitions of democracy do not involve non-negotiable truth; they have no real ethos or normative structure. This lack of foundational truth makes democracy unfit to function as the ideological basis of the Islamic state.

Mawdudi nevertheless understands the strategic importance of the ideograph of democracy for the lexicon of the Islamic revival. Thus he coins the term, "theo-democracy," one of the most interesting hybrid concepts of the entire Islamist discursive order. Islam is considered genuinely democratic in the sense that there is no clerical elite with a monopoly over the sacred ruling over the rest of the society and because of the profound egalitarianism of the Qur'anic revelation. It is the entire body of believers, which effectively controls enforcement of the law, and everyone is equal under God's Sovereignty. In this way the Islamic state is, as already explained above, a theo-democracy rather than theocracy.

The democratic element of theo-democracy is realized through control of government by the people's will. In case of transgression, the system allows and even encourages lawful resistance and deposition of the failed leader. Thus a limited form of popular sovereignty is apparently tolerated under God's Sovereignty and freedom of speech and assembly are guaranteed. Other structural aspects of democracy such as separation between religion and politics and independence of elected officials are not, however, included. The theocentric dimension of Mawdudi's theo-democracy, in the form of absolute authority of the *Shari'ah* both as divine and positive law, is evidently dominant. Thus we read that "when an explicit command of God or His Prophet already exists, no Muslim leader or legislature, or any religious scholar can form an independent judgment, not even all the Muslims of the world put together, have any right to make the least alteration in

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[498] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 88.

it."[499]

It must be stressed that in Mawdudi's vision, man, due to his faulty nature, does not have the competence to legislate. No matter his progress or education, man is inevitably enslaved by his own petty passions and will eventually commit the ultimate transgression of "exalting the devil in him to the position of a supreme Lord." Mawdudi thus allows for "limitations on human freedom, provided they are appropriate and do not deprive man of all initiative," since there are "absolutely necessary in the interest of man himself."[500] This strongly paternalistic vision on man and his nature brings Mawdudi close to Juan Donoso Cortés, as we shall see.

Some additional points should be briefly noted. The ususual hybrid "theo-democracy" might suggest a comparison with Christian democracy. However, despite the use of Western terms and Mawdudi's description of a "God-worshipping democratic caliphate,"[501] the Islamic state is not actually a democracy. Mawdudi employs the ideograph of democracy merely to render the Islamic state intelligible to a Western audience and more palatable to young, Westernized Muslim intelligentsia. The word democracy is, in other words, used for rhetorical reasons. The political community established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina remains the paradigmatic model of excellence whereas the so-called modern democracy is reduced to procedural mechanisms for selection of the political elite. As Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr says, Mawdudi's use of democracy is "static, partial and non-systematic."[502] Democracy remains a floating signifier that can be captured and used in different discursive strategies and ideological constructions.

4.6 Sayyid Qutb's Dialectics of Exclusion: Towards Complete Islamization of Ideology

Qutb's critique of modernity, along with that of Mawdudi, is a pillar of the Islamic radical discursive order. His discourse represents an articulate polemical dialogue with ideological alterity using complex strategies of selection, reconfiguration and dissemination of Islamized ideographs. Qutb's discursive order enforces Islam as the sole identitary form of belonging. Islam is a comprehensive revolutionary ideology, and universal ethical solution for the malaise of modernity.

In this part of the chapter, we will canvas Qutb's definitions and instrumentalizations of ideologies and compare them with those of Mawdudi. As in the case of Mawdudi, Qutb's discourse

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[499] Mawdudi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution,* 148.
[500] Ibid, 153.
[501] Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 88.
[502] Ibid, 89.

is directed against modern *Jahiliyah* and its ideological configurations in an effort to counteract and diminish its symbolic capital. Also like Mawdudi, Qutb views modernity as essentially ideology-centric. He conceptualizes ideologies as distorted religious forces and treats them as secular religions, while holding a rather nuanced view of ideology itself. We will again use Calvin McGee's concept of ideographs to throw light on Qutb's Islamization of the discursive order of modernity. The end result is a purely Islamic definition of ideology as divinely prescribed universal *manhaj*. In this context, the modern ideologies of communism, nationalism, capitalism and democracy[503] are compared to the archetypical Islamic model, in a strategy that can be regarded as a systematic dialectics of exclusion.

4.6.1 The Ideograph of Ideology

Our analysis of Mawdudi's ideological Islamic state demonstrated how he recovers and purifies the term "ideology" and makes it into an Islamic notion. In the case of Qutb, the equation is not as evident or unproblematic. Any attempt to read Islam as ideology is seen as suspect, since the introduction of foreign terms is regarded as *shirk* or associationism. Thus, in contrast to Mawdudi's more open and pluralistic model, Qutb's discourse strives to maintain the monopoly of Islamic terms. Islam and ideology are thus irreconcilably opposed, since for Qutb the only acceptable definition of Islam is the tautological formula, "Islam is Islam." This tautology nevertheless is not a "conversation stopper" in Qutb's ongoing dialogue with modernity, as we shall see below.

In order to get to the centre of Qutb's polemics against modern ideological otherness, we must begin with his definition of Islam. Qutb insists that Islam does not fit in the narrow frameworks devised by the traditionalist *ulema* or Western Orientalism, which limit it to metaphysics or worship, thus paving the way for separation of religion from life and the transcendental from the political. Qutb firmly believes that Islam is the only comprehensive, universal and emancipatory meta-ideology, capable of unifying humanity and saving it from political oppression and moral anomie. This ideological notion of Islam as a system is at the heart of Qutb's discursive order. William E. Shepard terms this type of holistic perspective, "Islamic totalism." Totalism is "the tendency to view Islam not merely as a "religion" in the narrow sense of theological belief, private

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[503] Qutb, unlike Mawdudi, appears to be less focused on Imperialism.

prayer and ritual worship, but also as a total way of life with guidance for political, economic, and social behavior"[504]

In order to oppose secular ideologies, Qutb employs a definition of Islam as a "world-wide, eternal and ideal system of life" characterized by *shumuliyah* (comprehensiveness).[505] We have seen that *shumuliyah* is an important attribute of the Qur'anic revelation and key to Qutb's hermeneutics of mobilization and radicalization. Since the Qur'an is a comprehensive order, the model built upon it is also necessarily comprehensive; as Qutb says, "Islam has one universal and integrated theory which covers the universe and life and humanity, a theory in which are integrated all the different questions"[506]

Islam therefore represents the true religion not only from the point of view of metaphysics and eschatology, but also as a global, unified, comprehensive, and divinely produced vision. Its *Weltanschauung* encompasses knowledge, power, life, and the world, in their epistemological, axiological, ontological, and political dimensions. Sayyid Khatab and Ibrahim Abu-Rabi both remark that Qutb's concept of *al-wahdah al-kawniyah al-kubra* (the great universal unity) progressively becomes a key analytical term as Qutb's conceptual architecture develops. The idea of the unified life-world, as we have demonstrated, appears already in Qutb's pre-Islamist career as a poet and literary critic, having found its way into his work as a Romantic notion. The concept of unity arguably bridges Qutb's pre-Islamist and Islamist thought.

The concept of "the great unity" also suggests the transcendent nature of Qutb's Islamic ideology. We have seen that for Mawdudi, universality is the main characteristic of modern ideologies. Qutb has a similar view. As Khatab puts it, Islam in Qutb's thought becomes "a comprehensive system, an ideological ideal, and a convincing concept that expounds the nature of the universe, the nature of Man, and determines Man's position in the world as well as the ultimate objective of existence as a whole."[507] The idea of Islam as an all-embracing vision of the world springing from the comprehensiveness and universality of the Revelation guarantees that the concept of ideology cannot be automatically rejected as foreign. On the contrary, Islamization of ideology becomes a crucial part of the titanic effort to Islamize all benign aspects of modernity,

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[504] William E. Shepard, "Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (August 1987): 308.
[505] Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, 116.
[506] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam,* trans. John B. Hardie (New York: Islamic Publications International, 1953), 20.
[507] Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 77.

from science to communications and technology.

Consequently, Qutb's first Islamist works, *Social Justice in Islam* published in 1949, and *The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism* and *World Peace and Islam* both published in 1951, created a perspective in which Western ideologies are seen, as McGee says, as more than instruments that "cosmetically camouflage significant and unresolved problems."[508] Qutb rather addresses ideologies as systematic attempts to organize existence. He emphasizes the importance of ideology for social orders, stressing that all societies derive from ideological ideals:

> The social order with all its characteristics is an off-shoot of the ideological ideal (*manhaj*). It grows biologically and naturally and it is completely adapted in accordance with the assessment of life, which that conception demands relative to the human situation, state of existence and the goals of the man in this life.[509]

It is noteworthy that Qutb's understanding of ideology is congruent with that of the new discourse analysis theorists Theun Van Dijk and Calvin McGee, who define ideologies as "basic frameworks for organizing the social cognition shared by members of social groups, organizations, or institutions." According to Van Dijk, ideologies in this respect "are both cognitive and social," functioning as "the interface between the cognitive representations and process underlying discourse and action on the one hand and societal opposition and interest of social groups, on the other."[510]

For Qutb, in the same vein as Mawdudi and many contemporary theorists of discourse analysis, modern ideologies are in essence systems of beliefs or, as he says, "creeds" (*'aqidah*). According to Qutb, all religions as systems of life include a component of ideology, or, reversing the equation, all ideologies are the pseudo-religions of modernity: "We may equally contend that each system of life is a *din* (religion) in the sense that religions function in society as the philosophical mooring that determines the fiber of life in that society."[511] These ideologies cannot be uncritically rejected without offering a valid alternative.[512] In other words, a successful Islamic critique of modern ideologies cannot ignore their potent seductive potential. Thus the chief objective of Islamic apologetics as conceived by Qutb as well as Mawdudi is to persuade the youth

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[508] McGee, "The 'Ideograph,'" 2.
[509] Sayyid Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future* (Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1978), 15.
[510] Theun Van Dijk, *Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Text and Talk* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 23.
[511] Qutb, *Islam, the Religion of the Future*, 17. Mawdudi expressed the same point as early as 1930. Qutb's employment of the term *din* (religion) perfectly echoes Mawdudi's perspective and in essence, this is the starting premise of all political theologies, regardless of the religious and political context.
[512] Ibid, 18.

that the Islamic *manhaj*, properly understood and fully enforced, represents the only viable and authentic alternative to Western ideologies. As an expression of *Tawhid,* the Islamic *manhaj* is that alternative, as it encompasses, in the words of Qutb, "a system of life, which becomes a convincing concept that includes the social order."[513]

There is, however, a fundamental difference between Islam and modern ideologies. The difference does not reside in the non-ideological character of Islam (since Islam includes virtually all aspects of reality and has a specific political dimension), but rather in the radical difference of origins. According to Qutb, the critical problem of all ideologies and their fatal flaw is their purely human origin. The different origin becomes evident in the incompatibility between the Islamic ideal and modern ideological Otherness, for Islam is not only ideological in nature, but its ideological ideal is "a divine ideological ideal/*manhaj* which secretes naturally a society structured in all its components by a divine religion"[514]—provided, of course, this axiomatic unity of the divine order built around the concept of *Tawhid* (unity and oneness of God) is transferred to ontological and social space so that it can generate a harmonious, homogenous and stable human society.

It is worth emphasizing again that Qutb does not reject the concept of ideology *per se*. He only rejects its human and artificial character. In his vision, ideologies are an intrinsic part of modern history. They can persuade, fascinate and mobilize individuals and communities, but ultimately remain fallacious attempts to replicate the archetypal model of perfection represented by the Islamic ideal in human terms and with human concepts. As man-made products, modern ideologies are built on ignorance, hubris, and imperfection. As products of human thinking, non-Islamic ideologies fail to provide a place for stable and moral subjects and a universal consensus. They are, moreover, bound to generate conflict between human nature and the natural order and they will inexorably create artificial societies and systems of values.

In other words, the essential problem of all ideologies remains tension between the abstractness of social theories and reality of human existence. In Qutb's view, only the ideological ideal of Islam is in perfect harmony with human nature and intellect. Ideological Otherness and the divine ideology of Islam are essentially different because of the radical dichotomy between artificiality and authenticity, and anything other than Islam will produce an "unnatural arbitrary

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[513] Qutb, *Islam, the Religion of the Future*, 17.
[514] Qutb quoted in Khatab*, The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 107.

system… lack[ing] in vital elements," which is "doomed to disappearance."[515]

At this point, it must be remarked that despite its modern undertone, the Qutbian discursive construction relies at its core on traditional Islamic terms. If Mawdudi's vision represents a synthesis between Western and Islamic concepts, the methodological imperative for Qutb is Islamic conceptual purity. Canonical terms such as *fitrah* (human nature), *Hakimiyah* (sovereignty of God), '*Ubudiyah* (servitude) and *Jahiliyah* are placed in new discursive contexts, in which they establish the vocabulary and conceptual grounds for a purely Islamic ideological ideal. All foreign concepts and ideological acculturation are rejected as not only superficial, but also extremely dangerous for the Islamic identity:

> The Western ways of thought and all the sciences started on the foundation of these poisonous influences with an enmity towards all religions, and in particular with greater hostility towards Islam. If, in spite of knowing this, we rely on Western ways of thought, even in teaching the Islamic sciences, it will be an unforgivable blindness on our part. Indeed, it becomes incumbent on us, while learning purely scientific or technological subjects for which we have no other sources except Western sources, to remain on guard and keep these sciences away from philosophical speculations, as these philosophical speculations are generally against religion and in particular against Islam. A slight influence from them can pollute the clear spring of Islam.[516]

Thus in Qutb's view, modern ideographs such as sovereignty, human nature, equality, justice, and democracy, are not incompatible with Islam. They are actually corrupted Islamic concepts altogether, making it useless to create hyphenated constructions as Mawdudi does. The Islamic *manhaj* represents an all-encompassing social theory that does not require alteration or hybridization, but only proper individuals and a society to completely implement it.

4.6.2 *Fitrah*—The Ideograph of Human nature

Qutb's puristic refusal to draw on the lexicon of modern ideologies and strategy of delegitimizing the monopoly of Western modernity over essential ideographs is fully displayed in his ideograph of human nature. The concept of human nature and the philosophical humanism on which it is based are central to Marxism, socialism and liberal democracy. In fact, all modern ideologies revolve around, in the words of Carl Schmitt: "an ideological humanitarian conception of humanity."[517]No critique of modernity can succeed without providing an alternative to the master signifier of human nature. Qutb understood this imperative better than any other Islamist

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[515] Qutb quoted in Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 15.
[516] Sayyid Qutb*, Milestones* edited by A.B. al-Mehri, (Birmingham: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006), 128-129.
[517] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 70.

thinkers. Thus while Mawdudi centers his political theology on the Islamic state, Qutb focuses instead on an Islamic technology of the self, in which re-creation of the integral Muslim individual precedes re-Islamization of society. The purely Islamic term Qutb chose for the ideograph that would combat the pervasive modern narrative of secular humanism was *fitrah*.

The term *fitrah* is an integral part of the Islamic tradition, appearing in the Qur'an. Q. 30:30 reads, "Adhere to the *fitrah* of God upon which He has created [all] people," and a well known *hadith* which states that "every infant is born according to the *fitrah* [of Islam], then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian." In modern times, *fitrah* is generally understood by Muslims as the original human nature that inclines to worship of One God. It is often used in modernist Muslim discourse to assert the superior rationality of Islam, as in Rashid Rida's statement that Islam is "the religion of pure innate disposition (*din al-fitrah*), thought, wisdom, rational demonstration and proof."[518] In sum, as Sayyed Khatab points out: "the concept of *fitrah* is one of the most sensitive areas of Muslim belief. It touches upon the Islamic concept of God's will and determinism; and is concerned with questions such as good and evil; the human, freedom, reason and human will; Sovereignty; the divine rule and judgment."[519]

Unlike modernists who use *fitrah* in irenic fashion to suggest a universal human disposition, Qutb argues that it is the monopoly of Islam and vastly superior to any Western concept of human nature. Unlike its abstract and limited Western counterpart, the concept of *fitrah* brings together universe, life, humanity, and the relationship between the Creator and his creation.[520] According to Sayed Khatab, Qutb's view of *fitrah* implies the *khilafah* (vicegerency) of Man on earth, free will, and the human responsibility for the world amidst the complexity of life, and finally, a harmonious relationship between humanity and the universe. Furthermore, these four dimensions of *fitrah* "complement Qutb's comprehensive constructs of Sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*), servitude (*'ubudiyyah*) and the universality of Islam," ultimately integrating the human actor into what Qutb calls "the great universal unity" (*al-wahdah al-kawniyah al-kubra*).[521]

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[518] See Simon A. Wood *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashid Rida's Modernist Defense of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications 2007), 39.

[519] Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty*, 71.

[520] In fact, human nature is just one element of *fitrah* which was given by the Creator to his creation. See Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty*, 77. Khatab also notices that Qutb shares the same perspective on the role of *fitrah* with al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), al-'Asqalani (d. 1449) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905)—see Sayed Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 2 (April 2004): 217-244. doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.2004.00049.x.

[521] Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty*, 77

Fitrah for Qutb is the mirror image of the autonomous human subject who controls and shapes his life-world while separated from any metaphysical constraints. Thus, in Qutb's view, Western humanism, despite its emancipatory, universalistic rhetoric, cannot truly define mankind. Humanism divorced from revelation cannot connect human nature, life, social order, and the ideological ideal. At best, it provides a limited understanding of human nature, and at worst, leads to alienation and paralyzing social anomie. As William E. Shepard notes, for Qutb only *fitrah* can perceive the existence of the universal system (*nizam*). Only the Creator of the universal and eternal *Nizam al-Islam* can generate a *manhaj* (meta-ideology) that harmonizes human existence with the *nizam*. While human reason is not cut off from this system, it can never play the role of creator of the human life-world.[522]

Qutb goes on to integrate the concept of *fitrah* into his master antithesis of *Jahiliyah* versus *Nizam al-Islam*. The malign fragmentation produced by separation of humans from their nature and the universe is seen by Qutb as an enduring mark of modern *Jahiliyah*. Despite their complexity and seductive rhetoric, Western definitions of human nature and humanity are naught but failed approximations, helpless against oppression and powerless to ward off tribalism and ethnocentrism. Only when the system of Islam is firmly established will *fitrah* be preserved and nourished and the psychological, physical and spiritual dimensions of man finally connected in an organic whole within the divine system.[523]

In sum, Qutb's Islamic ideology as the perfect opposition to abstract, unnatural, and hubristic modern ideologies. It is the only safeguard of the universal *fitrah*. The Islamic *manhaj* is fundamentally the message of the Revelation organized in a movement (*harakah*) that will finally bring the human quest for a perfectly integrated and universal ideology to an end.

4.6.3 Ideologies as Man Made Idols

Qutb's comparison of the Islamic ideological ideal with ideological alterity lays the ground for a dialectics of exclusion. As we have stressed on several occasions, Qutb's polemics against non-Islamic otherness is not an a priori rejection of modernity. Despite his radical Islamic perspective, his discourse of *Jahiliyah* is not a mere casting out the devil of modernity in favour

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[522] Shepard, "Islam as a 'System,'" 40.
[523] Shepard also notices that Qutb frequently uses organic imagery (plants, trees) in order to describe the nature of the Islamic manhaj. See: Shepard, "Islam as a 'System,'" 36.

of religious obscurantism. Like Mawdudi, he creatively uses the lexicon of modern ideologies against them. Thus, prior to being rejected as expressions of *Jahiliyah*, communism, nationalism, capitalism and democracy are first compared to the Islamic model. It has also been emphasized that Qutb, unlike Mawdudi, does not introduce hybrid terms or concepts, since his mission is to ensure the monopoly of Islam over the foundational ideographs that structure the world. Islam remains the only solid ground for truth, "anchoring in man's soul knowledge of his supreme merit and dignified properties and saving his psyche from the abjection imposed upon it by Darwin, Karl Marx, and their likes."[524] Qutb's determination to avoid contamination by non-Islamic concepts is programmatic. Khatab expresses this well when says:

> Qutb argues that labeling the Islamic system by any name, other than Islam, is but a reflection of the condition of inward defeat, in the face of the human systems that humanity have formed for themselves in isolation from the system of God. In his view, Islam gains nothing when told there are similarities between it and these ideas, and it loses nothing if there are not.[525]

Thus, for instance, Qutb insists that the Islamic model does not rely on philosophical truths, but rather on the absolute truth of Revelation (*al-wahi*). Even though Islam is considered to be the religion of intellect and reason, Islamic ideology is internally derived from the infallible source of the Revelation, which remains the only locus of truth and authority. Consequently, all human attempts to comprehend and express the complexity of existence by creating legal and political systems will finally only increase barbarity and will hinder the progress they claim to foster.

As we did for Mawdudi in the first part of the chapter, we will analyze Qutb's critiques of communism, nationalism, capitalism and democracy and his employment in his own Islamic ideology of essential ideographs such as justice, freedom, truth, and equality. We will see that, far from expressing a fanatic, irrational hatred of modernity, Qutb, like Mawdudi, produced a rational, conceptually-oriented critique; although, unlike the Pakistani, he refuses to draw on non-Islam concepts in his perspective.

Before proceeding, two observations are necessary. First, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Qutb's *Jahiliyah* goes beyond the theoretical fallacy of modern political philosophy. [526]

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[524] Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future*, 115.
[525] Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, 120.
[526] "This jahiliyya is not an abstract theory, in fact, under certain circumstances it has no theory at all. It always takes the form of a living movement in a society, which has its own leadership, its own concepts and values and its own traditions, habits and feelings. It is an organized society, and it is closed cooperation and loyalty between individuals and it is always ready and alive to defend its existence *habits and feelings*. It is an organized society, and it is closed cooperation and loyalty between individuals and it is always ready and alive to defend its existence habits and feelings." Qutb, *Milestones,* 36.

Since ideology is not merely theory or rhetoric, but a social and political force embodied in living reality, it covers all dimensions of reality, affecting all spaces and all systems of values. Consequently, the Islamic *manhaj* should once again become a movement (*harakah*) in order to counter ideological alterity:

> The requirement of Islamic belief is that it takes shape in living souls, in an active movement struggling against the *Jahili* environment, while also trying to remove the influences of *Jahili* societies in its followers. Islamic belief has a much more wider range of action than a simply academic discussion, as it does not only address itself to hearts and minds but also includes practices and morals.[527]

Qutb further realizes that ideology can be refuted only from an ideological perspective because a purely theological critique of modernity depending on the outdated lexicon of the *ulema* is sterile from the point of view of praxis and will further alienate the younger generations from the Islamic *manhaj*. Nilüfer Göle and M. Hakan Yavuz term this critique from within "the vernacularization of modernity."[528]

The second observation concerns the fact that *Jahiliyah* in Qutb's view is definitely not confined to non-Islamic space. Carrying his radical dichotomy to its logical end, he asserts that modern *Jahiliyah* is global:

> Lastly, all existing so-called Muslim societies are also *jahili* societies. We classify them among *jahili* societies not because they believe in other deities besides God, or because they worship anyone other than God, but because their way of life is not based on submission to God alone. Although they believe in the unity of God, still they have relegated the legislative attribute of God to others and submit to this authority, and from this authority they derive their systems, their traditions and customs, their laws, their values and standards, and almost every practice of life.[529]

This passage richly illustrates how Qutb's—and Mawdudi's—critique of ideology is not just a rejection of Western, alien systems, but also a radical deconstruction of modern, "fallen" Muslim identity. Mawdudi's employment of the term *Jahiliyah*, however, is less extensive than that of Qutb and leaves more hope for gradual reform. Qutb's intransigence is unique in this regard and will pave the way for the ultra-radical discourse of the contemporary jihadist thought.

4.6.4 *Hakimiyah*: The Ideograph of Sovereignty

In addition to the epistemological defects inherent in all non-Islamic ideologies that preclude them from providing solid knowledge, safe from corrosive relativism, they suffer an acute

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[527] Ibid, 39.
[528] Nilüfer Göle, *Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[529] Qutb, *Milestones*, 103.

deficit of genuine sovereignty. The previous chapter highlighted Qutb's contribution to Islamist radical *tafsir* through his use of the concept of *Hakimiyah.* The concept originates in Mawdudi's term *hakimiyat-e ilahi,* (divine sovereignty), but Qutb makes it the definitive criterion for engaging politics in all its expressions. In Qutb's view, *Hakimiyah* or Divine Sovereignty radically divides Islamic authenticity and all non-Islamic or pseudo-Islamic forms of life, ideology, and society:

> The *Jahili* society is any society other than the Muslim society; and if we want a more specific definition, we may say that any society is a *Jahili* society if it does not dedicate itself to submission to God alone in its beliefs and ideas, in its observances of worship, and its legal regulations. According to this definition, all societies existing in the world today are *Jahili*.[530]

Qutb argues that all modern ideologies cohere around an authority and sovereignty that is entirely human. Secular modernity has excluded God's religion from social and political life and arbitrarily transferred God's Sovereignty to human agents. Above and beyond its technical achievements, modernity re-installs man-made idols and the servitude of man to man. This is the essential difference between the Islamic ideal, which fully preserves God's Sovereignty, and all ideological Otherness. The catastrophic consequence for all humanity is involution to the systemic barbarity of the Age of Ignorance.

Muslim societies—despite their superiority complex, essentially based on formalism and refusal of self-criticism—are in reality, basically erased from the face of the earth: "The Muslim community vanished at the moment the laws of God become suspended on earth."[531] Here we see how *Hakimiyah* plays the central role in Qutb's thought. God's Sovereignty in a very concrete sense of the term, as the only law that structures the praxis of Muslim societies remains the only criteria that guarantees the Islamic authenticity at individual and collective levels. *Hakimiyah* is the strongest normative concept of Qutb's political theology. Without a complete and universal rule of God's Sovereignty over all spheres of existence, no tradition, history, institutions or amount of piety can save Muslim societies from the catastrophic fall into *Jahiliyah.*

In this desolate post-Islamic landscape, it is imperative that God's Sovereignty be re-established as the axis of the Islamic *manhaj.* Qutb hopes to motivate his audience to do so by convincing them that all non-Islamic ideologies are in reality expressions of tyranny (*Taghut)* which create moral bankruptcy: "In all modern *Jahili* societies the meaning of morality is limited to such extent that all aspects that distinguish man from animal are considered beyond its

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[530] Qutb, *Milestones,* 101.
[531] Ibid, 25.

sphere."[532] Moral bankruptcy in turn forecloses social and political stability, so that, despite technological progress and military might, societies structured by human sovereignty are eventually plunged into generalized anomie as they become "backward, degenerate, and *Jahili*."[533] It is obvious that negotiation and compromise between this political modernity and a genuine Islamic *manhaj* are impossible, making Qutb's employment of the concept *Hakimiyah* and his message overall more focused, radical, and finally more persuasive than Mawdudi's synthetic rendition.

4.7 Qutb's Critique of Nationalism, Communism, Capitalism and Democracy

This section analyzes Qutb's critique of four modern ideologies: nationalism, communism or socialism, liberal democracy and capitalism.[534] We will see that, like Mawdudi, Qutb does not perceive Western ideologies all in the same terms. Apart from the meta-concept of *Jahiliyah*, he does not reject all ideologies using the same conceptual apparatus, rhetoric, or intensity. One reason for this is that his critique and radicalism evolved gradually, reaching its final stage in his most radical work, *Milestones*. Analyzing Qutb's perspective on the basis of only this last text would be misleading. Thus the discussion below relies on texts from three different stages of Qutb's thought: *Social Justice in Islam* (1949), "This Religion" (1954*), Islam: The Religion of the Future* (also 1954), and finally, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics* and *Milestones*, both appearing in 1964.

It is helpful for the analysis to keep in mind the basic characteristics of Qutb's approach to ideological alterity. His approach is ideological in essence, since it uses religious concepts in an ideologically oriented order of discourse; it is also essentialist and antinomic, due to binary distinctions such as *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* versus human sovereignty or *Taghut*. Finally, its presentation of the Islamic *manhaj* is holistic and universalistic.

Qutb's list of characteristics essential for the Islamic ideal represent, *in nuce*, his perspective on Islamic ideological excellence. In his important Islamist work *Khasa'is al-tasawwur al-Islami wa-muqawwimatuh* (*The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*), Qutb lists seven basic elements specific to the Islamic ideological ideal (*Tasawwur): Rabbaniyah* (divinity),

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[532] Ibid*,* 11.
[533] Ibid, 108.
[534] We will return to this framework of analysis in the next chapter when we compare Juan Donoso Cortés's famous critique of liberalism and socialism from the perspective of an integrally Catholic, reactionary political theology.

Thabat (stability), *Tawhid* (unity)*, Shumuliyah* (comprehensiveness), *Tawazun* (balance), *Ijabiyah* (positive orientation) and *al-Waqi'iyah* (realism).[535] These characteristics, which are presented as a de facto monopoly of the Islamic ideal, function as normative criteria for evaluating and finally discarding the ideological configurations produced by modernity. Seen from this perspective, Qutb's framework of analysis appears to be even more systematic than the one produced by Mawdudi.

4.7.1 Nationalism: The Ideographs of Solidarity and Universality

Like Mawdudi, Qutb considers nationalism a prime ideological threat to the Islamic ideal. Since nationalism is secular and sectarian, it is seen in both its Western and Arab guises as colliding with the universality of Islam. Nationalism is an important conceptual source of *Jahiliyah.* With its narrow definition of collective identity in terms of geography, race, language, and nationality, nationalism is a form of neo-tribalism, replicating the idolatry of the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance:

> The pagans have a variety of idols that sometimes are called homeland (*watan*) and race (*jins*) or nations (*qawm*). These forms of idols appear from time to time, once under the name of Hittite nationalism, and once more under the name Arab nationalism, and sometimes under various names and flags.[536]

Qutb argues in his *Milestones* that the actions of the Prophet Muhammad himself at the dawn of Islam are a powerful argument against the temptation of Arab nationalism. Although the Prophet was perfectly capable of unifying the Arabs, freeing them from Persian and Roman domination and establishing an Arab national state, he refused to follow that path, for it would have been inconsistent with the radical egalitarianism of Islam and its clear universal message:

> "The way is not to free the earth from Roman and Persian tyranny in order to replace it with Arab tyranny. All tyranny is wicked! The earth belongs to Allah and should be purified for Allah, and it cannot be purified for Him unless the banner, "No deity worthy of worship except Allah", is unfurled across the earth. Man is servant to Allah alone, and he can remain so only if he unfurls the banner, "No deity worthy of worship except Allah", "La illaha illa Allah" as an Arab with the knowledge of his language understood it: no sovereignty except Allah's, no law except from Allah, and no authority of one man over another, as the authority in all respects belong to Allah Almighty."[537]

Sayed Khatab notices that Qutb attempts to link nationalism to Islam already in the early 1950s, before his radical Islamist phase in the late 1960s.[538] At that time, he atttemped to do with nationalism what Mawdudi did with theocracy and democracy: that is, to create a working

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[535] James Toth added *iman* (faith) and *amal* (practice) to this list in order to stress the theological origins of Qutb's analisis of modernity. See: Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy*, 91.
[536] Qutb as quoted in Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism," 228.
[537] Qutb, *Milestones*, 40.
[538] See Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism."

synthesis. [539] Having asserted, like Mawdudi, that nationalism is a religion (*din*) and creed ('*aqidah*), he proposes the interesting construction *al-qawmiyyah al-Islamiyah* (Islamic nationalism). In the radical Islamist phase, however, "nationalism" is replaced entirely by *ummah,* the Islamic community, and ideographs such as homeland (*watan*), nationality (*jinsiyah*) and nation (*qawm*) are read through a strictly Islamic lens

At first glance, the hybrid "Islamic nationalism" espoused by Qutb in the first phase seems to be a contradiction in terms since it fuses universalism with ethnocentrism and the vertical solidarity of religion with the horizontal solidarity of a secular ethos. For Qutb as he saw the world in the 1950's, however, only secular (and especially Arab) nationalism is deemed part of *Jahiliyah*. In the same fashion as Mawdudi's Islamization of democracy, Qutb seems to have initially believed that nationalism could eventually become genuinely universal if it was purged of sectarianism, racism and colonialism and infused with the '*aqidah* of Islam. The radical opposition between nationalism and universalism, in other words, could be dissolved if Islam were to become the unique identitary framework of belonging of the human race. Qutb expresses the synthesis as follows:

> In Islamic view, all human beings are one nation. Thus there is no race or homeland (*watan*) that can exploit other races or the homeland of others. When Islam abolishes both those geographical bounds and racism upon which the idea of national homeland is established, it does not abolish the idea of homeland completely but preserves its righteous meaning that is the meaning of association, brotherhood, cooperation, system and the meaning of the common goal with which the group is associated [540]

Qutb's use of the term *ummah* is key to his approach to nationalism his second, radical Islamist phase. In order to emphasize the antithesis between Islamic nationalism and secular, regional nationalism, he opposes the classical concept of *ummah* to the modern concept of nation. Qutb's *ummah* is an all-encompassing structure fusing politics, society, culture, economics, and last but not least, eschatology. For both the Egyptian and the Pakistani but especially for Qutb, *ummah* is the universal, transhistorical community of all Muslims, a unified space of belonging organized around the principles of the divine Revelation that exceeds nationalism in every way:

> The *ummah* is the group of people bound together by belief that constitutes their nationality. If there is no Creed, there is no *ummah*, for there is nothing to bind it together. Land, race language, lineage, common material interests are not enough, either singly or in combination to for an *ummah*.[541]

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[539] "Thus, the idea of 'Islamic nationalism' is not outside the framework of Qutb's ideas of the early 1950s." Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism*,*" 221.

[540] Qutb quoted in Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism," 220.

[541] Sayyid Qutb, *This Religion of Islam / Hadha al-Din*, 81.

Here we must stress again that in the discourse of Qutb and Mawdudi, terms are never abstract. Concepts cannot be neutral or artificial and religious terms are consequently charged with ideological meaning. To put it another way, classical terms are actively employed in polemics and apologetics as what might be called combat ideographs. Qutb's employment of *ummah* is a perfect illustration of this weaponized lexicon. Qutb uses the term *ummah*, in fact, to combat not only nationalism but also Marxism. As Khatab notices, he states on many occasions that Muslims have no homeland (*watan*) except in the space structured by *Shari'ah*; no nationality (*jinsiyah*) but their creed (*'aqidah*), and no citizenship other than that offered by the Abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*).[542] Nationalism as the basis of territorial and ethnic solidarity is clearly a target, but the contrast between an Islamic identity free from the chains of narrow class loyalties and a seductive Marxist universalism organized around the internationalism of the proletariat is also evidently implied.

Arab nationalism in particular, which was very seductive for the Egyptians of Qutb's generation with its ethnic pride and emancipatory rhetoric, was a target of Qutb from the very beginning of islamist career. Arab nationalism is described as a locus of *fitnah* (division), narrow regionalism, and ethnocentric and linguistic enclosure. It is, of course, deemded to be directly antithetical to *Hakimiyah* and even to *Tawhid,* since it dissolves the only form of solidarity that carries a salvific dimension, namely the vertical connection between the Creator and the creation.[543] Qutb opposes all Arab nationalism. He discards Sati al-Husri's[544] influential neo-Fichtean theory of pure nationalism based on the primacy of the Arabic language as well as the Egyptocentric nationalism advocated by luminaries such Taha Hussein. Qutb forcefully reaffirms that *ummah* is only benign and, most importantly, authentic, Islamic alternative to all forms of modern secular nationalism. In the end, Qutb inscribes the encounter between the Islamic *manhaj* and Western-inspired nationalism in the matrix of the paradigm clash between *Nizam al-Islam* and *Jahiliyah.*

One final observation has to be made. However robust Qutb's definition of *ummah* may

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[542] Khatab, "Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb's Thought on Nationalism."

[543] Benedict Anderson famously defines nation as an imagined community: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. . . [It] is imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, 34.

[544] Sati al-Husri (1882–1968) was an Ottoman and Syrian writer who is considered the most seminal Arab nationalist thinker in the first half of the twentieth century. For a sophisticated analysis of Nationalism in Egypt see Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

be, he does not lay out a clear political theory of the Islamic state. This is because his ultimate focus is on creating an Islamic society on the model of the pristine Islamic *ummah* established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina. The actual state in which Islamic society functions is more or less epiphenomenal, as long as God's Sovereignty and God's Law have the monopoly over all spheres of reality. Qutb does not quite share Mawdudi's fascination with the machinery of state or his focus on the Caliphate as the epitome of Islamic politics. For Qutb, *ummah* is the rather an archetypal, transnational, trans-racial framework of belonging, in which all men as bearers of the same *fitrah* share the status of Qur'an 2:30's vicegerent on the earth. What is essential is that *ummah* is established as a community ruled by God's Sovereignty alone. The actual construction of the state, whether monarchic, republican or caliphal, is not of great importance.

4.7.2 Communism: The Ideographs of Universality and Equality

Carl Schmitt identified the center of political theology in 1922 when he famously claimed that: "all significant concepts of the theory of the modern state are secularized theological concepts."[545] Qutb and Mawdudi actually invert Schmitt's definition by arguing that all modern systems of life organized by ideological ideals are mutilated forms of religion (*din*). Hence, ideologies are structured around social, patriotic, national, and economic creeds (*aqa'id*); as Qutb writes, "every system and order of life is a religion for that life."[546] In short, in Qutb's perspective, all modern ideologies are simulacra of the divine religions. They are nevertheless dangerously seductive configurations of meaning that should be subjected to a systematic critique.

According to Qutb, communism with its quasi-religious creed and pseudo-scientific materialism is the most powerful of modern ideological ideals. Significantly more than Mawdudi—for whom nationalism is the main enemy—Qutb acknowledges the great seductive potential of Marxist philosophy and communist ideology. It can be argued that for Qutb, communism is the secular religion *par excellence*. He remarks that Marxism "attracted not only a large number of people from the East, but also from the West" because, unlike democracy, it was able to forge a strong identity as a "way of life based on a creed (*'aqidah).*"[547] The persuasive force of communism lies particularly in the victory of its creed over Christianity. On the ruins of the

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[545] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 34.
[546] Qutb, *Islam, the Religion of the Future*, 18.
[547] Qutb, *Milestones,* 23.

Christian world reduced to mere formalism and private piety,[548] communism and socialism offered secular definitions of concepts such as justice, freedom and equality, bound together in a revolutionary theory of perpetual class struggle. Communism in Qutb's view succeeded as a "system of persuasion"[549] because it was able to dislocate an entire world of meaning from an ossified Christianity which had lost the ideological battle for modernity because it had "no essential philosophy of actual and practical life…and no power to make life grow under its influence in any permanent or positive way."[550]

Qutb devotes a significant space in his critical discourse to demonstrating that Marxism, contrary to its claims of humanism and scientificity, actually rejects human nature. Marxism, he writes, "denigrates man's most significant function as the primordial positive element on this earth in the making of history,"[551] thus virtually erasing both humanity and its Creator. It is consequently seen not as an emancipatory philosophy, but rather as an anti-humanist vision that objectifies human beings by reducing them to *homo oeconomicus*. The end result is denial of human agency. Human history is placed under the control of economic forces that leave no space for either creation or Creator. In fact, the materialistic dialectic interpretation of history advanced by Marxism and communism reveals their "profound ignorance" of the nature of existence overall, for such a view is "more contradictory to human nature in whole and in part than any other system."[552]

We saw above how perfect accord between the Islamic ideological model and human nature (*fitrah*) is regarded as the most important criterion for judging all modern ideologies. In this regard, it is the incompatibility of human nature with the theoretical principles of Marxism that most decisively reveals its dogmatic arbitrariness. Marxism is a scientific fallacy primarily because it reduces the complexity of human existence to a material economic theory which "imprisons man's scope within the single arena of economics/the factors of production" while turning a blind eye to "the sublimity of the physical universe and its consonance with the requirements of human

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[548] Qutb emphasizes that virtually all great moments of Western Civilization are Islamic in origins: "The movement of religious reform, undertaken by Luther and Calvin in Europe; the renaissance from which Europe is still nourished today; the destruction of the feudal system and liberation from aristocratic rule; the movement of equality and the rights of man which appeared in the Magna Carta in England and the French Revolution; the experimental method on which is based the scientific glory of Europe—all these, which are commonly accepted as chief developments of history, were derived from that great Islamic wave and fundamentally and profoundly influenced by it." Qutb, *Hadha al-Din*, 65.

[549] McGee, "The 'Ideograph,'" 8.

[550] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 317.

[551] Qutb, *Islam, the Religion of the Future*, 65.

[552] Ibid.

life"[553]. This "petty mode of thought" ends up by making economy "the creating deity, the ordering lord of creation".[554]

Far from establishing a stateless and classless society, Marxism allows the state to "fatten day by day and devour everything, including the people themselves."[555] Communism's lack of universalism renders it thoroughly anti-human, since "any system of human life which does not rest on the foundation of a comprehensive view of existence is deprived of natural roots it is an artificial system that cannot live long. It is a source of misery for humanity as long as it exists among them, until their nature destroys it and they return to their natural basis."[556]

Qutb's critique of Marxism and communism is ultimately aimed at their usurpation of God's Sovereignty. Communism is a corrupted and "morally repugnant" tyranny *(Taghut)* that programmatically rejects the sovereignty of God in order to enforce that of the Party. This mutilated sovereignty is not only illegitimate, but also arbitrary, surviving only by coercion, indoctrination and oppression.[557] Communism is an essentially antagonistic ideology that is unable to solve social and political tensions. Far from being able to realize their dream of a peaceful, classless society, socialism and communism are captive to a permanent struggle between classes. Communism is thus not only an ideology of *Shirk* and *Taghut*, but a perpetual *fitnah* of lack of social solidarity and mutual cooperation. By contrast, the the Islamic *ummah* with its organic solidarity is "one body [which] feels all things in common" so that "whatever happens to one of its members, the remainder of all members is also affected."[558]

Qutb is convinced above all that communism is historically bounded. Despite its pseudo-scientific veneer, it is nothing more than the "passing rancor of a single generation," and yet another fragile and perishable product of Western history.[559] Islam, in contrast, is "the dream of an eternal humanity embodied in a reality living on earth."[560] According to Qutb, communist ideology, like all others apart from Islam, is nothing more than a porous agglutination of concepts. The Islamic ideological ideal (*manhaj*), divine in its origins and universal from the very beginning,

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[553] Sayyid Qutb, *Basic Principles of the Islamic Worldview*, trans. Rami David (Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publication International, 1995), 71.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future,* 67.
[556] Qutb, *Hadha al-Din*, 20.
[557] This is one of the main claims of both *Social Justice in Islam*, and *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq.*
[558] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 90.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Ibid. We will see in the next chapter how Juan Donoso Cortés and Sayyid Qutb—in spite of their temporal and religious distance—share virtually the same Cassandra Complex.

is the only stable structure, as it is designed by the Creator to be the final answer to all man's tribulations and dilemmas. At the centre of Qutb's vision of history, we find again his idea of human nature: "A basic characteristic of Islam," he writes, is that "it never forgets for an instant, at any time or place, the nature of man and the limits of his capacities, nor does it neglect the material realities of his existence."[561]

In order to counter the powerful yet vulnerable ideology of Marxism, socialism, and communism, Qutb strives to gain control of the production and dissemination of its ideographs of justice, freedom and equality. His strategy is to provide strictly Islamic definitions of these ideographs in order to enforce the Islamic ideological ideal (*manhaj*) as the only space where justice, freedom and equality can flourish. Another aspect of Qutb's strategy in regard to ideographs is the interconnection of concepts. As Calvin McGee notes, an ideograph cannot be analyzed in an atomistic manner, but must rather be understood "in its relation to another" and as "defined tautologically by using other terms in its cluster."[562] Thus, for instance in Qutb's discourse, justice in its social dimension is related to and defined by equality and freedom.

Qutb's work with ideographs reaches its apogee in his *Social Justice in Islam*.[563] *Social Justice* is a paradigmatic example of apologetics combined with combat rhetoric, in which freedom, equality and justice are presented as authentic and comprehensive only in the Islamic ideological ideal. In this work, Qutb contrasts the lack of justice in Marxism and communism with the justice of Islam, which, he believes, functioned perfectly in the time of the early Islamic community. He compares the failure of communism to redistribute wealth with the efficiency of the Islamic economic system embodied in *Zakat*.[564] Carried by the fifth pillar of Islam, justice as well as equality and freedom are ultimately guaranteed by Divine Sovereignty. The transcendent framework of *Hakimiyah* guarantees a social system in which all forms of oppression are *ab initio* forbidden and justice and equality are transcendentally normative and secure from human monopolization and corruption.

Because communism is centered on economics and *homo oeconomicus*, Qutb responds in

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[561] Qutb, *Hadha al-Din*, 2. We will discover the same valorization of communism in the perspective of Juan Donoso Cortés.

[562] McGee, "The 'Ideograph,'" 8.

[563] Charles Tripp notices that the important conceptual construction of "social justice" is a very modern one, being essentially absent from the classical lexicon. See Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 69.

[564] In this regard, Mawdudi, and Qutb's positions are perfectly congruent.

kind. He nevertheless also wrests other ideographs from Marxism in the course of critiquing its economics, since ideographs in a system of discourse are, as explained above, related and clustered. Thus according to Qutb, communism provides only a narrow, partial interpretation of justice since it conceives of justice only in terms of equal wages and economic freedom. Limited by this narrow perspective, communism begins with the erroneous hypothesis that eliminating economic discrimination will secure social justice and freedom of conscience. Qutb rejects this approach as both unjust and unrealistic. In a passionate defense of individualism, he argues that the thorough egalitarianism of communism supposedly secured through rejection of private property and absolute economic equality is both oppressive and unnatural. Forced, totalistic economic equality only results in another form of tyranny in which individuals are repressed. That tyranny will, furthermore, pave the way for open rebellion, since "the man who has the greatest ability—who can produce the most—will always overcome the law of absolute equality."[565] Islam, in contrast, accepts private property as a natural right and recognizes that free competition is consonant with man's nature, for "every man is created with a natural love of wealth for its own sake" and is "naturally endowed with a love of possession and with a desire to retain what he possesses."[566]

Qutb's critique of Marxist-communist economics seeks, as ever, to project an image of realism and pragmatism. This is an essential task in Qutb's strategy of ideographic Islamization. Pragmatism differentiates the Islamic ideal not only from ideological but also religious and philosophical alterity. Here Qutb singles out Christianity as being narrowly metaphysical and lists Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and German idealism as philosophical currents sharing the same constitutive defect. As for communism, it is deemed a utopian projection of a highly abstract philosophical construction as well, while Islam is said to practice "realism" (*al-waqi'iyah*, a characteristic of the Islamic ideal that is a leitmotif of the Qutbian critique of modern ideologies). A prime example of the pragmatism and realism of the Islamic system is its approach to social conflict. According to Qutb, only in Islam do collectivism, in the form of solidarity and mutual social responsibility (*al-takaful al-ijtima'iyah*), and individualism complement each other, thus eliminating conflict. When the true sovereign of the earth is God, property becomes a right received from him by the Muslim *ummah* and individuals are mere stewards.

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[565] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 54.
[566] Ibid, 130.

A remark on individualism is in order here. Pleas for morally and ethically infused individualism are found throughout Qutb's body of work. A heroic, axiologically pure individualism of faith in action is balanced by the pragmatic imperative of serving society and public interest (*maslahah ijtima'iyah*).[567] This equilibrium between individualism and collectivism is frequently presented in Islamist discourse as a monopoly of Islam, in direct opposition to the unbalanced ideologies of modernity. In Qutb's view, both communism and capitalism produce pathologies of power and types of societies in which either atomistic individualism or oppressive collectivist totalism fundamentally contradict human nature and deny the future of mankind. Qutb's (and Mawdudi's) discursive orders promise to save both individualism from the institutionalized cupidity and soul-crushing materialism of capitalism[568] and communitarianism and social solidarity from the dehumanizing iron grip of totalitarian communism.

Given the structural weakness of liberal democracy and the materialist orientation of modern man, communism, says Qutb, will eventually conquer the West. Thus all Muslims will eventually have to choose between Islam and communism; the future of mankind will be decided in a clash between communist hegemony and *Hakimiyah*.[569] In his *Milestones*, Qutb, follows his dialectical model to a final conclusion by arguing that following the defeat of capitalism, communism will in turn lose all its conceptual value to survive only as pure tyranny. Its ideological infrastructure will be dissolved so that it stands as the last expression of the hubris of the modern man: a nude power.[570] Marxism, he declares in a Cassandra-like tone, shall finally be defeated "on the plane of thought" for its theory "conflicts with man's nature and its needs… [and] prospers only in a degenerate society, or in a society which has become cowed as a result of some form of

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[567] Tripp goes as far as terming Qutb's approach as "unashamedly subjectivist." See Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy,* 156.

[568] Qutb's description of the American system is very relevant in this regard: "[America]…this country of mass production, immense wealth and easy pleasures. I have seen the [Americans] a helpless prey in the clutches of nervous diseases in spite of all their grand appearances . . . They are like machines swirling round madly, aimlessly into the unknown . . . That they produce a lot there is no doubt. But to what aim is this mad rush? For the mere aim of gaining and production. The human element has no place if their life is neglected . . . Their life is an everlasting windmill which grinds all in its way: men, things, places and time . . . What is the medicine to all this imbroglio? A peaceful heart, a serene soul, the pleasure which follows strenuous work, the relation of affection between men, the cooperation of friends." Qutb, "Humanity needs us" in *Al-Muslimun* 3/2 (December 1953): 3–4, quoted in Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy,* 48.

[569] We will see that Donoso Cortés makes the same prediction in relation to Catholicism and to European civilization.

[570] Donoso Cortés would use the term "*el poder desnudo"* (naked power) whereas Giorgio Agamben will famously argue that an uncontrollable sovereignty will reduce its subjects to 'bare life' (vita nuda) and will make the concentration camp the matrix of the politics. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: il potere sovrano e la nuda vita,* (Roma: Einaudi, 1995).

prolonged dictatorship"[571]

4.7.3 Capitalism: The Ideograph of Social Justice

Systematic rebuttal of capitalism[572] occupies a distinct space in Qutb's discursive order and is taken up in two major works, *The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism* (1951) and *Social Justice in Islam* (1949).[573] Again we must refer to the context of Qutb's thought. In his view, the distorted capitalism imposed on Egypt in his time by an alliance between traditionalist *ulema* and venal capitalists obstructed economic growth and hampered social progress. It brought corruption, exploitation, and chronic unemployment. His diagnosis of the Egyptian liberal experiment expressed in *Battle* leaves no room for compromise:

> Evil conditions suffered by the masses in Egypt are at variance with the nature of things and glaring short of all the essential factors of survival. It moreover contradicts the real purpose of human civilization, the nature of all religious beliefs and the spirit of the age. More importantly it is contrary to the most elementary principles of sound economics.[574]

In this regard, Charles Tripp notes that some critique of capitalism in the Muslim world took a moderate socialist direction under the influence of Fabianism and utopian thought, the "God-worshipping socialists" in 1940s Iran being one example.[575] Despite an initial, essentially terminological opening towards socialism,[576] Qutb finally did not yield to the temptations of hybridization. His critique of capitalism comes from what he believes to be a strictly Islamic perspective. According to Qutb, capitalism is the economic and ideological force behind the imperialism of the white race, and thus seeks to separate Islam from the economic sphere in order to exploit the Egyptian masses.

Despite its global reach, capitalism in Qutb's estimation lacks conceptual force and a complete way of life in accordance with human nature. The term capitalism (*ra'smaliyah*) appears

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[571] Qutb, *Milestones*, 23.

[572] As it was the case for Mawdudi, whose theoretical efforts created the premise for Islamic economics.

[573] Hasan Hanafi openly acknowledged that these early works of Qutb were very influential in shaping his perspective. See John L. Esposito, and John Obert Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 68.

[574] Sayyid Qutb, quoted in Youssef Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The Story of Islamist Movements* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 131.

[575] In Egypt the writings of Khalid Muhammad Khalid captured the same spirit, outlining a distinct position that would be developed in the 1950s and 1960s into the forms of argument and apologia labeled 'Islamic socialism.'

[576] William E. Shepard notes that "Mawdudi is sometimes said to be more capitalist and Qutb more socialist." See Shepard, "Islam and Ideology," 315. In the same vein, Margherita Picchi argues that Qutb's socio-economic perspective expressed in *The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism* is closer to Mustafa al-Siba'i's "Islamic Socialism" than it is usually aknowledged. See Margherita Picchi, "Islam as the Third Way: Sayyid Quṭb's Socio-Economic Thought and Nasserism," *Oriento Moderno* 97, no.1 (2017): 192.

only twice in his very popular *Social Justice in Islam*, and then at the very end of the text. Even before his American experience, Qutb had remarked that the American working class could be converted from capitalism to socialism, since socialism at least provides an ethos of justice, equality, and solidarity, while the only attraction of capitalism is wages and wealth. [577] Such a conversion would be facilitated by the fact that capitalism and communism share the same purely materialistic interpretation of the world. As Qutb puts it: "there is no difference between their principles or their philosophies [for] their only difference lies in their worldly methods and their profitable markets, [and] we are their markets."[578] By 1951, he had combined benign elements of socialism and capitalism to formulate his theory of Islam as the best economic system.

Qutb portrays the economic system of Islam as the specular image of capitalism. Like capitalism, Islam favours private property, but it disciplines it with rules of lawful acquisition and protects it according to clear Qur'anic exhortations such as Q. 4:36 ("concerning charity") and Q 4:2 ("Give to the orphans their property"). The Islamic system, moreover, understands "natural love of wealth for its own sake" (again the appeal to the harmony of Islam with human nature) and purifies it by channeling it towards society's needs. For Qutb, property is a right that belongs to society as a whole, which receives it as a "trust from God, who is the true owner of anything."[579] Moreover, the Islamic system rejects the monopolies[580] that according to Qutb plague the capitalist model. Concentration of wealth through hoarding and monopoly, the root cause of all poverty, is controlled and ultimately rejected through *Zakat*.

As in Mawdudi's model, *Zakat* takes centre stage in the Islamic economic system. It is the perfect purifier, eliminating all the malign aspects of capitalist as well as communist economics.[581] *Zakat* guarantees a fair and balanced distribution of wealth, creates universal social security, and enforces mutual responsibility in all strata of society. Qutb's discourse on *Zakat* is both apologetic and polemic. On the one hand, it is designed to persuade young Muslims infatuated with Marxist theory, Soviet communism and Arab socialism that these ideologies do not exclusively own

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[577] For the most systematic analysis of the various editions of *Social Justice in Islam*, seen as an indicative of Qutb's progressive radicalization, see William E. Shepard, "The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Qutb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Editions of 'Social Justice in Islam,'" *Die Welt des Islams* 32, no. 2 (1992): 96-236.

[578] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 300.

[579] Ibid, 54.

[580] Qutb identifies Q. 5:57, 24-33, 59-7 as the *ayas* describing the Qur'anic rejection of monopolies.

[581] In *Islam and the Moral Economy* Charles Tripp aptly observes that participation in the *zakat* was not only mandatory from the perspective of the pillars of Islam, but it also provided a means allowing any individual to "fulfill their ethically complete potential," 56.

ideographs such as social justice, economic freedom and class equality. On the other, it aims to break the monopoly claimed by capitalism over the ideographs of individual rights, private property and the free market. Qutb's presentation of *Zakat* as the perfect meta-concept for an ethically structured economic system makes him one of the pioneers of Islamist economics along with Mawdudi and Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (d. 1979).

4.7.4 Democracy: The Ideographs of Equality and Freedom

As already observed, the most significant methodological difference between Qutb and Mawdudi in respect to their polemics against ideological alterity is the Qutbian imperative of the complete autonomy of Islamic ideology. The Islamic idea must remain authentic and pure, for "Islam is a comprehensive philosophy and a homogeneous unity, and to introduce it to any foreign element would mean ruining it….like a delicate and perfect piece of machinery that may be completely ruined by the presence of an alien component."[582] Islam is thus defined as a complete and autarchic system, impossible to comprehend through the lexicon of other systems. The Islamic ideal "does not seek and never thought to imitate, find connections of similarities with others," and therefore has "no connection with others, even when they agree with it, or differ from it."[583] Qutb's approach to Otherness is focused not on similarities, but radical differentiation, and Islam is compared to alterity only to establish its superiority. He applies this approach most rigorously to capitalism and democracy.

As in the case of other ideologies, Qutb stresses the human origin of democracy: "Democracy is a system of government made by human beings [carrying] with it the characteristic of human beings and [thus] subject to fallacy."[584]The social contract that theoretically guarantees freedom, justice, and equality in a democratic system is nothing more than a human convention and philosophical fiction. Thus in reality, democracy is powerless in the face of tyranny and oppression.

Qutb finds man-made democracy to be frail particularly because it fails to create an integrated identity for individuals and communities based on a unified *manhaj.* Without a strong, coherent identity, democracy cannot even be considered a real ideology; rather, it is a vague,

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[582] Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future*, 117.
[583] Ibid.
[584] Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 165.

shapeless agglutination of concepts. Democracy is, in fact, a pseudo-ideology, making it invalid both as a concept and practice.[585] Since democracy is more a system of government than an ideology *per se*, it is forced to appropriate fundamental concepts from Marxism, for instance elements of the economic system which are imported "under the name of socialism." [586]

Another important line of Qutb's critique of democracy concerns its sources of authority. Qutb stresses that the main cause for the identity crisis of democracy resides in its full dependence on popular sovereignty. Even the constitutional foundation of democracy, generally considered one of the strongest concepts of political liberalism, is seen by Qutb as a paper barrier powerless to hold back the pathological abuse of power inherent in man-made sovereignty. In the face of a defective sovereignty, constitutions do nothing for social functionality and stability. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's influential distinction between aggregative and deliberative democracy, we can say that Qutb would reject both the aggregative model, which aggregates citizens' preferences to determine which "leaders, rules, and policies will best correspond to the most widely and strongly held preferences,"[587] and deliberative democracy, in which the democratic process is focused on discussion of "problems, conflicts, and claims of need or interest" which are then tested "through dialogue." [588] Concerning aggregative democracy, Qutb distrusts electoral systems, believing that there is no real competition and that decision-making is controlled by a few capitalist oligarchs rather than being genuinely in the hands of the citizens. Elections are a rigged game and meaningless rubber stamp, for the electoral system along with the entire pool of candidates is part of the capitalist system and, in fact, a strategy to conceal classism As for deliberative democracy. Qutb would probably judge it to be a utopia, in view of the democracy he experienced during his visit in the US as replete with hidden agendas and thoroughly exclusionary, i.e. based on the supremacy of the white race.

Qutb's experience of the Egyptian political system also no doubt influenced his views of democracy. Forged during a time of liberal experiment and dominated by conflict between the British, Wafd Party and monarch, Egyptian political culture was both unstable[589] and exclusionary

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[585] Khatab compares Qutb critique of democracy with J.J. Rousseau's perspective, but, we will see how a more fitted comparative term is Juan Donoso Cortés. See Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 165.

[586] Qutb, *Milestones*, 23.

[587] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19.

[588] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy,* 22.

[589] Selma Botman uses the term "inchoate democracy" in describing the Egyptian Liberal Age (1923-1952). See Selma Botman, "The Liberal Age (1923-1952)," in *Modern Egypt, From 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martin W. Daly, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 285-309.

of minority parties such as Young Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, and nascent women's associations. The system was patently elitist and clientelist, with the Wafd functioning as a party of cadres with a pyramidal structure, [590] as well as lacking transparency due to direct and indirect control of the press.[591]

Qutb's treatment of the ideographs of democracy is best understood against the background of these Western and Egyptian expressions. The characteristics of his Islamic system are shown to be free of their particular defects. Thus he presents the Islamic system as offering a divinely inspired Constitution (*Shari'ah*), a transcendental authority with undisputed sovereignty over all spheres of life (*Hakimiyah*), and a dynamic principle of consultation (*Shurah*) immune to arbitrary rulings and abuse of power. The Islamic model is in fact so far from defective Western models that it cannot be called democratic and constitutional in the Western, secular sense. Islam does not overlap with any other system: "Islam is Islam, Socialism is Socialism [and] Democracy is Democracy [for] there is a difference between the program made by man, and the program made by God, who created man."[592]

Qutb constructs Islamic ideographs that wrest equality and freedom from both democracy and communism. He asserts that "complete human equality" (*al-musawa al-insaniyah al-kamilah*) is an ontological result of the spirit of equality expressed in the Revelation. Complete equality embraces class, race, and gender. Genuine social justice is achieved through complete equality rather than the abstract and theoretical version of democracy or the one-dimensional communist view. The only criterion of difference and superiority accepted by the Muslim ideological ideal is *taqwah* (piety), which, unlike non-Islamic criteria such as wealth, race, or gender, represents an ethical solution to the aporias of identity and difference. An Islam "freed from the conflict of tribal and racial loyalties" is thus able to achieve an equality that "civilizations in the West" have not achieved "to this day."[593]

The ultimate guarantor of equality as well as freedom, of course, is full enforcement of

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[590] "The *Wafd*'s political ideas and strategies were handed down from above after consultation among only its most prominent members." See Botman, "The Liberal Age (1923-1952)," 288.

[591] Interestingly, Qutb's mentor Mahmoud al-'Aqqad was one of the advocates of the strict control over press, arguing that freedom of press leads to "confusion." As Ghada Hashem Talhami has noted, al-'Aqqad proposed a combination between the fascist Italian model, which banned all anti-governmental publications, and the American model that allowed virtually anyone with enough capital to create publications free from government influence. See Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From al-Ahram to al-Ahali* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 25.

[592] Qutb quoted in Sayed Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, 165.

[593] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 70.

God's Sovereignty on earth. Only when *Hakimiyah* is extended to all structures of society and tissues of community can a genuine equality be secured in which all individuals are equal under the same Divine Law. Freedom from the tyranny and oppression imposed by human sovereignty as well as freedom to escape from immorality is possible only under God's Sovereignty, for "in a society where some people are lords who legislate and some others are slaves, then there is no freedom in the real sense, nor dignity for each and every individual."[594] This is the apparent paradoxical definition of freedom employed by Qutb: to be completely free, an individual must submit completely to the only rightful master, who is God. In other words, freedom is voluntary servitude, but servitude to God alone.

This does not mean, however, that Qutb's political theology is patently anti-democratic. That would assume that he considered democracy and liberalism worthy adversaries. Properly understood in the context in which it was produced and disseminated, Qutb's discourse never takes democracy seriously. The constitution and parliament are deemed "topics of humorous talk" disconnected from the reality of the masses.[595] Qutb's *Battle between Islam and Capitalism* (*Ma'rakat al-Islam wa-al-Ra'smaliyah*) identifies communism, socialism and Islam as three possible trajectories for Egypt, with democracy conspicuously absent. [596]

4.8 Conclusion: Ideology and Discourse

This chapter analyzed Mawdudi's and Qutb's modern political theologies as critical and coherent discursive orders with their own alternative conceptual grammars. Mawdudi and Qutb were the first Islamist political theologians to make the decisive leap from a purely religious critique of modernity to ideological polemics. Their writings opened the way for the development of a new discursive field and novel political theology within the Sunni *episteme* that would come to shape much of the Islamist perspective on modernity, and they remain the prime exponents of a particular type of Islamist response. Thus, despite their radical views and apologetic triumphalism, their theoretical works should be deconstructed without resorting to facile stereotypes and generalizations. The two Islamists' critiques of modernity and their thought overall are more complex than is usually realized.

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[594] Qutb, *Milestones*, 108.
[595] Qutb, quoted in Youssef M. Choueiri: *Islamic Fundamentalism,* 125.
[596] Abu-Rabi notes that *The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism* "prepares the ground for Qutb's ideological commitment to the Ikhwan movement." See Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgance,* 126.

Using discourse analysis and the concept of ideology, I have argued that Qutb's and Mawdudi's political theologies are neither a simple theological reflection on the political, nor (despite a persistent cliché) a crass politicization of theology. On the contrary, they recuperate the concept of ideology, Islamize it, and present the result as the only universal solution to what they see as the failures of political modernity. Analyzed through the lense of ideology, Mawdudi's and Qutb's discourses reveal a common underlying structure. Islam for both is not only the perfect example of monotheism, but also the sole meta-ideology capable of unifying past and present. Only the Islamic ideology can maintain internal coherence while evolving in different contexts. All other ideologies (and eventually all other religions) are at best temporary constructions, doomed by their inherent defects and ethical and metaphysical flaws to disappear.

Modern ideologies are nevertheless seductive. In order to counter the lure of modernity and create a new Islamic consciousness, Qutb and Mawdudi undertook the Islamization of modern ideographs, which are needed to cement ideological commitments and political action. Both Islamist thinkers realized that power is an intrinsic element of language[597] and that the hegemonic narrative of Western modernity could be resisted only through forging an equally seductive Islamic counter-narrative. To put it in Theun Van Dijk's terms, they engaged in the production of both de-legitimating and legitimating discourses.[598] In this way they contested the monopoly of Western modernity over key ideographs such as social justice, equality, revolution, humanity, solidarity, and freedom. They also seized control of negative ideographs such as oppression, tyranny, violence, and discrimination in order to cast them as the ineluctable products of modernity. Breaking the monopoly of Western ideologies such as nationalism, communism, capitalism, and democracy over essential ideographs allows marginalized groups to establish a counter-discourse, and the success of Mawdudi and Qutb in using those ideographs as foundational building blocks of a novel Islamist political theology of faith in action cannot be denied.

We have also seen that Qutb and especially Mawdudi are open towards engaging modern ideologies on their own terrain and employing a modern lexicon. Because Qutb's and Mawdudi's critiques of modernity represent an effort to re-create an alternative ideological infrastructure in order to resist what Roland Barthes terms "les forces excentriques de la modernité,"[599] their

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[597] Roland Barthes termed it "le discours du pouvoir." See: Roland Barthes, *Leçon* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978)
[598] For Van Dijk, legitimation is a "complex, ongoing discursive practice involving a set of interrelated discourses… and presuppose norms and values." See Van Dijk, *Society and Discourse*, 257.
[599] See Roland Barthes, *Leçon* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), 8.

political theologies inevitably appropriate parts of those ideologies and employ modern, extra-Qur'anic sources and models. At the same time, they constantly polemicize against those very models. Thus they depart from the discourse of both the traditionalist *ulema* and Westernized, secularized Muslim intelligentsia. One effect of this strategy is that their discourses seem to be at the same time theologically incorrect, since their positions are implicitly and sometimes explicitly at variance with official, mainstream theological and exegetical doctrines,[600] and academically precarious. Concerning the latter, there is very little evidence that Mawdudi and especially Qutb actually read the works of Western political thinkers quoted or mentioned in their texts such as Marx, Hegel, Fichte or Lenin. Their most likely limited knowledge of Western political philosophy comes mainly through second-rate popularizing sources, making the limitations of their apologetics painfully obvious in many places.

The lack of theological and academic credentials, however, is fully compensated for by persuasive rhetorical force. Qutb's and Mawdudi's command of literary Arabic and Urdu sets them apart from other Islamist thinkers of the period, and it has left a lasting mark on the Islamist discursive universe. Radical political theology, indeed, does not need to be theologically correct or academically systematic. It only needs to be persuasive, passionate and inspiring. The critique of the two Islamists was able to inspire and persuade largely because, different from other contemporary Muslim reflections on the political, it identified the fracture between theory and praxis as a symptom of a deeper crisis of meaning. In the terms of Laclau and Mouffe, they created the conceptual premises for a revolutionary situation allowing the leap from latent and theoretical to active and practical.[601]

As we have pointed out in this chapter, despite common objectives, a basically similar strategy of Islamization of modern ideographs, and significant cross-pollination, there are important differences in Qutb's and Mawdudi's discursive orders. Mawdudi's critique is more open and hybridized, whereas Qutb's construction is exclusivist and purist at its core. Qutb begins by creating a *cordon sanitaire* between the Islamic model and all foreign concepts and then goes one to systematically replace all essential ideographs with "superior" Islamic alternatives. The task

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[600] For an analysis of theological incorrectness from the perspective of cognitive theory of religion, see Jason D. Slone, *Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[601] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 11.

of defining a purely Islamic lexicon is paramount for Qutb.[602] Mawdudi, on the other hand, actively seeks to create a Western-Islamic synthesis in which benign elements of modern ideologies are ingested and Islamized.

Another significant dissimilarity between Qutb and Mawdudi concerns political structures. Mawdudi's discourse is state-centric. He envisions an ideological state realized through progressive Islamization from above, starting with gradual replacement of the Westernized intelligentsia by a large Islamic elite which will play in the Muslim context the role of Gramsci's "organic intellectuals."[603] In contrast, Qutb is society-centric, as he focuses on re-creating the Islamic *ummah* on the model of the first Qur'anic generation. Qutb held two different positions on the re-Islamization of social and political space. In his moderate phase, he seemed to prefer progressive Islamization from below (following the model of Hasan al-Banna's mass Muslim Brotherhood movement), whereas in his later, radical Islamist phase, he proposed a very restrictive elitism dominated by the concept of an Islamic vanguard—the *tali'ah*, a genuine aristocracy of faith. In both cases, the state plays at best a peripheral role. Qutb's thesis is that once an Islamic *ummah* is established exclusively ruled by God's Sovereignty and Law, the structures of a state will automatically fall into place.[604] There is hardly any mystique of the Islamic Caliphate in Qutb's discourse, and he is often critical of Islamic polities after Madinah.[605]

The last difference between Qutb and Mawdudi I wish to draw attention to is rooted in the different historical contexts in which Mawdudi and Qutb lived and produced their discourses. As Theun Van Dijk stresses, the deep connection between ideology and discourse "will always, literally, depend on the context… [so that] no discursive theory of ideological expression and reproduction can be adequate without an analysis of context."[606] Mawdudi created his discursive order in the course of a career spanning fifty years as a journalist, politician and public figure. He engaged modernity in two radically different geo-political and religious contexts. From 1930 to 1947, his perspective spoke to a Muslim minority context in which Hindu nationalism had captured

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[602] "In practice, therefore ideology is a political language composed of slogan-like terms signifying collective commitment." McGee, "The 'Ideograph,'" 15.

[603] See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebook of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

[604] We can employ here Hegel's concept of the 'divinization' of the State in relation to Mawdudi, and the divinization of the social order in relation to Qutb.

[605] It is true, at least when it comes to the successive editions of *Social Justice in Islam*, that in later editions of this work Qutb de-emphasizes the decline of the post-Rashidun Islamic state without completely coming to terms with the classical institution of the Caliphate. See William Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism,* 331.

[606] Van Dijk, *Society and Discourse*, 227.

a social imaginary preoccupied with the effort to put an end to British colonialism. In the Indian period, his discourse had two objectives. The first was to delineate the specificity of the Islamic message in relation to the dominant Hindu discursive order and express a nascent Islamist identity politics. The second objective was to provide an Islamic critique of hegemonic, racist Western modernity. In the post-Partition period beginning in 1947, Mawdudi's critique becomes the conceptual and discursive arm of his Islamist movement, the Jamaat-e-Islami, and functions, with only limited friction, in the normal Pakistani political system. The effect of this integration is noticeable. Mawdudi's radicalism becomes more controlled and his critique of modernity is more constructive.

Qutb, on the other hand, progressively radicalized his discourse in a context in which the Muslim Brotherhood suffered brutal repression under the Nasser regime. His critique consequently reproduces the carceral conditions of its production, becoming ever more radical until the premature end of his life. Qutb's discourse, unlike that of Mawdudi, is placed not within but at the very periphery of a normal discursive and ideological system. He was, indeed, an outsider even in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood. His intransigence and unapologetic use of the highly destabilizing concepts of *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* made him a model for radical factions in the Brotherhood while alienating him from its more moderate and legalistic leaders.

A final observation should be made. Despite the importance of context in creating discourse and ideology, Mawdudi and Qutb were careful to de-contextualize their critique of modernity. They carefully avoided territorial and linguistic identity markers or creation of localisms and parochial enclosures, for their aim was to create a universal ideology, and not a Pakistani or Egyptian school of thought. This strategy has helped to assure a place for the two Islamists in the trans-national and cross-linguistic radical Islamist discourse of modern times.

The next chapters will place Qutb's political theology in a completely different context in order to demonstrate that it is not a singular construction rooted exclusively in the Egyptian ideological and political context of the 1950s and 1960s, but rather an expression of a larger anti-modern paradigm.

Chapter 5: Sayyid Qutb and Juan Donoso Cortés's Political Theology of the Clash of Civilizations

The previous two chapters placed Sayyid Qutb's anti-modern political theology in the frameworks of comparative hermeneutics and comparative discourse analysis in relation to the *comparans* of the Pakistani Islamist thinker Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi, with the *tertium comparationis* being Sunni anti-modern political theology. Since Qutb in many respects shares Mawdudi's historical, cultural and religious context and the influence of the latter over the former is well established, the viability and stability of a comparative approach is evident. The last two chapters of this study will place Qutb in a comparison that can be termed exogenous, by introducing as *comparans* two seminal anti-modern political theologians from the Catholic and Protestant traditions: Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper.

5.1 Biographical Preamble: Juan Donoso Cortés and His Legacy: A *Sitz im Leben*

Juan Francesco María de la Saludad Donoso Cortés, marqués de Valdegamas is considered by Peter Viereck "the subtlest intellect in the entire history of conservatism."[607] In the view of John T. Graham, Cortés represents for the European revolutions of 1848 what Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre were to the French Revolution of 1789.[608] With his significant European reach and influential counter-revolutionary critique of socialism and liberalism, Cortés, who was active between 1848 and 1853, was the most important Spanish conservative Christian thinker of his time.[609] He directly or indirectly influenced political decisions at the highest level in both his native Spain and across Europe, with Louis Napoleon, King William I, Bismarck, Metternich and the Czar Nicholas I reading and commenting on his works.

Cortés was also very influential in Ultramontanist circles in both Spain and France, his friendship with Louis Veuillot, the chief thinker of the Ultramontanist movement[610] in France

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[607] Peter Viereck, *Conservatism from John Adams to Churchill* (New Bruswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 63.

[608] "A critical and prophetic voice of tradition that called for reaction and reconstruction and which warned that anarchy, tyranny, and ruin were the fruits of revolution." John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 3.

[609] Apart from the Catholic priest, theologian and political philosopher Jaime Balmes (1810-1848) who was considered the other essential conservative Spanish thinker of the nineteenth century.

[610] The Ultramontanist movement was informed by the works of Bonald and Josephe de Maistre and represented a very influential theological and political direction in the nineteenth century Catholic space.

during the nineteenth century being important in this regard. His defense of an authoritarian and infallible papacy along with his concept of integral Catholic civilization (*civilización católica entera*) was to become a source for the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), which established papal infallibility as well as pronouncing against liberalism. Pope Pius IX, who had called the Council, publicly defended Cortés's controversial work *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism: Considered in Their Fundamental Principles* (*Ensayo sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo y el Socialismo*),[611] which expounded a theory of infallible authority that would serve as an important premise for the declaration of papal infallibility in 1871.[612]

Following Cortés's death, his thought fell into oblivion almost immediately and inexplicably, until Carl Schmitt re-discovered him in 1922 as a leading example of anti-modern political theology.[613] Although Cortés remains relatively understudied in North America,[614] his political theology in general and epoch-making *Discourse on Dictatorship* ("Discurso sobre la dictadura") in particular have had a significant impact in creating the theoretical infrastructure for authoritarian political regimes in Europe. The *Führerprinzip* (leadership principle) in National Socialist Germany, fascist regime of Mussolini in Italy, and authoritarian *integralista* or corporatist regime of António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal (1932-68) derived their concepts of authority in various degrees from Cortés. In his native Spain, his political theology was rediscovered in the 1940s and 1950s[615] and served as the essential conceptual framework for the principle of *caudillaje* (leadership), which legitimized the Franco regime (1936-75). In the realm of political theory,

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[611] In 1852, Cortés's work *Ensayo sobre el Catolicismo, el. Liberalismo y el Socialismo* was the center of a European controversy involving the liberal and conservative Catholic circles. Abbé J.P.L. Gaduel, vicar-general of the Diocese of Orleans, rejected the work as being heretical in a series of series of critical articles published in the journal *Ami de la Religion,* and Albert de Broglie, director of the Revue des Deux Mondes, did the same. Donoso Cortés sent Pius IX a copy of the *Ensayo* and asked for the Vatican mediation. The pope Pius IX declared the work free of any teological or dogmatic errors and endorsed it.

[612] Jeffrey P. Johnson notices that Donoso Cortés's important "Letter to Cardinal Fornari" is also a precursor for Pius's encyclical letter *Quanta cura* and *Syllabus of Errors*. See Jeffrey P. Johnson*, "Dogma and Dictatorship: The Political Thought of Juan Donoso Cortés"* (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 1997), 12.

[613] See: Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and Carl Schmitt, "A Pan-European Interpretation of Donoso Cortés," *Telos* 125 (2002) 100–115.

[614] Reception in the English-speaking world is represented by two monographic studies, a rather small number of articles and seven unpublished doctoral dissertations.

[615] The process of Donosian revival started in the late 1930s when the Catholic journal *Acción Española* re descovered Cortés as the best representative of traditionalism (*tradicionalismo*) and integral Catholicism in Spain along with Juan Balmes, Francisco Alvarado, Juan Manuel Ortí y Lara, Antonio Comellas, the Cardinal Ceferino González and Juan José Urráburu. For an excellent analysis of the place of Donoso Cortés in the Spanish context, see Joaquín Macías López, "Balmes y Donoso Cortés ante la política española en el siglo XIX," *El Catoblepa* 105 (noviembre 2010): 1-14.

Eugenio D'Ors, the chief representative of the far-right Falangismo, and Ramiro de Maetzu's Acción Española also derived their conceptual frameworks from Cortés's political theology.[616]

This study does not intend to provide an intellectual biography of Juan Donoso Cortés,[617] since there is already an important body of secondary literature available. Nevertheless, a brief biographical and intellectual *Sitz im Leben* is necessary in order to set the stage for a systematic comparative analysis. It should be noted that all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Juan Donoso Cortés was born on May 6, 1809, at Valle de la Serena in the province of Badajoz into a family of minor nobility. He was a descendant of the conquistador Hernán Cortés on his mother's side. His father, Don Pedro Cortés, was a lawyer, landlord, rancher and *católico convencido* (practicing Catholic).[618] He was also a good friend of Manuel José Quintana, one of the leading figures of the *liberales progresistas* (progressive liberals) and an important writer and poet.[619]

In 1824, the young Cortés followed the intellectual trajectory of his father by enrolling in the faculty of Law at the University of Salamanca, As Edmund Schramm notices, Salamanca was at that time "the breeding ground of philosophical materialism and political radicalism" (*un foco de materialismo filosófico y de radicalism político)* in which the "party of the philosophers" (*partido de los filósofos*) led the fight for spiritual renewal, assimilation of modernity and political liberalism.[620] Similar to the young Sayyid Qutb one hundred years later, Donoso Cortés came to

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[616] For the authoritative history of the far right ideology in Spain see Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923–1977* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

[617] For an in depth study of Cortés's intellectual biography, see John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*; Robert A. Herrera, *Donoso Cortés: Cassandra of the Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995). These two works are the most systematic analysis of Cortés's trajectory in the English-speaking world. In the Spanish and German space, there is a significantly more capacious body of secondary literature dedicated to the life and work of Cortés. See Federico Verdeger Suarez, *Introduccion a Donoso Cortés* (Madrid: Rialp, 1964); Edmund Schramm, *Donoso Cortés, ejemplo del pensamiento de la tradición* (Madrid: Publicación Ateneo, 1952); Dietmar Westemeyer, *Donoso Cortés: Staatsmann und Theologe* (Münster: Regensberg, 1940). Westemeyer's work is translated in Spanish as *Donoso Cortés*: *hombre de estato y teólogo* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1957). More recent works include: José María Beneyto, *Apocalipsis de la modernidad: El decisionismo político de Donoso Cortés* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1993); María Del Carmen Montana Franco, *Donoso Y La Libertad* (Extremadura: Universidad De Extremadura, 2014).

[619] Manuel José Quintana represents for the young Donoso Cortés what al-'Aqqad represented for Sayyid Qutb. He was a mentor and a protector. He was regarded at the time as the seminal example of liberalism and the advocate for a progressive and tolerant political culture. His celebrated work *Cartas a Lord Holland sobre los sucesos políticos de España en la segunda epoca constitutional* represents one of the most important critiques of the Spanish absolutism in the nineteenth century. Interestingly, like al-'Aqqad in Egypt, Quintana was persecuted for his views and spent 6 years in prison in the fortress of Pamplona for the crime of les-majeste. For the definitive works on Quintana see: Diego Martínez Torrón: *Manuel José Quintana y el espíritu de la España liberal* (Sevilla: Ed. Alfar, 1995), and especially Albert Dérozier, *Manuel José Quintana y el nacimiento del liberalismo en España* (Madrid: Turner, 1978).

[620] Schramm, *Donoso Cortés*, 24.

embrace the modernist, liberal *Weltanschauung*, due especially to the influence of the patriot and poet Manuel José Quintana. Donoso Cortés retained for his whole life the conviction instilled by him in Quintana that academic scholasticism was to be rejected in favour of action, a proposition that comes through as the leitmotif of his political theology of "decisionism" (*decisionismo*). As we will see, systemic anti-intellectualism is common to Qutb's and Cortés's political theologies.

Donoso Cortés's biographers divide his intellectual trajectory into two distinct phases: the liberal-progressive phase and conservative-reactionary-Catholic phase, with the year 1848 as the watershed between the two.[621] As in the lives of Qutb, Mawdudi and Kuyper, Cortés's anti-modern political theology emerges after a long gestation, culminating in a process of conversion or *metanoia* from political, philosophical and aesthetic Romanticism to a fully religious *Weltanschauung*. Indeed, all the political theologies analyzed in this dissertation involve conversion from modernity to anti-modernity and from liberalism or nationalism to integral Islamic or Christian perspectives.

According to Federico Suárez Verdeguer, Donoso Cortés went, in fact, through a double metanoia: a religious conversion in 1847, supposedly in the wake of his brother Pedro's death, and a political conversion in 1848, triggered by the revolutions that were affecting the entire continent. In this context, his famous 1849 *Discourse on Dictatorship* presented in the lower house of the Spanish parliament (*el Congreso de los Diputados de España*) is widely regarded as the full expression of the radically anti-modern *secundo* (second) Donoso Cortés.[622] As for Cortés's religious conversion, John T. Graham describes it as a move from being "a perfunctory Christian" to a "zealot whose conviction become invincible and whose intense faith ruled his whole life in thought, words, and actions."[623]

Again very similar to Qutb, Donoso Cortés was deeply influenced by the romantic notion of the "unity of reason and feeling" (*unidad de razón e sentimiento*) in a comprehensive whole (*todo orgánico*) that would provide individuals with the right perspective on the world and existence. Such a perspective according to Cortés generates a dynamic synthesis of progress and freedom for all of humanity (*nueva sítnesis e una nueva totalidad*). The theme of the *gran unidad* (great unity) and search for a meta-principle that can unify and explain history, politics and society is central to

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[621] For an analysis of the theory of the "two Donosos" see Schramm's *Donoso Cortés, ejemplo del pensamiento de la tradición.*
[622] López, "Balmes y Donoso Cortés," 26.
[623] John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 115.

Cortés's liberal period.[624]

In Salamanca, Cortés was also profoundly influenced by French philosophy, especially Condillac's and Destutt de Tracy's *sensualisme* and—to a lesser degree—the traditionalism and monarchism of Bonald and Joseph de Maistre.[625] Donoso left Salamanca and, after a short intermezzo at Colegio de San Pedro in Cáceres and Seville, moved to Madrid where he joined a circle of poets known as "Sons of Apollo" that suited his embrace of Romanticism. Having graduated with a law degree from Seville in 1828, he began a prodigious career as a political journalist (*periodismo político*) in the course of which he published articles in important Spanish journals such as *La Abeja, el Porvenir, El observador, El Correo nacional, El piloto,* and *La revista del Madrid.* Donoso remained a prolific political commentator (*periodista*) and firm believer in the influence of modern mass media all his life. All the political theologians discussed in this study were, in fact, prodigious journalists. They all understood the power of mass media as a driving force of ideological modernity, and their anti-modern political theology was conducted from within the modern world using not only a modern lexicon, but also modern means of mass communication.

Cortés's inauguration speech upon being named professor at Colegio de Humanidades de Cáceres in 1829 is an open apology for reason and progress in a united Europe and a radical critique of the *Ancien Régime*. The influence of Rousseau is pervasive, and Cortés is definitely on the Romantic side of the ideological spectrum.[626] His teaching career, however, was not successful and he left within a year after having had only two students.

A brief discussion of the political and ideological context of Spain in the 1830s will serve to place Cortés in his time. Donoso lived and theorized in a period in which Spain underwent a transition from absolute monarchy and colonial empire to a more modern and liberal political configuration. This development was profoundly influenced by the seismic change produced all over Europe by the French Revolution. Thus, as in Qutb's ideological evolution, Cortés's trajectory began in the midst of a grand liberal experiment that led to a clash between two types of radicalism. On one side, there was the revolutionary camp of liberals (*los liberales*), who were

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[624] We have to notice here that *al-wahdah al-kawniyah-al-kubra* (the great universal unity) is also a key analytical term in qutbian conceptual architecture.

[625] John T. Graham lists as additional formative influences: Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Chateubriand, Walter Scott, Schiller, Bentham and Locke. See *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 24.

[626] Schramm points out that "by then Donoso was decisively placed in the camp of the Romantics." See Schramm, *Donoso Cortés,* 50.

influenced by the rationalism of the Enlightenment and French Revolution and demanded a complete departure from clericalism and political absolutism. And on the other, there was the camp of the radical Catholics (*apostólicos*, *exaltados)* organized around the figure of Infante Carlos, Count of Molina, the brother of the King Fernando VII (1784-1833), who advocated a return to medieval absolutism, including restoration of the Inquisition and insulation of Spain from all foreign influences.[627]

The liberal camp was divided in turn between the progressive (*los progresistas*) and moderates (*los moderados*). The latter were decisively influenced by the French royalist "Doctrinaires" Benjamin Constant, Royer-Collard and Guizot and professed the autonomy of the individual subject in all spheres of existence along with the inner rationality of the human subject and, in the political realm, popular sovereignty and constitutionalism.[628] Donoso Cortés eventually became one of the main thinkers associated with *los moderatos*,[629] a position that became clear in October 1832 with the publication of his first important work, *Memoría sobre la situación actual de la Monarchía.* Here Cortés rejects both radical liberalism and ultra-conservative Carlism (referring to partisans of the Infante Carlos for the Spanish throne; see below). His *Situación actual de la Monarchía* is essentially an apology for the Bourbon monarchy already in place as a moderate and modern institution. This is the stance of a *liberal conservadora* (conservative liberal) massively influenced by French political philosophy: Guizot's "Doctrinaire" liberalism, the eclecticism of Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant's theory of representative government, and Saint Simon's dogmatic realism.[630]

In February of 1833, Donoso began his career in public service with a post at la *Secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Gracia y Justicia de Indias* (the government entity focused on Spain's overseas territories, created through the Bourbon reform in 1790). Cortés remained a public servant until his death in 1853. Then between 1834 and 1839, Spain suffered a civil war waged between the partisans of the Infante Carlos, Count of Molina, for the throne of Spain and supporters of

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[627] See Schramm, *Donoso Cortés,* 34, and also Francis Graham Wilson and H. Lee Clarke et al. eds., *Order and Legitimacy*: *Political Thought in National Spain* (Madrid: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

[628] See José María Beneyto, *Apocalipsis de la modernidad,* 45. For a historical analysis of the long liberal experiment in Spain, see Charles J. Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808-1939* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), and especially Josp Fontana, *Historia De España vol. 6, La época del liberalismo* (Barcelona: Crítica/Marcial Pons, 2007).

[629] Beneyto calls him: "el primer moderado" (the chief moderate). *Apocalipsis de la modernidad*, 45.

[630] See Schramm, *Donoso Cortés,* 60; John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 36.

María Cristina de Bourbon, the widow of the deceased King Fernando VII who was acting as regent for the infant Isabela II (the only heir of Fernando VII).[631] This violent confrontation, known as the Carlist rebellion, also represented a clash between the last remains of the absolutist *Ancien régime* on the one hand and supporters of progressive liberalism and political modernity on the other. During this difficult period, Donoso Cortés suffered the trauma of the premature death of his wife Teresa Carrasco in 1835. He never remarried and remained childless. One year later, however, he was elected to the prestigious Chair of Constitutional Political Law at El Ateneo, the epicenter of progressive liberalism in Madrid.[632] Here he delivered a series of lectures constituting the most important theoretical text of his liberal period, *Lecciones de derecho político pronunciadas en el Ateneo de Madrid*, or *Defense of Representative Government: Lectures on Political Right*.[633] Considered one of the most important works of political theory of the period,[634] Donoso's *Lecciones de derecho político* positioned him as a very influential moderate liberal. It is in this context that he introduced his concept of *la soberanía* (sovereignty), which would become the leitmotif of his entire intellectual life. Nicomedes Pastor Díaz, an important figure of nineteenth century Spanish political liberalism and intellectual Romanticism and a friend of Cortés, proclaimed him author of the first historical and philosophical examination of sovereignty in

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[631] In 1830, the King Fernando VI introduced *Pragmática Sanción* (The Pragmatic Sanction) through which he abolished the Salic law forbidding the succession to the throne of a female hair. Therefore, his brother, Carlos, Count of Molina was eliminated from succession in the case that the king would die without a male hair. See Fontana, *Historia De España vol. 6,* and Miguel Artola, *La España de Fernando VII* (Madrid: Editorial Espasa-Calpe, 1999).

[632] *Ateneo Científico, Literario y Artístico de Madrid* (Scientific, Literary and Artistic Athenæum of Madrid) is a prestigious private institution of learning created in 1835 as a continuation of Ateneo Español, which existed during "el Trienio Liberal" (1820-23) as on of the intellectual centers of the Spanish liberalism, combining a conference hall, a forum, a library and a concert hall. This important institution was organized in *Catedras* and attracted numerous luminaries of progressive thought. The 2ⁿᵈ article of the founding document of 1836 described the mission of the institution: "*Los socios reunidos en este Ateneo se proponen aumentar sus conocimientos, por medio de la discusión y de la lectura, y difundirlos por los de la enseñanza y de la imprenta*" (The founding partners reunited in this Ateneo aim to enhance their knowledge through discussion and readings and to disseminate it via education and publishing). For a history of *Ateneo*, see Salvador Antonio Ruiz, *El Ateneo Científico*, *Literario y Artístico de Madrid* (*1835-1885)* (Londres: Tamesis Books Limited, 1971); Francisco Villacorta Banos, *El Ateneo científico, literario v artístico de Madrid, 1885-1912* (Madrid: Taravilla, 1985).

[633] See Juan Donoso Cortés, *Obras de Don Juan Donoso Cortés, marqués de Valdegamas,* vol. 1 (Madrid: Imprenta de Tejado, 1854), 115-257. This foundamental text was one of the few translated into English. See *A Defense of Representative Government Lectures on Political Right* by Juan Donoso Cortés, trans. Vincent J. McNamara (Concord: Captus University Publications, 1991).

[634] Joaquín Costa famously compared *Lecciones de derecho político* with the reflection on sovereignty, authority and power produced by Francisco Suárez, in the sixteenth century. See Joaquín Costa, *Estudios jurídicos y políticos* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Revista de Legislación, 1884), 124, and John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 43. For a focused analysis of Donoso Cortés as a Liberal doctrinaire, see Vincent J. McNamara, "Juan Donoso Cortés: un Doctrinario Liberal," *Rev. Filosofía Univ. Costa Rica* 30, no. 72 (1992): 209-216. Schramm as well considers *Lecciones de derecho político* as "the most systematic and persuasive formulation of his political and juridical conceptions." Schramm, *Donoso Cortés,* 88.

Spain.[635]

For Cortés, sovereignty is the essential element of political theory, although it would have to be configured for the Spanish context. His aim was to reconcile popular sovereignty (as an expression of Rousseau's *volonté générale*) with sovereignty as the absolute and perpetual divine right of the king as expounded by De Maistre, Bonald and Bodin.[636] His solution involved modification of Guizot and Royer-Collard's principle of "sovereignty of reason" (which was very popular among the moderate liberals of the period) in favour of what he termed "sovereignty of intelligence" (*la soberanía de la inteligencia)*. He thought this to be more palatable in the Catholic Spanish context than excessive emphasis on reason and dilution of axiological values produced by the excesses of popular sovereignty.

Cortés's sovereignty of intelligence is in essence a political expression of a systemic intellectual elitism. The right to vote is restricted to a new legitimate aristocracy composed of educated middle class men able to moderate both the radicalism of the masses and conservativism of the traditional aristocracy. The classical distinction between *soberanía de derecho* (the sovereignty of Law, *de jure*) and *soberanía de hecho* (the sovereignty of fact, *de facto*) is key to Cortés's formulation. The former rests theoretically with God and the king, but the later is praxical and transformed into actual power through the action of the intelligence. "Intelligence" is emphasized because in Cortés's vision it allows order (*orden*) and freedom (*libertad*) to co-exist, creating a dynamic equilibrium between society and individuality. As Vincent J. McNamara remarks, the concept of *inteligencia* allows Donoso to distance himself from the radical *racionalismo* (rationalism) of the liberals while conceiving of a dynamic principle for a non-Hegelian philosophy of history. [637]

Once again, there is a parallel in the intellectual trajectory of Sayyid Qutb. We noticed in the first chapter how the young Qutb, influenced by al-'Aqqad's emphasis on the superiority of intellect and feeling, came to profess a romantic elitism involving aristocracy of feeling (*'iffah)*

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[635] See John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 43. Together, Donoso and Pastor Díaz created the journal *"El Porvenir"* ("The Future") and were ideological allies and personal friends during Cortés's liberal period. For an excellent comparison between Donoso Cortés, Juan Balmes and Pastor Díaz, see Santiago Galindo Herrero, "Donoso Cortés y su paralelo con Balmes y Pastor Díaz," *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 69 (1953), 111-139.

[636] John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 43.

[637] "The intelligence is not a purely abstract reason but a vital and historical reason which advances through many transformation in time. Intelligence is a part of a man who has an relative existence and it cannot be identified with the "Spirit" or "Geist" which, according to Hegel, manifests itself within history" See McNamara, "Juan Donoso Cortés: un Doctrinario Liberal," 213.

and intellect (*fikr*) as a counterbalance to the vulgarity and obtuseness of modernity.[638] In the later parts of their lives, Qutb's and Cortés's romantic elitism dissolved into a purely religious vision of an aristocracy of faith.

In 1837 Donoso was elected deputy in the *Cortes* (Spanish parliament) representing Cadiz and begun his political career. He also continued his activity as a *periodista,* producing hundreds of articles, ranging from polemics to history and political theory to literary criticism. In a way, his entire intellectual trajectory is reflected in the pages of these articles. Despite the puzzling diversity of thematic and stylistic registers, one element remains constant. Cortés, like Qutb and Mawdudi, was regarded as a master of the language in which he wrote, as well as being one of the most charismatic speakers of his time.[639]

Donoso also continued his interest in literature. In 1838, he joined José Fernández de la Vega, Nicomedes P. Díaz, Juan N. Gallego, Manuel Quintana, and García Gutiérrez as a member of the influential literary society Liceo Artístico y Literario*,* and in 1831, he published his first literary production, the epic poem *"El cerco de Zamora"* (The Siege of Zamora), dedicated to the *Reconquista*. As will happen with Qutb a century later, Juan Donoso Cortés expresses and filters his Romanticism through poetry; it is interesting indeed that poetry is significant in shaping both Cortés's and Qutb's religious critiques of modernity. Also as in the case of Qutb, Cortés's literary production amounted to just a handful of texts. Both would finally prefer a career in politics, which they saw as the vital force of their time.

In 1840 after tremendous public pressure, the hero of the Carlist War, General Joaquín Baldomero Fernández-Espartero, was named head of government, representing the radical faction of the progressive liberals. The Queen Mother María Cristina promptly resigned the regency and left for Paris. Following her as a private secretary, Donoso Cortés made his first direct contacts with Catholic circles in France. His journalism of this period shows a gradual departure from the eclecticism of Guizot and Cousin and the beginning of openness to the Catholic political theology of Bonald and de Maistre.

In 1843, the Espartero government fell and the moderate party returned from its French exile. The young Queen Isabella was declared to have attained her majority and Donoso Cortés

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[638] See chapter two, page 33-4.
[639] We should remind here that Mawdudi and Qutb were as well seen as masters of their languages. John T. Graham also notices that his critics attacked Cortés as being too opinionated, excessively rhetorical and arrogant. See *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 43.

was named her private secretary, receiving a substantial salary.[640] In October 1844, Cortés was elected to parliament for the fourth time and named to the commission appointed to reform the constitution of 1837. On September 27, 1845, he was named *Consejo Real* (Crown counsel) as private secretary to the Queen, and, in 1846, he was awarded a title of nobility as Vizconde del Valle, Marqués Valdegamas. At the age of thirty-seven, he was named a *grande* of Spain.[641] He also became the president of El Ateneo de Madrid and in 1848 a member of the Academia Espanola de la Lengua, where he produced his text, *Discorso Académico Sobre La Biblia*. Thus Cortés moved close little by little to the centres of power.

As Edmund Schramm and John T. Graham stress, Donoso Cortés's influences during this period of his ascension change from progressive liberal sources such as Guizot, Benjamin Constant, Montesquieu, and Rousseau to works such as Augustine's *City of God*, Bossuet's *Universal History* and de Maistre's *Du Pope* and *Soirées de St. Petersburg.*[642] Gianbattista Vico's concept of *corsi e ricorsi* as a universal law of human societies that causes all configurations of power to perpetually vacillate between the divine, heroic and human will also supply Donoso with a useful alternative to the concept of progress through the inexorable march of reason. Cortés evidently began to experience disappointment with what he perceived to be the inability of liberal thought to provide a universal principle of human history other than the abstract ideal of reason. He progressively perceived religion as replacing reason and intelligence as the driving force of human history and *sine qua non* for existence for all societies. In other words, as Qutb was to do in the early 1950s, Donoso Cortés experienced a conversion from political theory to political theology. This intellectual shift would serve as a propaedeutic for the religious conversion to follow.

In 1847, Donoso's older brother Pedro Cortés died. This event is considered by most of his biographers as the trigger for Donoso's conversion[643] and awakening to "a total conception of Catholicism."[644] The second trigger is thought to be the European-wide 1848 Revolution, which

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[640] Schramm notes that his salary was 40,000 reales.

[641] Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age,* 60.

[642] Federico Suárez considers that despite the fact that Donoso's education was liberal and Francophile (*liberal y afrancesada*) he had never been a revolutionary but a conservative on the topic of regime change "non es revolucionario, antes al contrario, desde este primer momento aparece conservador." Suarez, *Introduccion a Donoso Cortés*, 35.

[643] José María Beneyto has noted that: "the death of his brother Pedro was the last and the most decisive element in his conversion" (my translation). *Apocalipsis de la modernidad*, 194. Suárez calls this event "*la gran mudanza*" (the great change) and sees it as the most important factor in Cortés's life.

[644] Edmund Schramm, *Donoso Cortés su vida y su pensamento* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1936), 185.

transformed the politics and ideology of the nineteenth century.[645] Donoso concisely expressed the consternation of European intellectuals when revolution engulfed the continent from Paris to Bucharest: "the February revolution comes like death: unexpectedly" (*vino como viene la muerte: de improvise*).[646] For Donoso, these were not isolated events, but catastrophic symptoms of an upcoming universal socialist revolution. His negative perspective on revolution was already clear in his *Discurso Sobre Dotación del Culto Y Clero* ("On the Endowment of Worship and Clergy") pronounced in parliament in February of 1845. For Donoso, all revolutions are "rebellion against legitimate authority," a rebellion that is "not only a crime, but the worst of all crimes, and not just the worst of all crimes, but the crime *par excellence.*"[647]As we shall see, revolution plays for Donoso the same role as *Taghut* and *Jahiliyah* for Qutb; revolutions are the bearers of chaos, anomie and tyranny of man-made systems. "Revolutionary freedom," writes Cortés, is essentially anti-Catholic, because it is essentially pagan, which explains why the French Revolution was a "type of resurrection of paganism."[648]

Donoso's reaction to the violence of the 1848 revolutions was encapsulated in his *Discurso sobre la Dictadura* (*Discourse on Dictatorship*) already referred to above. This famous speech was pronounced on January 4, 1849, in support of General Narvaez, who had become head of the government in 1847 and strongly repressed all revolutionary activities in Spain. Cortés's *Discurso sobre la Dictadura* made him a leading voice of Spanish counter-revolutionary thought and a well-known orator in Europe overall.[649] It has been described as "resolutely Conservative, Christian and Spanish,"[650] with no trace of eclecticism or ideological ambiguity. At this moment, Donoso's political theology is completely on the path of radicalization, and his critique of modernity will only increase in intensity and scope.

In January of 1850, Donoso follows with his *Discurso sobre la situación general de*

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[645] Carl Schmitt points out that the 1848 revolutions produced the eruption of "a completely new problematic" expressed by radically new terms in the European lexicon: socialism, communism, anarchism, atheism, and nihilism. See Carl Schmitt, "A Pan-European Interpretation of Donoso Cortés." For a historical analysis of the importance of the 1848 Revolution in a European context, see R.J.W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, eds., *The Revolutions in Europe*, *1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[646] Donoso Cortés, *Obras*, tomo 3, 258.

[647] Cortés, "Discurso Sobre Dotacion del Culto Y Clero," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 92.

[648] Cortés, "Pio IX," in *Obras,* tomo 3, 199.

[649] "It had been applauded, excoriated and discussed by monarchs, statesmen, politicians, intelelctuals and the general public." Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age,* 73.

[650] Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age,* 67. He will discuss this fundamental text of political theology later in this chapter highlighting both the congruences and the radical differences between Cortés's and Qutb's perspectives on authority.

Europa, which marks his complete political and religious conversion while showcasing what Herrera terms "apocalyptic propheticism."[651] The text was immediately translated into French, Italian and German, receiving praise from Metternich, Czar Nicholas II, and Frederic Wilhelm IV and commentary from Schelling and Ranke.[652] It shows Donoso's Cassandra-like perspective, fully developed, on the destiny of Europe. For Cortés, the time of Russia had arrived, and its entrance on the world stage would radically change the destiny of the world. Driven by materialism, Russia was to create a socialist world state, with the only force capable of opposing the crushing Leviathan being the Catholic Church.[653] Cortés's intuition that there would be a revolution in Russia, and a socialist one at that, caused Carl Schmitt to judge the Spaniard one of the few truly visionary voices in nineteenth-century political thought.[654]

Following the "Speech on the General Situation in Europe," Donoso delivered another celebrated speech on December 30, 1850, focused on the internal politics of Spain. The *Discurso sobre la situación de España* was instrumental in the fall of the Narváez government, ending what Spanish historians call "the moderate decade" (*la década moderada*). Its perspective is completely anti-modern and systematically anti-liberal, offering *civilización católica entera* ("integral catholic civilization") as the only alternative to the barbarity of socialism. Cortés was subsequently named ambassador in Paris, where he became one of the artisans of Napoleon III's *coup d'état* in December 2, 1851. At this time, he was regarded as one of the most important voices of the Ultramontanist current in Catholic thought, for which his close friendship with Louis Veuillot and excellent relations with the Vatican were instrumental.

In August 1851 at the request of Louis Veuillot, Donoso Cortés published his only book, *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism: Considered in Their Fundamental Principles* (*Ensayo Sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo, y el Socialismo, Considerados en sus Principios*

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[651] Some of his critics called Cortés: "*Donoso el apocalíptico*" (Donoso the apocalyptical). See Belén Rosa de Gea, "El enviado del cielo," 7.

[652] John T. Graham calls this discourse: "a world classics of oratory." *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 155. Federico Suárez even claims that "never the words of a Spaniard casued such a universal impact and never they were listened to with such attention beyond the Pyrenees Montains. The popularity of Donoso's text in Europe reached the zenith." Suarez, *Introduccion a Donoso Cortés*, 169.

[653] We can note here that Qutb's perpective of the final triumph of communism over the Western democracies is comparable with Donoso's prophetic tone. We will analyze this particularly prophetic dimension of their political theologies in this fallowing section of this chapter.

[654] "Unquestionably the Speech on Europe was Donoso's greatest and it was one of the most eloquent, prophetic and universal of modern parliamentary orations." See John T. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 157.

Fundamentales). Cortés's *Essays on Catholicism* represent a synthesis of his political theology and remains one of the most important critiques of modernity produced in the nineteenth century. Described by Schramm as *"obra de combate"* (a combat work) and "fundamentally polemical,"[655] it was praised in conservative, anti-liberal circles from Moscow to the Vatican and met with hostility in liberal and socialist circles. Cortés's radical critique of the ideological expressions of political modernity caused scandal among Catholics. Moderates rallied behind it and radical Catholics rose up against it, making Cortés one of the most polarizing figures of the period in a controversy that finally involved the Holy See. After long and often violent polemics, in the course of which Cortés was accused of ignorance of theology, political naïveté, Jansenism, Lutheranism and even heresy, Pope Pius IX publicly defended his *Ensayo* and finally took it as an important source for the First Vatican Council.

The whole affair took a heavy toll on Donoso's already failing health, and he died of a heart attack[656] on May 3, 1853, in his residence in Paris at the age of forty-four. Yet his *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism* went on to be used by liberals and conservatives in the battle over French Catholicism and were ultimately rediscovered as a classic of political theology in the twentieth century.

At a first and superficial glance, Sayyid Qutb and Juan Donoso Cortés have little in common. One was a humble school-teacher who always had to struggle financially, while the other was an aristocrat, a man of the world and a dandy who used carved ivory walking sticks, wore tailored suits and smoked fine cigars.[657] Donoso was a parliamentary statesman, an important diplomat and royal counsellor for two queens, living in the close proximity to the centers of the European power. Qutb, on the other hand, was not on the center of Egyptian politics. His radical perspective placed him at odds even with the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership. While Cortés conversed in the most fashionable Parisian salons, Qutb spent his days and nights in a prison cell. Donoso Cortés was given a state funeral and is buried alongside Goya, Meléndez Valdés and Moratín in Madrid's San Isidro cemetery, while Qutb died on the gallows, was buried in secrecy, and rests in an unmarked grave.

Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés's lives may have been very different, but their visions of

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[655] Schramm, *Donoso Cortés su vida y su pensamento*, 243.
[656] John T. Graham advances the hypothesis that Donoso's heart attack was triggered by a syphilis contacted in his youth that reached its terminal stage. See: *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 298.
[657] Ibid, 74.

modernity and political theologies have many points of contact. They even suggest similar mindsets. Both lived and shaped their views in a world in which long-established traditions were being radically and violently contested by novel modern ideologies. Despite obvious cultural and religious differences, mid-nineteenth century Spain and mid-twentieth century Egypt both endured violent clashes between the paradigms of tradition and modernity. While Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés were developing their visions, both countries were experiencing the eclipse of long periods of liberal experimentation that had attempted to expel religion as a social and political force. In both locations industrialization and urbanization produced massive social and economic dislocation, and imported ideologies [658] including liberalism, nationalism and socialism, successfully contested the symbolic capital of traditional religious structures of self-definition and belonging.[659] In this context, modern mass media in both countries served as an instrument for both the meta-narrative of modernity and for the religious counter-discourse, making Qutb's and Cortés's literary and journalistic skills key, as noted above, to their influence.

Last but not least, both political theologians were converts from Romanticism to an integral religious identity. As neophytes, they embraced a radical piety, which was by default inflexible and exclusivist. Most important, Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés share in their own historical contexts the same enemy: a hegemonic modernity. They also offer the same solution: a comprehensive, integral religious *Weltanschauung* that combines politics, society and culture in a religious order structured by God's Sovereignty and Law. Finally, as the analysis below will demonstrate, Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés's political theologies are very far from being

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[658] Liberalism, socialism and nationalism were basically introduced in Spain after the French occupation during The Peninsular War (1807–1814). The later phase of Donoso Cortés's political theology of integral Catholicism was recuperated by the Franchist historiography as a full affirmation of *auténtica hispanidad* (authentic Hispanicism), despite the fact that Donoso Cortés was hardly a strict nationalist.

[659] Michel Despland has noted that in its French, classical expression, liberalism was not a theory radically unfriendly to religion. However, as he elaborates further, liberalism redefined and relocated the public cult of God in the heart of men—"where it lives like the intimate source of his convictions and his consolations." This inner conception of religion was considered as being the only one that can assure the good functioning of society and functioned as the counter definition to the Ancient Regime apology for an integral religion. See Michel Despland, *Les hiérarchies sont ébranlées: Politiques et théologies au XIXe siècle* (Anjou: Editions Fides, 1998), 72, and Patrick Foley, "But What About the Faith? Catholicism and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Spain," *Faith & Reason* 6, no. 4, (Winter 1990): 1-8. It should be added that the Spanish ultra-liberalism of *los exaltados,* was a lot more radically anti-clerical and anti-religious than its French counterpart. In Spain, as Frances Lannon noted, between 1836 and 1845, eighty-three percent of the property belonging to religious orders was seized and sold. Male religious were effectively proscribed, and the 50,000 existing in 1797 were reduced to zero in 1840s. See Frances Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875–1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59, and David Blackbourn, "The Catholic Church in Europe since the French Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 4 (October 1991): 778-790.

idiosyncratic reactions to modernity. Their ambitions are systematic and their worldviews designed as perfectly functional alternatives to modernity.

5.2 The Clash of Civilizations

On May 7, 1849, Juan Donoso Cortés wrote to Count of Montalembert in response to increasing pressure to make his political theology more explicit. His short letter is an important entry point to his critique of modernity. Donoso opens by asserting that the destiny of man is a profound mystery revealed through two entirely incommensurable principles: the Catholic faith (*el catolicismo*) and philosophy (*la filosofía*). Rooted in these principles, the world of man is structured by two radically antithetic systems of civilization: *la civilización filosófica* and *la civilización católica,* divided by a fathomless abyss (*un abismo insondable*) and absolute antagonism (*un antagonismo absoluto).* What separates the two is the essential concept of sovereignty. "One civilization makes human reason and human will subordinate to the divine element," Cortés writes, "whereas the other leaves aside the divine element and proclaims the independence and sovereignty of the human element."[660] A century later in his *Milestones*, Qutb will emphasize the same tension in similar words by declaring that "*Nizam al-Islam* is, by its very nature, the only civilized society, and the *Jahili* societies, in all their various forms, are backward societies." [661] For Qutb as for Cortés, it is only when sovereignty belongs to God alone and God's Law is obeyed throughout society that it can define itself as free and civilized.

Donoso Cortés goes on to emphasize a radical, existential choice between two irreconcilable opposites. One civilization is error and the other is truth, one is good and the other evil. Negotiation or dual identity is therefore impossible, making it necessary to "choose with a supreme choice, to affirm one civilization in all its elements and condemn the other in its entirety." Furthermore, after the choice is made, "those who vacillate between the two [civilizations]… are irremediably condemned to absurdity" [662] Qutb's similarly intransigent attitude toward modernity is expressed in a well-known passage of his *Milestones*, which is worth quoting here at length:

> Islam cannot accept any mixing with Jahiliyah, either in its concept or in the modes of living which are derived from this concept. Either Islam will remain, or Jahiliyah: Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half-Islam and half-Jahiliyah. In this respect Islam's stand is very clear. It says that the truth is one and cannot be divided; if it is not the truth, then it must be falsehood. The mixing and co-existence of the truth and falsehood is impossible. Command belongs to God Almighty, or otherwise to Jahiliyah; God's Shari'ah will

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[660] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert," in *Obras,* tomo 2, 278.
[661] Qutb, *Milestones*, 109.
[662] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert," in *Obras*, tomo 2, 278.

prevail, or else people's desires.[663]

The concept of human nature is central to the visions of Cortés and Qutb. Both believe that their constructs respond correctly and uniquely to the nature of man. Their readings of that nature are, however, different. For Donoso Cortés, *la civilización católica* ensures that human nature (*la naturaleza del hombre*) is recognized as "sick and fallen" (*caída y enferma*) in essentially all its aspects. Outside the Catholic universe, man cannot escape the inner limitations of this nature of his. As the prisoner of an impotent will, he cannot discover or invent the truth and cannot love or discover the good. "So grand is the misery of men," [664] writes Cortés, "so deep is his abjection, so absolute his ignorance and so radical his impotence, that he cannot even form a good resolution, trace a grand design or conceive a great thing that can praise God or bring the salvation of his soul."[665]

Nor can human reason perceive the truth, which means that it cannot claim infallible authority. Cortés's verdict is clear: freedom of speech (*la libertad de discussion*) necessarily leads to error, and freedom of action to evil: "When the will emancipates from God and reason emancipates from the Church, error and sin rule unopposed in the world."[666] Like Joseph de Maistre, Donoso Cortés believes human nature to be irremediably affected by original sin. Corruption, weakness in will and action, concupiscence, greed, and blind reason are the stumbling blocks of a fallen humanity: "The reptile that my foot tramples is in my eyes less despicable than man is."[667] Carl Schmitt describes Donoso Cortés's vision of human nature as emphasizing "the natural depravity and vileness of man" and "more horrible than anything that had ever been alleged by an absolutist philosophy of the state in justifying authoritarian rule."[668]

We have seen how Cortés opposes Catholic civilization to "philosophical civilization," another name for modernity in Cortés's lexicon. Philosophical civilization according to Cortés is seemingly benign in that it claims that "*la naturaleza del hombre*" (human nature) is whole and sound. It professes that men can see and discover the truth, possess a sound will, and love and practice the good in the most natural way.[669] Consequently, human reason is presented as an

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[663] Qutb, *Milestones*, 146.
[664] Cortés, *Ensayo*, in *Obras*, tomo 4, 271.
[665] Ibid, 284.
[666] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert," in *Obras*, tomo 2, 279.
[667] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 271.
[668] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 58.
[669] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert*,*" in *Obras*, tomo 2, 280.

instrument capable of entirely grasping truth, and autonomous human will as able to "forcefully realize the absolute Good."[670] These views, according to Cortés, lead philosophical civilization to claim that the only solution to social problems is to break the bonds that enslave reason and free will. Abolishing all bonds (*ligaduras*) will supposedly make humanity perfect. This, however, has the dire consequence of questioning the institution of family and causing the bond of domestic life (*ligadura doméstica*) to vanish. Denying the principle of private property will destroy social bonds, and once the principle of government is rejected, political bonds will also disappear. Ultimately, God will be negated and the divine bond (*ligadura divina*) will also be dissolved.[671] In other words, modernity stripped of its civilizational rhetoric results in the dissolution of all substantial connections. Modernity is the harbinger of chaos and anomie.

It is clear from Donoso Cortés's exposition of philosophical civilization that he believed that the world in his time was engaged in an epic struggle between paradigms. On the one hand, modernity presents a seductive, seemingly emancipatory model that makes the unbound human subject the ultimate criterion of truth and freedom (*independencia y' la soberanía del elemento humano*). On the other, there is a strict model that denies autonomous freedom and reason by subjecting it to the absolute authority of God—which ultimately guarantees genuine freedom and truth for humanity at it subjects itself God's Sovereignty. Stepping outside of Cortés's worldview, we see an optimistic philosophy of progress opposed to a pessimistic and austere theology of sin and redemption. The idea at play here is very much the same as in Qutb's antinomy between *Nizam al-Islam* and *Jahiliyah*: the oppression of modernity, through a deceptive misreading of human nature, is powerfully seductive.

There is, however, a profound difference between Qutb's and Cortés's estimations of human nature. Qutb's vision is not essentially negative or fundamentally dark. As we saw in the previous chapter, his Islamic ideological ideal is not the discipliner but rather the guardian of universal *fitrah*, for Islam: "never forgets for an instant, at any time or place, the nature of man and the limits of his capacities."[672] The Islamic tradition does not entertain the concept of original sin that plays such an important role in Catholic theology and eschatology. Qutb's political theology is consequently not misanthropic in the manner of Cortés, despite its acute critical and

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[670] Ibid.
[671] Ibid, 279.
[672] See this study, p. 201.

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polemical edge.[673] His view of human nature is, indeed, at times extravagantly optimistic:

> The noblest of all the creatures on earth and whatever it contains, and because there is no material value on earth that can be raised higher than the value of man or for which man can be sacrificed… Muslims do not consider man naturally sinful or evil, nor do they raise him to the status of a god or of an angel, made of light and goodness and free of physical needs and desires. Yet, the humanity of man has a very high status and every man is potentially capable of reaching great heights of perfection at any time and place.[674]

Qutb's positive view of human nature also fits his strategy of building a revolutionary movement around a believing elite that will ultimately create a universal Islamic society by establishing God's Sovereignty (*Hakimiyah*). Qutb's vision, in other words, is of emancipation and salvation gained by humanity here on earth,[675] whereas Donosos Cortés, preoccupied as he is with the irreversible fall of humankind, argues that the only way to save wretched humanity is through the direct action of God in history. For man is incapable of recognizing the truth and will in fact deny it though it is before his very eyes; or if he cannot deny it, he opposes it while imagining himself to be an independent sovereign (*en calidad de soberano independiente*). These tendencies in Cortés's view are rooted in the very nature of humankind:

> Sinful and prevaricating man (*el hombre prevaricador y caído*) was not made for truth, nor was truth was made for sinful and prevaricating man. After the prevarication of man, God placed an immortal repugnance and insurmountable repulsion (*una repugnancia inmortal y una repulsión invencible*) between truth and human reason, Truth does not impose its yoke but contains in itself the title of its own sovereignty, but man because he rebelled against his God consents only to his own sovereignty.[676]

The essential point at which the visions of Cortés and Qutb nevertheless converge is their reading of modernity. Political modernity is seen as essentially malign and nihilistic. For Qutb as for Cortés, the evils of modernity, though obscured by the rhetoric of progress, humanism and freedom,[677] represent an absolute reversal of all values and axiological principles. Qutb would no doubt agree with Cortés's accusation against philosophical civilization that by "proclaiming the independence of human reason and will," it converts "what was relative, exceptional and

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[673] Edmund Schramm stresses that sin in Donosos Cortés's perspective has a very concrete reality and that "the problem of sin occupies the center of his entire thought, because the negation of sin points out to the real root of the socialist theory of man, with all its consequences." *Donoso Cortés, ejemplo del pensamiento de la tradición,* 40.

[674] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 13.

[675] "According to our unvarying definition of civilization, the Islamic society is not just an entity of the past, to be studied in history, but it is a demand of the present and a hope of the future. Mankind can be dignified, today or tomorrow, by striving toward this noble civilization, by pulling itself out of the abyss of *Jahiliyah* into which it is falling." Qutb, *Milestones*, 117.

[676] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras*, tomo 4, 59.

[677] "If materialism, no matter in what form, is given the highest value, whether it be in the form of a 'theory,' such as in the Marxist interpretation of history, or in the form of material production, as is the case with the United States and European countries, and all other human values are sacrificed at its altar, then such a society is a backward one, or, in Islamic terminology, is a 'Jahili society.'" Qutb, *Milestones*, 109.

contingent to something absolute, universal and necessary."[678] Donoso in his *Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa* makes the antithesis between the two worlds even more clear by replacing philosophical civilization with the more poignant "revolutionary civilisation" *(la civilización revolucionaria)*, described as negative *(negativa)*, decadent *(decadencia),* and revolutionary only in the sense that "its fundamental errors are converted into revolutions which transform states."[679]

Having diagnosed these maladies, Cortés proceeds to elaborate on Catholic civilization. His Catholic civilization rests on three fundamental affirmations, each of which points to God's Sovereignty. The first affirmation is of the existence of God and His presence in all aspects of life. The second affirmation is that an omnipresent personal God rules supreme "in heaven and earth" (*en el cielo y en la tierra*). And the final affirmation, the result of the first two, is that "God who reigns in heaven and on earth governs absolutely the divine and human existence."[680] In direct opposition to this threefold model, "philosophical civilization" is structured by three fundamental negations which shape the evolution from progressivism to pure atheism. The first negation is the denial of God's presence in the world of men: "God exists, God rules but because He is so far away, He cannot govern human things." Constitutional progressive monarchy corresponds to this negation of God's providence.[681] The second negation rejects a personal God: "God exists but He does not have a personal existence. God is all that lives and moves. God is humanity and nature." Pantheistic religion and political republicanism correspond to this negation, since claiming that God is not a person is to assert that He cannot rule or govern. The final negation is enforced by atheists in the religious sphere and by socialists in the realm of politics: "God does not reign or govern. He is neither a person nor a multitude. He does not exist."[682] As in the case of Qutb's vision, in which modernity is thought to systematically deny God's Sovereignty over all aspects of human life, Donoso Cortés's antinomic political theology refuses to admit any nuance in a modernity that leads to the dissolution of all connections between creation and its Creator.

Notice how, similar to Qutb's radical reading of modernity as *Jahiliyah*, Donoso Cortés's perspective is deliberately monoglossic. The Spaniard staunchly refuses to acknowledge any

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[678] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert," in *Obras*, tomo 2, 281.
[679] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3*,* 315.
[680] Ibid, 322.
[681] Ibid, 321.
[682] Ibid.

religious dimension in any product of modernity. This tunnel vision is quite peculiar since, as Michel Despland has demonstrated, mainstream liberalism and socialism in the first half of the nineteenth century in France were far from completely hostile to religion. Liberalism was in fact favourable to religion, even if it was, as Despland puts it, "redefined and relocated" from a public cult to "the heart of man…where it lives as the intimate source of his convictions and his consolations."[683] Even the French socialism of the period "read the Bible and other scriptures, probed the historical future with ideas of theodicy, and meditated on the suffering of humble men."[684] The French Revolution altered the conceptual place of religion in society, politics, and praxis more profoundly,[685] and Donoso Cortés's very sharp reaction to that perspective seems more comprehensible. The issue, in any case, is dislocation of religion, to which Qutb would react a century later in a similar manner, albeit it in defence of Islam rather than Christianity. Both political theologians denounce the idea of a personalized, individualized, and altogether tamed religion regarded as an important but not exclusive building block of an ideal society. This Liberal conception is regarded as simply camouflage for an anti-religious ethos. Religion in the views of Cortés and Qutb must rather be integral and all-encompassing, for it is the instrument of God's Sovereignty on all levels of social and individual existence. Any sovereignty other than the dual authority of a Christian sovereign and the Holy See, or the *Hakimiyah* professed by the first Qur'anic generation, is naught but modern barbarity poorly disguised by tattered religiosity.

In Cortés's perspective, the outcome of the battle between modernity and pre-modernity is clear. In this world, philosophical or, as he also calls it, "revolutionary" civilization will triumph. Europe will completely revert to literary, philosophical, political and religious paganism, culminating in the ultimate restoration of socialist paganism (*paganismo socialista*).[686] This involution will pave the way for a great catastrophe recalling the biblical flood: "this great catastrophe signifies … the natural triumph of evil over good" (*el triunfo natural del mal sobre el bien*). [687] As we pointed out in the previous chapters, the theme of the return of the paganism of

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[683] Despland, *Les hiérarchies sont ébranlées,* 7.
[684] Ibid, 72.
[685] Michel Despland calls this phenomenon "le dereglement de l'economie religieuse," where economy in this context is defined as "the anssamble of mentality, society and conscience phenomena that give religion oat one hand its social place and its life in the hearts (of men)." *Les hiérarchies sont ébranlées,* 16. For an analysis of the French Liberal Catholicism in the works of Lamennais, Lacordaire, Bautin, Gratry, Olle-Laprune, Maurice Blondel and Alfred Loisy, see Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
[686] Cortés, "Carta al Conde de Montalembert," in *Obras*, tomo 2, 286.
[687] Ibid, 281.

Jahiliyah in a new, more dangerous and more hegemonic form plays a central role in Qutb's denouncement of the status quo in the Islamic world. One difference is that, whereas Donoso Cortés was clearly influenced by Vico's *corsi e ricorsi*, Qutb's conceptualizes modernity as the unprecedented return of *Jahiliyah*.

Cortés's Cassandra-like prediction of a final civilizational catastrophe is also reminiscent of Qutb. Qutb certainly agrees that modernity (called by him *Jahiliyah*) is a hegemonic force which has imposed a world-wide system of man-made tyranny and is close to erasing religious civilization.[688] However, for Qutb, a small elite of an aristocracy of faith, organized after the model of the first *ummah* and carrying the same understanding of the Qur'an as the living revelation of God, will be able to oppose the seemingly unstoppable march of modernity. Cortés, on the other hand, seems (especially after 1848) to deny the efficacy of human intervention in the cosmic battle between Catholic and philosophical civilizations. Only when God himself directly intervenes in the course of human history can the conflict finally be resolved. Catholicism, Cortès writes, "does not say that men will be able to triumph over evil." On the contrary, it says that "since societies cannot triumph over evil without the help of God's hand, man also cannot do it without God's grace."

In this context, it is worth mentioning that several of Cortés's readers, including Carl Schmitt, have remarked on the profound pessimism of the Spaniard's critique of modernity[689] and messianic overtones of his political theology. These went against the dominant perspective of his time, which was shaped by the liberal discourse of progress, humanism and freedom. Cortés's dark and gloomy political theology of the direct, personal action of God's Sovereignty in human history does in fact have a genealogy, as it directly continues Joseph de Maistre's theology of history. It nevertheless opened him to accusations of heresy. The scandal generated in Catholic circles by the publication of his *Ensayo* has already been mentioned. Abbé J.P.L. Gaduel, the vicar-general of the Diocese of Orleans and editor of the influential literary and political Catholic publication *L'ami*

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[688] "The need for a fixed standard and unchangeable norms was never more apparent than it is today, because people have abandoned fixed principles and mankind is cut loose from its axis. Our situation resembles a planet that has broken loose from its orbit and threatens to collide with others, destroying itself as well as everything in its path." Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, 35.

[689] "In contradistinction to the optimism of the time, he [Donoso] saw with great clarity that the railroad and the telegraph would bring with them a centralized, planned dictatorship." Carl Schmitt, *Donoso Cortés in gesamteuropaischer Interpretation* (Cologne: Vier Aufsatze, Greven Verlag, 1950), 110. Michel Despland also notes that that the first liberalism of the 1830s was "avant tout une doctrine politique optimiste." *Les hiérarchies sont ébranlées*, 73.

de la religion et du Roi, accused Cortés of Baianism, a thesis of the Belgian theologian Michel Baius (d. 1589)[690] involving a peculiar perspective on original sin in which the Fall is said to have affected the entirety of human nature so that "all acts [not resulting from faith] are sinful" (*omnia opera infidelium sunt peccata*). Since Baianism was a quasi-Protestant dogmatic deviation, the suspicion of crypto-Protestantism persisted despite exoneration (mentioned above) by the Holy See. Cortés, like Qutb, was not, of course, a trained theologian and never claimed to represent Catholic dogma.

In sum, for Donoso Cortés, Catholicism represents the only "complete system of civilization" (*un sistema de civilización completo*), a system that encompasses all things: "the science of God, the science of angels, the science of the universe and the science of man."[691] This all-encompassing system can be understood only through a universal conception embedded in an equally comprehensive theology. Thus theology for Cortés is the supreme science, (*la ciencia de todo*) reigning over the laws of political systems, social laws, and all human concepts. In a space where theology rules supreme, Donoso Cortés regards social and political science as parasitic accretions based on the arbitrary classifications of limited human understanding:

> Hence it follows that every assertion concerns God or all political and social truth turns necessarily into theological truth… Therefore, if everything is explained in God and for God and theology is the science of God, theology is by necessity the science of everything.[692]

The entire body of Sayyid Qutb's work displays the same theological reductionism, which is, in fact, the essential mark of exclusivist and totalistic political theology. The most forceful expression is found in his *The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept and its Characteristics* (*Khasa'is al-tasawwur al-Islami wa-muqawwimatuhu*). "Concept" *(al-tasawwur)* is Qutb's term for his political theology, which includes the attributes and foundations of divinity *(Rabbaniyah)*, stability *(Thabat)*, unity *(Tawhid)*, comprehensiveness (*Shumuliyah*), balance *(Tawazun),* positive orientation (*Ijabiyah*) and realism (*Waqi'iyah*). No man-made concept, however sophisticated, can express or equal the "world-wide, eternal and ideal system of life" provided by Islam. Like other

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[690] Michel de Bay or Michael Baius (1513–1589) was a Belgian theologian who is regarded as one of the main influences on Cornelius Jansen, the creator of Jansenism. In 1567, Pope Pius V condemned parts of Baius' work with the bull *Ex Omnibus Afflictionibus*. Pope Gregory XIII renewed the condamnation in 1580. For a Jesuit, very biased perspective on Baius, see Jean-Baptiste Du-Chesne, *Histoire Du Baianisme Ou De L'Heresie De Michel Baius* (J. F. Willerval, 1731). For a more balanced view see F. X. Jansen, *Baius et le Baianisme*: *Essai théologique* (Louvain: Musaeum Lessianum, 1927).
[691] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 27.
[692] Ibid, 16.

anti-modern political theologians, Qutb and Cortés advocate a profound form of *intégrisme*-totalism that refuses any degree of autonomy for politics. In the views of the Egyptian and the Spaniard, fragmentation of social life, loss of organic social unity, anomie and the corruption of modernity are the inevitable result of separation between politics and religion. In this fractured world, the connection between metaphysics and politics must be restored for a new totality to be born. The humanism of mundane political philosophy must be replaced by a non-negotiable political theology of unity. Praxis is crucial for Qutb and Cortés as it is for all political theologians, and so at this level, displaced and tamed religion should be confronted with a strong religion focused exclusively on the absolute sovereignty of God.

Despite their different understandings of human nature, Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés share the same binary vision of human history. It is a vision of a clash between two completely incompatible worlds engaged in a universal zero-sum contest—in Gregory Boyd's felicitous phrase: a "warfare of worldviews."[693] We must stress one again that the anti-modern worldviews expounded by Qutb and Cortés are not simply theoretical projections. Rather, they are part of a larger system of thought designed not only to interpret the world, but to transform it.[694]

5.3 Qutb's Realism and Anti-intellectualism and Donoso Cortés's *Decisionismo*: Two Sides of the Same Coin

> Indeed, the Islamic concept is not like a theory, or an ideal dream, or spiritual mysticism, which may remain passively in the depths of the human heart. It is a practical plan designed to be implemented. As long as it is not implemented, its value remains purely academic, and that is not its intent. It keeps stirring in the heart of the Muslim, spurring him to work in order to realize its goals in the world of events.[695]

As this fragment suggests, Qutb spent much energy and space on presenting his political theology of faith in action as the only real solution for a world full of speculative utopias. Realism *(al-waqiʻiyah)* is an important concept for Qutb, listed, as we saw above, as the sixth element of the Islamic "concept" (*tasawwur)*. The "system of life" that the Islamic *tasawwur* "delineates for mankind," says Qutb, "is realistic and eminently practical because it is designed by God to be

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[693] Gregory Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, (Wetmount, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 19.

[694] For the definitive intellectual history of the concept of world-view, see David K. Naugle Jr., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002). Naugle identifies the origin of the concept of Wordview /*Weltanschauung* in Kant's notion of *Weltbegriff*, and follows its evolution in philosophy, social sciences and theology. As Naugle stresses, it is important to note that, in the Protestant theology, the concept of worldwiew is fully employed in the critique of modernity by James Orr and especially by Abraham Kuyper. However, Naugle does not mention the Catholic or the Islamic political theology as seminal loci for the use of the concept of Wordview.

[695] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 104.

implemented in human societies."[696] Ergo, the Islamic ideal represents a perfect synthesis of speculation and action. Everything that does not conform to it is dangerous intellectual noise, for "Islam came to deliver mankind from the rubbish heaps of philosophies and religions under whose ideas, systems, and burdens it was groaning and from the wilderness of speculation in which its beliefs and ways of life had gone astray."[697] Since *Jahiliyah* is a hegemonic ideology that needs to be heroically resisted, the Islamic ideology and movement must adhere to a sober realism that equally rejects political despair, pessimism, and the temptation of utopian speculation. Qutb insists forcefully on this realism, as in the following remarkable passage:

> We must make it clear, however, that we do not desire to seek the truths of the Islamic concept merely for the sake of academic knowledge. We have no desire to add still another book to the shelves of Islamic libraries under the heading of "Islamic Philosophy." Never! Indeed, our purpose is not mere cold' 'knowledge" which deals only with intellectual issues and adds to the stock of "culture." For us, this sort of activity is somewhat trivial and cheap and not worth the effort. Rather, we want to bring about that "movement" which is beyond "knowledge." We want the knowledge of the Islamic concept to lead people toward the realization of its contents in the real world.[698]

Qutb's insistence on "realism" has a distinct genealogy. The claim that Islam is the religion of realism *par excellence* bringing together human nature and the metaphysical in a unique way is, of course, a commonplace of modern Islamic *Tajdid-Islah* reformism. More importantly, the claim of realism is a key theme of the battle with nationalism, liberalism and communism. Thus it is hardly surprising that talk of the unique realism and practicality of the Islamic *manhaj* is ubiquitous in Qutb's political theology. It could be also argued that Qutb's emphasis on realism represents an attempt to provide an Islamist version of Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, thus contesting the Marxist claim to transformative political ideology. Islam, writes Qutb, "did not fold its hands in surrender to this 'reality' [i.e. the false reality of *Jahiliyah*]." Rather, "it abolished it, or changed it, and erected in its place its own sublime and unique structure, on its firm and profound basis."[699]

In this context, Andrew March's perspective on Qutb as the creator of a complex and convincing "realistic utopia" is useful.[700] March places realistic utopia—defined as "a vision of a society that is the best we can or ought to wish for and that, by virtue of its proper implementation,

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[696] Ibid, 109.
[697] Ibid, 13.
[698] Ibid, 6.
[699] Qutb, *Haddha al-Din,* 59.
[700] Andrew March, "Taking People as They Are: Islam As a 'Realistic Utopia' in the Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb," *The American Political Science Review* 104, no.1 (February 2010) 189-207.

would remove the main perennial human obstacles to justice, morality, and good"[701]—at the centre of Qutb's theory of Islamic order. Viewed from this perspective, Qutb's hostility toward speculative philosophy is a programmatic strategy designed to sharply differentiate the Islamic *manhaj* from the solutions offered by Western ideologies. The difference between a scholastic, speculative philosophical understanding of reality and a supposedly realistic, direct and action-oriented Islamic political theology is that of inauthentic and authentic worldviews.

Qutb is insistent on realism and anti-intellectualism also in relation to the Islamic sciences. The firm native sources of Islam are the Qur'an and, to a lesser extent, *hadith* and *Sunnah*. The endless debates and speculations of Islamic philosophy and theology (*kalam*) do nothing but generate scepticism. They are not merely "foreign to Islam, to its nature, method, style, and teachings,"[702] but completely useless. One of the ways *Jahiliyah* installs its hegemonic rule is through such intellectualism and passion for scholarly debates. Qutb's targets are evidently the conservative *ulema* and Westernized intelligentsia. The alternative to philosophy and wild speculations of theology is the realistic, pragmatic and direct political theology of the Islamic *manhaj,* which not only interprets the world but also changes it according to God's plan for humankind.

As for Donoso Cortés, his anti-intellectualism and insistence on praxis is expressed in his concept of "decisionism" (*decisionismo*). Cortés's decisionism influenced Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism and was instrumental in creating the conceptual framework for Franco's doctrine of leadership (*caudillaje*).[703] In order to better frame this seminal concept and compare it with Qutb's anti-intellectualism, we need to discuss Donoso Cortés's radical critique of parliamentarianism and his famous apology for dictatorship, since these are the direct outcomes of *decisionismo*.

Similar to Qutb's disdain for Westernized intelligentsia, Cortés declares that bourgeois liberal parliamentarianism produces "a chattering class" (*una clasa discutidora*) incapable of proceeding with meaningful, practical action. In Cortés's view, parliaments make intellect an idol, elevate discussion to the level of fundamental principle, and cut off theory from praxis, [704] so that "action does not correspond to the discourse, the problem is not solved, and the promise is not

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[701] Andrew March, "Taking People As They Are," 192.
[702] Qutb, quoted in Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: The Theory of Jahiliyyah*, 166.
[703] Carl Schmitt introduced the term "*decisionismo*" in the preface of the 1928 edition of his work *Die Diktatur*. The most important work focused on this concept is José María Beneyto's *Apocalipsis de La Modernidad*.
[704] Beneyto, *Apocalipsis de la modernidad*, 80.

fulfilled.[705] Most importantly, Cortés openly accuses parliamentarism of being the force that dissolves natural and divine hierarchies, destroys the unity of society and consequently places itself in a state of permanent rebellion against God as "creator, legislator and preserver of human societies (*creador, legislador y conservador de las sotiedades humanas*).[706]

Ultimately, the intellectualism and endless speculation characteristic of parliamentarianism weaken the defences of society against modern anomie, resulting finally in the chattering classes falling prey to "horrible dictatorships."[707] As philosophical speculation infects politics, the forces of modernity prepare to establish a universal tyranny. The spectre of tyranny as the inevitable product of secular modernity plays the same role in Donoso Cortés's thought as *Taghut* (tyranny) for Sayyid Qutb. Worldwide tyranny is enabled by the passivity of the masses and impotence of religious and secular elites caught in the web of abstract theory. Hence, Cortés prophesized:

> The world, gentlemen, advances with rapid steps towards the constitution of the most gigantic and devastating (*gigantesco y asolador*) despotisms in the memory of mankind. This is the road of civilization and the path of the world…the road is prepared for a gigantic, colossal, universal tyrant. Everything is ready for that.[708]

According to Cortés, the only workable, rational tool humans can apply to avoid this disaster is the *decisionismo* exercised by dictatorship. If for Qutb the only way to counter the *Jahiliyah* of modernity is enforcement of a system in which *Hakimiyah* rules on every level of existence, for Donoso Cortés the only means to stave off revolutions such as those of 1848 is a conservative dictatorship. It is sure that the corruption and anarchy of modernity cannot be opposed through theoretical utopias. As José María Beneyto noted, Donoso Cortés's theory of dictatorship mirrors the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat by generating a decisionist counter-utopia based on the image of the strong leader.[709]

Donoso Cortés, in fact, perceived the future as being inevitably shaped by dictatorship. The choice is between technocratic and plebiscitary dictatorship of the masses ("dictatorship from below," as he puts it) and "dictatorship from above" by providential strong leaders who exercise the "state of exception" (*estaldo de excepción*, in which legal order outside the authority of the dictator is suspended in favour of unburdened *decisionismo*) in order to counter anarchy and anomie.

> I choose the dictatorship which comes from above, because it comes from regions more clean and serene. It

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[705] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura pronunciado en el Congreso el 4 de Enero de 1849" in *Obras*, tomo 3, 264.

[706] Cortés, "Carta a L'Editor of La Revue des deux Mondes," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 210.

[707] Cortés, "Pio IX," 175.

[708] Cortés, "Carta a L'Editor of La Revue des deux Mondes," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 231.

[709] Beneyto, *Apocalipsis de la modernidad*, 189.

is a question of ultimately choosing between the dictatorship of the dagger (*la dictadura del puñal*) and dictatorship of the sword (*la dictadura del sable*). I choose the dictatorship of the sword, because it is nobler.[710]

The dichotomy between *la dictadura del puñal* (represented by the tyranny of the vulgar masses) and *la dictadura del sable* (seen as the mark of a providential strong leader) will endure as an influential rhetorical antithesis in Spanish political thought and *locus classicus* of Western anti-modern political theology. The distinction also points to a significant difference between Cortés and Qutb. Both see the future as a march towards global tyranny driven by instrumental reason, the autonomy of politics in relation to religion, and bureaucratization of social space. Both regard intellectualism and scholasticism as impotent and hollow reflections on a misconceived praxis. Both strongly feel the need for a realistic, integral, praxis-oriented political theology. For Cortés, however, the solution, as we have explained, is dictatorship—a dictatorship, indeed, that constitutes a "state of exception" as explained above.[711] Thus, for Donoso, dictatorship in certain circumstances where the advent of chaos must be forestalled is

> … a good government, a beneficial government, like all other governments; it is a rational government which can be defended in theory as well as in practice…This is the shining, indestructible crown theory of dictatorship. And this theory, gentlemen, is a truth within a rational order, it is a constant given in the historical order. Name one society that did not have dictatorship. Name one.[712]

For Qutb, on the other hand, decision and sovereignty do not belong to any man, however powerful and noble he may be. No human actor can claim the right to a state of exception, and no dictatorship of the sword is acceptable. Rather, the only dictatorship that is salvific and necessary is the dictatorship of God, expressed in His sovereignty (*Hakimiyah)* and enforced via his Law (*Shariʻah*). Rule of any other kind not only limits the freedom of its subjects, but their very humanity:

> By assigning legislation/ legislative power and sovereignty to God alone and making all men servants of God, Islam and only Islam liberates men from servitude to each other. In all systems where legislative power and sovereignty are in the hands of men, in one way or another, the results is that there is a kind of slavery of people to other people (some men are the servants and slaves of others). This servitude is abolished in Islam, all men being equally the servants of God. This is the true meaning of the liberation of man, a liberation which might also be termed the birth of man, short of which man cannot enjoy a fully human existence. It is a divine gift, bestowed on mankind as a blessing.[713]

This important difference between Cortés and Qutb should not, however, lead us to believe

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[710] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 256.
[711] In his *Discourse on Dictatorship*, he defends and justifies the martial law or "state of exception" (*estaldo de excepción*), imposed by the Narváez government as a counter-measure against the 1848 revolution.
[712] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 274.
[713] Qutb, *Basic Principles of Islamic Worldview,* 221.

that Cortés advocated theocracy. Contrary to certain ideologically biased readings, Qutb, Mawdudi, Cortés and Kuyper, were not theorists of theocracy. Rather, they emphatically insist on Divine Sovereignty as the only benign alternative to the excesses of modernity. In fact, none of the political theologians studied in this dissertation trust humans to do God's job in the religious, political or social realm. It is especially important to clarify this in Cortés's case because of his willingness to support a "state of exception" for Ramón María Narváez and later Louis Napoleon Bonaparte following his coup d'état of December 2, 1851. This cannot be expanded to all forms of dictatorship. For Cortés, the only institution that can claim and exercise a truly benign dictatorship is the Universal and Apostolic Catholic Church. Only the Church represents "human nature without sin (*la naturaleza humana sin pecado*)…as it left the hands of God full of the original justice and the sanctified grace, because it is infallible and not subjected to death."[714] The Church appears as the *sumum bonum* of all political regimes. Pontifical dignity makes it the perfect absolute monarchy, apostolic constitution renders it the most accomplished benign oligarchy, and it represents an imposing yet benevolent aristocracy due to the profound distance between the laypeople and the clerics.[715] Crucially, only the Church is capable of withstanding the wave of destruction brought forward by revolutionary modernity. The Church alone can prevent or at least postpone the advent of universal tyranny and is the sole hope for preventing the ultimate destruction of civilization: "We must assert, without fear of being challenged, that without the supreme jurisdiction conferred by the universal agreement of the Church, Europe and civilization will perish together."[716]

Again, despite this strong emphasis on the Church as the only institution capable of saving humankind in a world immersed in moral, social and political crisis, Donoso Cortés, like Mawdudi and Qutb, is clear that he is not constructing an apology for theocracy. Confirmation of this essential but often overlooked point is found in his letter to the editor of *La Revue des deux Mondes* sent on November 15, 1851. Here, Donoso Cortés tries to defend his *Ensayo* against accusations made by the French monarchist politician and writer Albert de Broglie (1821-1901) who claimed that Donoso was a worshipper of the Middle Ages and theocrat willing to give the Church absolute

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[714] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 41.

[715] "When it proclaims the principle that the good pastor must die for his flock, when it claims that the aim of all actions of all ministers should be the congregation of the faithful the Church appears to be an immense democracy in the most glorious meaning of the term; or at least, a society instituted for an essentially popular and democratic objective." Ibid.

[716] Cortés, "Carta a L'Editor of La Revue des deux Mondes," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 210.

and universal domination over European affairs. Donoso Cortés retorts that submission before divine principles does not mean, "explicitly or implicitly… the institution of a theocratic government" (*la institución de un gobierno teocratico*), for the fundamental truths found exclusively in the Church translate neither theoretically nor in practice into domination over the temporal realm. The distinction between *Imperium* and *Sacerdotium* that is the ultimate source of temporal and spiritual authority remains intact. [717] At this point, Donoso Cortés condemns dictatorship in terms that place his concept of *la dictadura del sabre* in a completely different light:

> A limitless power is essentially an anti-Christian power (*un poder esencialmente anticristiano*) and an offense at the same time against God's majesty and man's dignity (*contra la majestad de Dios y contra la dignidad del hombre*). Limitless power cannot be called a ministry or a service, while political power under the empire of Christian civilization is nothing else. Limitless power is idolatry, both for the subject and for the King. It is idolatrous because the subject adores the King …and the King adores himself.[718]

Seen in this light, Donoso Cortés's position on the necessity of the state of exception under a dictatorship of the sword does not appear to warrant a necessary link between his *decisionismo* and the Fascist theory of absolute authority of the *Führer* or *Duce.* It is undeniable that the thought of Donoso Cortés, along with that of Antonio Cánovas del Castillo and Joaquín Francisco Pacheco y Gutiérrez-Calderón,[719] was used to justify the *Decreto de la Junta de Defensa Nacional* that made Generalissimo Francisco Franco *el Caudillo de España.* The *Decreto* offered Franco "the supreme power to dictate juridical norms of general character," including those applicable to the entire positive legislation of the state. As all these features are central to Donoso Cortés's *Sobre La Dictadura*, it may appear that the principle of *caudillaje* institutionalized his *la dictadura de la sabre* and basically made the "state of exception" a permanent reality. Nevertheless, as Alberto Spektorowski argues, Donoso Cortés and Joseph de Maistre before him do not profess decisionism based on the charisma of a secular leader and political mythology of the Saviour (both of which

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[717] Cortés, "Carta a L'Editor of La Revue des deux Mondes," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 216.

[718] Ibid, 220. Francis G. Wilson noticed that despite this late clarification Cortés, failed to sufficiently stress one of the central principles of Catholic political thought which states that government of the Church is not necessarily be the model for the government of the state. Francis G. Wilson, "Donoso Cortés: The Continuing Crisis," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 2, no. 1 (1960): 55.

[719] Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828–1897) was a politician and historian who served six times as the prime minister of Spain and was instrumental in the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. He was assassinated in 1897 by the Italian anarchist, Michele Angiolillo. Francisco Pacheco y Gutiérrez-Calderón (1808-1865) was a politician, writer and jurist who served as prime minister in 1847 and who was also an important figure of the Bourbon restauration. See José Antonio González Casanova, "La cuestión de la soberanía en la historia del constitucionalismo español" *Fundamentos: Cuadernos monográficos de teoría del estado, derecho público e historia constitucional,* no. 1 (1998): 295-328.

are instrumental for fascism).[720] Complete sovereignty belongs only to God; His Church guards it and traditional society and the spiritual leadership of the Church legitimize it. In the end, Spektorowski argues, "the synthesis of the Church and sword" did not generate fascism and in fact "set an epistemological barrier against Fascist development" because of its "reliance on Providential legitimacy and the idea of transcendence."[721] It is worth mentioning that Qutb denounces the mythology of the Saviour and unfettered sovereignty of charismatic dictators in an even more decisive fashion as expressions of *Jahiliyah.* Thus we see that his binomial *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut* expresses *in nuce* the essential difference between Fascist and Islamist political mythology.[722]

In sum, despite the formal difference of the "state of exception," Cortés and Qutb both favour decisionism as a way to bypass the *cul-de-sac* generated by the scepticism of philosophy, the artificiality of scholasticism, and pervasiveness of intellectualism. The Spaniard and the Egyptian both created a political theology of the sword that cuts the Gordian knot of endless debates and dissolves what they saw as the endemic demagogy of modern politics. This is the impulse that underlies their worldviews, despite formal differences produced by different contexts. The hand that holds the sword is (at least in exceptional circumstances) human in the case of former, and exclusively divine for the latter. Nevertheless, the enemies confronted by the two political theologians are the same: liberalism and especially socialism as harbingers of chaos and universal tyranny.

5.4 Cortés's Critique of Liberalism and Popular Sovereignty

Cortés's germinal idea, which is continuously hammered home in his theory of dictatorship, is the connection between religion and politics as the ultimate source of order and equilibrium in any human society. In Cortés's perspective, Europe in his time was structured by three great ideas: the Catholic idea, the philosophical idea (another term for liberalism) and the,

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[720] Alberto Spektorowki argues that the connection between non-normative, fascist decisionism and the counter-revolutionary Catholic political theology is based on Carl Schmitt's incorrect employment of Bonald, de Maistre and Cortés as sources for his own theory of sovereignty. See Alberto Spektorowski, "Joseph de Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 2 (April 2002): 283-302.

[721] See Albert Spektorowski, "Joseph de Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism," 296.

[722] For a comparison between Islamism and fascism via the concept of political mythology see Dragos Stoica, "Do Modern Radicals Believe in Their Mythologies? A Comparison between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Legion of the Archangel Michael in the Light of Four Political Mythologies" *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no.1 (2014): 103-135.

revolutionary idea (by which Cortés means socialism). We have mentioned on several occasions that all the political theologians examined in this study experienced conversion from Romanticism to liberalism, followed by an integral religious critique of modernity. Donoso Cortés is a perfect example of this *metanoia.* We briefly discussed Cortés's intellectual and political conversion in the first section of this chapter, remarking that it was triggered first by the death of his older brother Pedro in 1847 and then by the 1848 Revolution that changed the political and ideological landscape of nineteenth-century Europe. Donoso was thus transformed from a moderate liberal to the most important radical Catholic political theologian of his century. Following his conversion, Donoso's perspective ripened into a devastating critique of liberalism, which ultimately served as a template for the repudiation of modernity expressed in the First Vatican Council.

The starting point of Cortés's critique of liberalism (as well as socialism) involves this celebrated definition of political theology: "*De cómo en toda gran cuestión política va envuelta siempre una gran cuestión teológica"* (every great political question always contains a great theological question).[723] Consequently for Cortés, the inexpiable sin of liberalism resides in its "superb ignorance" (*soberbia ignorancia*) of theology. Liberalism is incapable of comprehending "the close link between divine and human things and great filiation between political, social and religious questions…It knows nothing of the connection between all problems related to the governance of nations and those related to God, the supreme legislator of all human associations."[724]

Because of this essential defect, the liberal school of thought is unable to take a firm stance on essential concepts such as faith, good, evil, God, or man. And liberalism is not only ignorant of theology. It is actually "inherently anti-theological" (*esencialmente antiteológica*) and consequently "completely unable to supply a grand impulse to civilization, which is a reflex of theology."[725] Rather than addressing this essential task, liberalism engages in endless speculation through which it creates "an abstract and indolent God" (*un Dios abstracto e indolente*) designed to serve the interests of philosophers and justify their rule over human affairs.[726]

This theological blindness leads to a series of other defects that, according to Cortés, plague

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[723] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras*, tomo 4, 13. Cortés is opening his treaty by agreeing with his *bête noire:* Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who, from a different perspective also linked the political and the theological.
[724] Ibid, 149.
[725] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras*, tomo 4, 183.
[726] Ibid, 152.

the liberal ideological model. There is a pervasive inconsistency which "falsifies all principles and capriciously and absurdly combines all contradictions."[727] Liberalism aims for equilibrium, but generates only anomie and confusion. It creates theoretical utopias of perpetual peace, but leads to devastating wars. Liberalism also undermines the solidarity it claims to establish by affirming universal reason and progress as forces binding humans together while rejecting the real solidarity guaranteed by the fusion of religious and political orders. Liberalism does include a sort of religiosity, but it is of a tamed kind that is parochial rather than universal and remains toothless against the forces of chaos, since it rejects the guilt and punishment embedded in the original sin and openly denies God's Sovereignty. The similarities to Qutb and Mawdudi are striking. As we discussed in the third chapter, their critiques of modern ideologies rest on two pillars: the unfulfilled imperative of universalism and God's Sovereignty. Hence for Qutb, all ideologies of *Jahiliyah*, despite their sophisticated conceptual apparatus and seductive rhetoric, are nothing more than narrow human constructions based on limitative core concepts such as class, race or nation.

Liberalism according to Cortés has also a highly atomistic definition of society, in which individualism leads to what he calls the principle of non-intervention. This extreme individualism, according to which "everyone should look out for themselves and none should leave their home to take care of others," is, Cortés says, "a direct contradiction of human solidarity."[728] For Cortés and Qutb, the emancipatory rhetoric of liberalism and democracy disguises a pre-Christian or pre-Islamic *forma mentis*. Cortés famously characterized liberalism as "nothing more than pagan egoism without the virility of its hate" (*el egoismo pagano sin la virilidad de sus odios).*[729] Qutb similarly maintains that modernity, and especially Islamic modernity, is a renewed *Jahiliyah* in more hegemonic and destructive forms. *Jahiliyah*, to whatever period it belongs, is *Jahiliyah*; that is, deviation from the worship of One God and the way of life prescribed by Allah Almighty. It derives its system, laws, regulations, habits, standards and values from a source other than Allah Almighty."[730] As Yvonne Haddad noticed, for Qutb "*Jahiliyyah* is not a period in time [but rather] a condition that is repeated every time society veers from the Islamic way whether in the past, the present or the future."[731]

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[727] Ibid, 183.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Ibid, 215.
[730] Qutb, *Milestones,* 146.
[731] Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival" in J. L. Esposito ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 85.

Thus both Donoso Cortés and Qutb see liberal materialistic individualism first and foremost as a destroyer of the natural order of society. Here, Donoso Cortés follows the counter-revolutionary perspective of Joseph de Maistre. Undermining of hierarchy begins by denying familial solidarity and finally shattering inherited authority through opening government to all men regardless of their family heritage the resulting *hiérarchies ébranlées*, as de Maistre called them, reduce the principle of national identity to an empty fiction:

> The principle of national identity does not signify anything if it is not a community of merits and flaws (*de méritos y de deméritos*), of glories and disasters, of talents and aptitudes between past, present and future generations; and this community is inexplicable if we do not consider it the result of hereditary transmission.[732]

The liberal-rationalist school, moreover, professes "a repugnant materialism" (*materialismo repugnante*) that makes wealth rather than blood the determinant of position in society so that "the authority of the rich seems more legitimate than the authority of nobles."[733] Here Donoso is expressing a tenet of classical conservative thought derived from the notion of "The Great Chain of Being."[734] The idea is that the unity of the divine must be reflected in the wholeness of human societies. This perspective is in Cortés's view the mirror opposite of a liberalism that values revolution over organic growth, equality over hierarchy, chaos over order, and innovation over tradition.

Sayyid Qutb's idea of the ten fixed principles of *Nizam al-Islam* expresses a similar view. The principles are: God and His attributes, the Universe as God's creation, the absolute servitude of creation to its Creator,[735] faith (*Iman*) in action,[736] the monopoly of Islam over all religions,[737] man as the vicegerent of God on earth,[738] the perfect equality of mankind as a universal community

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[732] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras*, tomo 4, 215.

[733] Ibid, 216.

[734] For the classical analysis of the conception of the whole expressed via the Great Chain of Being see Arthur, Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[735] "All universe with all its beings, animate and inanimate is created by God. Everything and everyone is His servant, without possessing any part of the attributes of divinity." Qutb, *Basic Principles of the Islamic Worldview* 75.

[736] "Action without faith in God is just as useless as faith without action… Without this faith, actions are meaningless from their very inception, incapable of acquiring any value, rejected, and neither taken into account nor accepted by God." Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics,* 46.

[737] "In the sight of God only Islam is the true religion and God does not accept any other faith or way of life from people. Islam and only Islam is the religion with which the Creator is pleased." Ibid.

[738] "Man, as a species, is the noblest of all the creatures on earth, because he is the deputy of God on earth…there is no material value on earth that can be raised higher than the value of man or for which man can be sacrificed." Ibid.

of believers,[739] complete obedience to God alone,[740] orthodoxy and orthopraxy as the essence of human common identity,[741] and finally, human existence as a test of belief and action.[742] Qutb believes that the pervasive materialism found in all modern ideologies causes these normative principles to be abandoned, with the result that the human condition comes to resemble "a planet that has broken loose from its orbit and threatens to collide with others, destroying itself as well as everything in its path."[743] So, behind the seductive veneer of progress and material prosperity, the ultimate result of the *Jahiliyah* of modern ideologies is, in Qutb's view, collective anxiety and individual alienation:

> Indeed, men are running away, running from their own hungry, anxious, bewildered selves, unable to hold on to anything fixed or move in a permanent orbit around any stable axis. But the human soul cannot live by itself, separated from the reality of God's universe, nor can it be contented in such a state. Thus it becomes shattered and wanders aimlessly, finding neither rest nor peace. [744]

In the perspectives of both Qutb and Donoso Cortés, all ideologies of modernity, but especially liberalism, lack the comprehensive understanding of existence found solely in religion. Thus, Qutb's and Donoso Cortés's critiques of liberalism and democracy employ the rhetorically potent theme of dissonance with human nature. This is a key similarity between the two thinkers, despite their very different understanding of human nature itself. In Cortés's view, liberalism falsifies human nature by denying original sin and the corruption and fall of humanity. For Qutb, on the other hand, modern ideologies (certainly including liberalism and socialism) falsify human nature by reducing it to a single essence, whether class, nation, economy or the body.

Put differently, according to Cortés, liberalism commits the logical fallacy of *argumentum ad speculum* by arguing that a perfect society will result in a perfect human, thus creating a fictional version of humanity which is then raised to the status of the master of the world. Liberalism reduces essential dichotomies such as evil versus good and order versus disorder to the question the

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[739] "All the people on earth came from one origin, and hence, in this regard, they are all equal. They acquire merit and rank with respect to each other through their faith, consciousness of God, and good deeds. Other criteria of distinction among people such as place of birth, family, wealth, nationality, class, and race, have no value in the estimation of God and His religion." Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics,* 46.

[740] "Among the requirements of complete obedience is to respond to His and only His commands in the affairs of life, whether these affairs are big or small, and out of love for Him to direct every intention, every vibration of one's heart, and every action toward Him and every vibration of one's heart, and every action toward Him and Him alone." Ibid.

[741] "In Islam, the basis of human groupings is belief and adherence to the way of God, not ethnicity, or nationality, or country, or race, or class, or economic and political interests, or any other earthly cause." Ibid*,* 47.

[742] "Man is tried and examined every moment of his earthly life in his movements and deeds, in his reaction to whatever reaches him of good and bad or of benefit and harm, all of which comes from God, Who is the final Judge." Ibid.

[743] Ibid*,* 48.

[744] Ibid.

"ephemeral and transitory" types of government (democratic, republican, monarchic…) therefore remaining dependent on a limitative and parochial understanding of humanity and proving useless when confronted with the most serious theological questions related to the human condition. There are, Cortés says, "no words in any languages to express the very profound incapacity and radical impotence (*la profundísima incapacidad y la radical impotencia*) of this [liberal] school of thought" which is not only incapable of solving but "even of raising these frightening questions (*estas pavorosas cuestiones*)."[745]

Qutb's diagnosis of liberalism is slightly different. He argues that all modern ideologies are guilty of a *modo hoc* fallacy, since they focus on single element of human nature—such as: class; race; ethnicity—and take it to represent the whole. Nevertheless, the fatal flaw in liberalism identified by both the Spaniard and Egyptian is essentially the same. That is its artificiality, since it is nothing more than a philosophical projection without a theological infrastructure, centered on the individual but at the same time dissonant with human nature. As Qutb points out, this constitutive defect is common to all expressions of non-Islamic thought, for "any social system not founded on a concept (*tasawwur*) will be artificial and will not last long." But while it lasts, it will "bring untold suffering and misery" since it will inevitably "conflict with human nature" because "harmony between [religious] belief and a social system is both an organizational necessity and an intellectual imperative."[746]

The root cause of the artificiality and conceptual impotence of liberalism in the view of both Qutb and Cortés is its a priori rejection of God's Sovereignty. While acknowledging that liberalism is not essentially atheistic, Cortés stresses that the conspicuous absence of any theological dimension will inevitably carry it towards atheism. Liberalism, furthermore, is plagued by a systematic ambiguity: it recognizes the existence of God as creator of the world while actively denying His constituent sovereignty (*soberanía constituyente*). Since God's existence and sovereignty, both constituent and actual, cannot be separated, liberalism necessarily ends up in denying Divine Sovereignty in its entirety. Moreover, "the actual sovereignty of reason" (*la soberanía actual de la razón*) cannot be claimed or justified without the constituent sovereignty of God, which is "the origin and the principle for the former."[747]

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[745] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 158.
[746] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics,* 14.
[747] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 154.

Consequently, the theory of the constituent sovereignty of the people (*la soberanía constituyente del pueblo*) that is the center of liberalism cannot be defended without taking on a democratic and atheistic perspective. In the previous chapter we noted that in Qutb's view, the dependency on atheism produced by the idea of popular sovereignty made the triumph of socialism over liberal democracy and capitalism inevitable. Using, as he often does, a dramatic comparison, Cortés prophesies as well that, caught in the antinomy between the original constituent sovereignty of God (*la soberanía originaria y constituyente de Dios*) and actual sovereignty of human reason (*la soberanía actual de la razón humana*), liberalism will sooner or later succumb to the more consistent and powerful school of socialism. His rhetoric reaches a crescendo as he declares that "the liberal faction fights for its existence, motionless on a high promontory that it has raised for itself between two seas that are lifting their waves and that will cover its top: the Socialism and the Catholicism."[748]

The importance of sovereignty or *Hakimiyah* for Qutb's political theology has been highlightened throughout this study. According to Qutb, the driving force of modernity as *Jahiliyah* is theoretical and practical rejection of divine *Hakimiyah* over all aspects of public and private existence. All ideological and philosophical configurations generated by non-Islamic perspectives are reducible, despite their apparent diversity, to one single defining element: they are expressions or justifications of man-made sovereignty. Thus Qutb forcefully affirms that "Islam does not look at the labels or titles which these societies have adopted; they all have one thing in common, and that is that their way of life is not based on complete submission to Allah alone. In this respect they share the same characteristic with a polytheistic society: the characteristic of *Jahiliyah*."[749] The equivalences: God's Sovereignty = genuine freedom, and man-made sovereignty = real slavery, that are the conceptual centers of Qutb's political theology, are also comparable to Donoso Cortés's vision that sees only Catholicism as containing an integral conception of sovereignty that includes both the constituent and the actual sovereignty of God over all aspects of creation. In the midst of a struggle for control of Western civilization between three distinct and incommensurable paradigms, there is just one immutable law of human history. This Cortés called the thermometer principle. According to Cortés, the sinful nature of the fallen man makes necessary in any society two forms of repression: the internal repression of religion, and

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[748] Ibid.
[749] Qutb, *Milestones,* 95.

the external repression of politics. The two are inversely proportional: "When the religious thermometer is strong, the thermometer of repression is low; when the religious thermometer is low, the political thermometer, political repression and tyranny are high." This, Cortès declares, is "the law of humanity, the law of history."[750]

As in Qutb's diagnosis of the eclipse of the Islamic *ummah* by a hegemonic modernity, political tyranny for Donoso Cortés results from the evanescence of the religious order as it is attacked by the modern ideologies of liberalism and socialism. A final observation must be made about Cortés's and Qutb's critiques of liberalism and popular sovereignty. Both seem rather simplistic. Donoso Cortés, despite his wide philosophical culture, operates a partial and deliberately mutilated reading. He is able to present liberalism as an artificial, vacuous construction lacking any real ethos only by ignoring the synthesis between liberalism and Catholicism which was an influential intellectual and theological force in France at the time. Nowhere does Donoso Cortés does quote the major French liberal-Catholics thinkers of his times such as Hugues Felicité Robert de Lamennais (d.1854) and Henri Lacordaire (d.1861). Also, despite having corresponded with the chief theorist of liberal Catholicism Charles Forbes René de Montalembert (d.1870), Cortés practically ignores his writings. As for Sayyid Qutb, he conflates all and every non-Islamic ideology, philosophy and type of thought under the umbrella term *Jahiliyah*. *Jahiliyah* describes: liberalism, democracy, capitalism, nationalism, communism and socialism. What these ideologies have in common is that they are seen as Western products, forcefully imposed over Islamic concepts and culture. We have seen that Sayyid Qutb is not an academic political theorist aiming to provide an in-depth analysis of modern liberal thought. On the contrary, he regards Western liberal democracy as too weak to be taken seriously. His efforts are focused rather on creating the premises for a re-Islamization of society through a thoroughly "authentic" Islamic political theology of faith in action, with the only systematic difference being that between *Nizam al-Islam* on one side and *Jahiliyah* on the other.

Cortés's and Qutb's simplistic or mutilated readings of liberalism and popular sovereignty are partly due to the contexts in which they worked. They reacted to particular versions of liberalism.[751] It must be remembered that Spain, unlike France, did not experience synthesis

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[750] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 266.
[751] For an analysis of Islamic liberalism see: Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism*: *A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

between liberalism and Catholicism or social Catholicism until the first decades of the twentieth century. José Arangueren remarks that "the total absence of a liberal Catholicism throughout the nineteenth century was fatal for Spain [to the extent that] Catholicism and modernity have had to be lived simultaneously, separately, quasi-contradictorily by many Spaniards." [752] Cortés consequently addresses only the two types of liberalism that fashioned the Spanish modernity of the nineteenth century: moderate liberalism—that being his own political affiliation until his conversion in 1842—and radical liberalism of anti-Carlist expression. The anti-clericalism of the latter was particularly significant for Donso Cortés's thought. During the First Carlist War (1833-1840), anticlericalism took extreme forms, leading to assassinations and even public executions of clergy.[753] As Patrick Foley notices, radical liberalism decimated the number of priests, monks and nuns in Spain, to the point of destroying all but eight of thirty-seven religious communities between 1820 and 1859.[754] As for Qutb, his perspective on liberalism and democracy was formed by the long and unsuccessful "liberal experiment" in Egypt, which was rife with corruption, abuse of power, and Western colonial intrusion. His experience during his American journey of racism and classism barely disguised by liberalism and democracy must also be taken into account. And finally, as William E. Shepard observes, there is an ambivalent relationship between Islamist resurgence and modernization overall. If modernization in the guise of technology provided Islamism with new tools and methods, modernization understood as Westernization was regarded in Egypt as a cultural continuation of British occupation and imperialism.[755] This said, Qutb's critique of socialism or communism is more elaborate and shows remarkable points of congruence with the views of Donoso Cortés expressed a century before.

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[752] José Luis Aranguren, *Moral y sociedad. La moral española en el siglo XIX*, (Madrid: Taurus, 1982), 177. In the same vein, Miguel Artola claims that: "Liberal Catholicism in Spain had not representative figure." See Miguel Artola, *La burguesía revolucionaria*: *1808-1874* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1974), and Noël Maureen Valis, *Sacred Realism: Religion and the Imagination in Modern Spanish Narrative* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2010), 37. This perspective is very influential in the Spanish historiography but it is not a scientific consensus. Noël Maureen Valis names Mariano José de Larra and Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (1801-1875) as representatives of a Spanish Liberal Catholicism whereas Javier Fernández Sebastián claims that "it would not be totally unreasonable to speak of 'Catholic liberalism' with respect to the first Iberian–American constitutionalism of the era of revolutions and wars of independence." See Javier Fernández Sebastián, "Toleration and Freedom of Expression in the Hispanic World between Enlightenment and Liberalism*," Past and Present* 211, no. 1 (2011): 160.

[753] One seminal example of anti-clerical violence and collective attack on clergy took place on July 17, 1834, when rioting mobs in Madrid killed seventy-nine Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Mercedarians, and devastated their residences See: William J. C. Godan, *Church, Politics, and Society in Spain, 1750-1874* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 153.

[754] Foley, "But What about the Faith*?"* 27.

[755] William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism*, xii.

5.5 Cortés's Critique of Socialism as the Seductive Secular Religion of Modernity

For Cortés as well as Qutb, socialism is the most dangerous ideological foe. Socialism is powerful because of its quasi-theological foundations and principles. If liberalism is anti-theological and sceptical, socialism is in Cortés's perspective the chief pseudo-theology generated by political modernity. Unlike liberalism, it asks essential questions about politics, history and society, questions that are "essentially theological…and have a certain greatness (*de cierta grandeza*)."[756] Liberalism shrinks the complexity of human existence to politics, to "questions of government that have no importance compared to questions of the social and religious orders."[757] Socialists, on the other hand, despite having concocted "an abstraction from the barbarian masses (*de las bárbaras muchedumbres*) that follow them," raise "all the great problems and all the great questions"; and they "always propose a peremptory and decisive resolution." The socialist vision, in short, is wide and praxical. It does not, however, provide real solutions, since it is nothing more than a twisted, parasitic version of Catholic political theology: "Socialism is pseudo-Catholicism (*semicatolicismo*) and nothing more."[758] Like the thought of the pagan philosophers, who combined "mutilated and incomplete biblical traditions" (*tradiciones bíblicas desfiguradas e incompletas*) with "false and unsustainable hypotheses,"[759] the seductive power of socialism is derived from Catholic ideas, corrupted by "ignorance of dogma, obliviousness of tradition, and disdain for the Church."[760]

Qutb's critique of socialism and communism discussed in the previous chapter presents interesting parallels. All ideological and political concepts are deemed by Qutb to be religious and theological at their core, with socialism also named as the leading example of a mutilated secular religion (*din*) based on certain social, economic, and national creeds (*aqa'id*). Thus in the view of Qutb as well as Cortés and Schmitt, modern ideologies must be deconstructed through an authentic, integral political theology. Treating such a dangerous pseudo-religion—"a satanic theology" (*una teología satánica*), as Cortés often calls socialism—as a systematic reflection on the concept of the political is an exercise in futility. For Cortés and Qutb, in any case, reflection is a propaedeutic for action, and their political theologies are designed to engage religion in a battle

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[756] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 184.
[757] Ibid.
[758] Ibid, 216.
[759] Ibid, 184.
[760] Ibid.

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for the future of mankind.

As seen in the previous section, both Cortés and Qutb consider all modern ideologies to be radical distortions of human nature. As a Catholic, Cortés's political theology naturally dwells on sin as the criterion for analyzing and finally excluding modern ideologies as solutions for the crises of his time. Catholicism affirms that sin originates with the first man, making the distinction between divine and human unbridgeable. Solutions to human problems must take account of this reality. Socialism, on the other hand, affirms that human nature is whole and unblemished and that only the society is conflicted and malign:

> Catholicism affirms two things: evil and redemption. Rationalist Socialism contains in the symbols of its faith the same affirmations. Between socialists and Catholics there is only one difference: the latter affirm evil in men and redemption in God, while the former affirm the evil of society and redemption in man.[761]

Despite his hostility toward socialism, Cortés does acknowledge that the rebellion it prescribes against social institutions is, in contrast to small-scale liberal solutions, "gigantic and grandiose, and [thus] in accord with the terrible majesty of the question."[762] The fundamental negation of socialism is rather negation of the original sin that that lies at the center of the Catholic perspective. From this original negation, Cortés derives a series of secondary negations that ultimately affect all human values. Thus, denying the legitimacy or even the possibility of sin inevitably translates into denying the freedom and responsibility of mankind, which leads, in turn, to a generalized anomie:

> Denying individual, domestic, political and human responsibility precedes the denial of individual solidarity in the family, the state and within the species, because solidarity signifies nothing without common responsibility. Thus when it comes to solidarity, the negation of sin, (*la negación del pecado*) culminates in nihilism.[763]

The negations of socialism erase love of family and motherland, leading ultimately to dissolution of domestic and political society, which "cannot exist or even be conceived without being in the [God's] communion of glory and being rooted in those great loves."[764] Though not familiar with the *Communist Manifesto*, Cortés argues that the inner logic of socialism involves rejection not only of familial, political and religious bonds, but also national or monarchic solidarity, making Socialism the real force behind modern nihilism. Qutb, a century later, emphasizes the same destructive vocation of socialism, characterizing it as a kind of derangement:

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[761] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 234.
[762] Ibid*,* 158.
[763] Ibid, 244.
[764] Ibid, 220.

> This madness is the craze to discard everything from the past and to embrace everything new, to remove all restrictions in the way of fulfilling desires and passions, and to mock everything traditional whether in the moral or in any other sphere. For the Marxist regimes, this madness is pre-planned and has a definite objective.[765]

Donoso's litany of the vices of socialism includes rigid dogmatism. He declares himself "astonished" by the lack of critical thinking and rationality involved in dogmatism, which involves "believing that I have to believe these things that are proposed as objects for my faith without my reason, which in effect contradicts all the things that are presented to me."[766] Again we see that Qutb's reading of Marxism is similar. Marxism for the Egyptian Islamist is an essentially dogmatic construction based on philosophical and intellectual constructs, as he makes clear in the following passage:

> Marxism is founded on dogmatic assertions and has nothing to do with facts or historical reality. To begin with, the principle of contradiction as formulated by Fichte and Hegel is a purely intellectual construct, having no roots in fact. Marx takes this principle and applies it to history, disregarding all elements or factors of human societies except the economic, thus sparing himself the trouble of demonstrating the validity of this principle in other aspects of societal developments. Next, he takes the economic element, which despite its importance is by no means the sole factor in the development of human societies, and traces the history of a single group of people, the Europeans, in an extremely simplified fashion by emphasizing only a few aspects of it."[767]

Qutb and Cortés's insistence that socialism is rigid and dogmatic is rooted in their reading of socialism as the self-idolatry of reason. Most significantly, Donoso Cortés's indictment of socialism revolves around the meta-concept that is also essential for Qutb: God's Sovereignty. Even more clearly than in the case of liberalism, socialist ideology is based on the premise that God is to be rejected "as author, maintainer and sovereign governor of all existence (*autor, y el mantenedor, y el gobernador soberano*)."[768] The socialist worldview is predicated upon "the deification of matter and absolute, radical denial of providence and grace *(la deificación de la materia y a la negación absoluta, radical, de la providencia y de la gracia.)"*[769] Thus all socialist currents of thought, despite their superficial differences, are rationalist in their philosophy, republican in their politics, and atheistic in regard to religion. Socialism invests human reason with "the omnipotent competence to resolve, without God's help, all questions regarding political, social, religious and human problems… and it enjoys a complete sovereignty and an absolute

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[765] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 51.
[766] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 224.
[767] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 51.
[768] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 73.
[769] Ibid.

independence (*una soberanía completa y una independencia absoluta*.)"[770] Socialist rationalism consequently enforces three fundamental negations: a negation of revelation, a negation of grace and a negation of providence (*la revelación, la gracia y la providencia*). These three essential aspects of the presence of the Divine in the world of men are in a zero-sum game with reason when it is regarded, as in socialism, as completely autonomous and fully sovereign. Revelation opposes the thesis of the total competence of reason; Grace contradicts the claim of reason's absolute independence, and last but not least, Providence is radically opposed to the sovereignty of reason.[771] In the end, as Cortés points out, these three negations are "dissolved in one," that being "the negation of all links between God and man."[772]

We should one more time remark here that an important objective of Qutb's anti-modern political theology is to establish that reason *('aql* or *istidlal*) is in perfect accord with *fitrah* (innate human nature) only in Islam. The Islamic "concept" (*tasawwur*) properly understood and applied will save human reason by ridding it of all its potentially oppressive and instrumental elements. This will be accomplished by positioning it as a maidservant of theology, serving God's Revelation rather than man's hubris. Despite an even more strident tone against the auto-legitimation of reason as the instrument of human rebellion against God, Cortés ultimately has the same objective as Qutb. His aim is to critically analyze modern ideologies, based on critique of the Enlightenment concept of autonomous reason.

It should be stressed that Cortés's and Qutb's political theologies, though systematically anti-modern, are not anti-rational. Neither the Spaniard nor the Egyptian have any use for mysticism. Despite their fiery language and rhetorical excesses, they insist that their political theology is genuinely rational. Their target is not reason, but rather the inexpiable sin of abandoning praxis to instrumental, autonomous reason.[773]Powerless pietism, empty scholasticism and the apathy of believers are their common enemies. Qutb's excommunication of all Muslim societies as expressions of *Jahiliyah* and Cortés's dark perspective on humanity as irremediably

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[770] Ibid, 161.
[771] Ibid.
[772] Ibid.
[773] "Qutb's critique thus extends beyond Nasserism, engaging contemporary po- litical theories that are the legacy of a worldview dating back to the European Enlightenment. In doing so, Qutb implicitly challenges the rationalist discourse that has defined its own hegemonic significance through the rejection of tran- scendent truths in favor of limitless human knowledge." Roxanne Euben, "Comparative Political Theory: An Islamic Fundamentalist Critique of Rationalism," *The Journal of Politics* 59, no. 1. (February, 1997): 51.

fallen and rebellious do not translate into a rejection of reason itself.[774] Once subjected to God's Sovereignty and purified of its instrumental and self-referential elements, reason will be radically transformed, as Cortés triumphantly exults:

> Reason then ceases to be rationalism (*racionalismo*), meaning that it becomes the beacon which illuminates without being fired by anyone. It becomes [true] Reason, a marvellous luminary that concentrates and reflects the splendid light of dogma (*luz esplendida del dogma*), which is the most pure reflection of God, the eternal and uncreated light.[775]

Roxanne Euben argues that Qutb and his Western counterparts are preoccupied with countering the abusive reification of instrumental reason that shapes modernity. "Qutb's anxieties about the costs of modern rationalism," Euben writes, "are mirrored in Western critiques of modernity, in what Richard Bernstein characterises as the "rage against reason" that defines modernity as crisis, and specifically as a decay in meaning that is the legacy of the Enlightenment."[776] The end result of the modern deification of instrumental reason that denies God's Sovereignty is the creation of a global tyranny. Dorothee Sölle will later call this hegemonic force of instrumental reason a "new totalitarian certitude," which considers politics to be shaped not by rationality but by "a pure ideology—without foundation and praxis—that unquestionably conceives its values as ultimate."[777]

As in Qutb's critique of communism via the concept of *Taghut*, Cortés argues, sixty years before the Bolshevik revolution, that far from being an emancipatory doctrine of equality and freedom, socialism's only conceptualization of unity is a new Leviathan: a monolithic, statist tyrant that "concentrates in it all rights and absorbs all individuals."[778] Thu in the view of both Qutb and Cortés, socialism is bound to give birth to a new empire based on the despotism of instrumental reason and deification of the state. When its emancipatory rhetoric and refined dialectical concepts are stripped away, socialism is simply a "naked power" (*el poder desnudo*) which denies the ideals of equality and social justice it pretends to defend.

In the previous chapter, we analyzed Qutb and Mawdudi's critiques of socialism from the perspective of the ideograph of equality. Qutb condemns the socialist so-called equality that

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[774] Roxanne Euben successfully argued against the pervasive social scientific explanations that portrays the Islamic fundamentalist as the paradigmatic irrational rational actor. We can argue that her framework analysis will function also in the case of anti-modern political theology. See *Enemy in the Mirror,* 34.

[775] Cortés, "Carta al Director de El Heraldo," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 168.

[776] Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 11.

[777] Dorothee Sölle, *Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 46-56.

[778] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 315.

sacrifices individualism and freedom on the altar of a totalitarian egalitarism and advocates "complete human equality" (*al-musawa al-insaniyah al-kamilah*) in the context of "social responsibility" (*al-takaful al-ijtima'iyah*). Donoso Cortés does the same. In Cortés's view, socialist thought on equality is deceptive and plagued by deep contradictions. Socialism reduces humanity to a narrow concept and then prescribes a pseudo-universalistic solution based upon it. It talks about equality, but allows servitude to be installed everywhere. It preaches universal brotherhood while recounting a history that "teaches us that all are enemies."[779]

Qutb's and Cortés's political theologies meet again in a dimension of anti-modern political theology that remains under-analyzed, namely charity and social justice. For both, these are intrinsic to religious civilization, and they both also believe that religion is their sole guarantor. Cortés identifies "equitable distribution of wealth, a problem that was never solved by any system of political economy" as a crisis at the heart of modernity.[780] Socialism, he believes, originates in this problem. The rich and poor have always existed, Cortés writes in his letter to Queen María Cristina de Bourbon, but "what has not existed until now is mutual, universal war (*guerra universal y simultánea*) between rich and poor."[781] The stability of the *Ancien Régime*, in contrast, was assured by a dynamic equilibrium between the charity practiced by the affluent classes and patience practiced by the classes in need (*las clases menesterosas*).[782] When the traditional social values of charity and patience were swept away by modernity, the world fell into chaos. Here again we see how Donoso's ideal world is structured and hierarchical, basically following the medieval *ordo christianus* expressed by Adalberon Bishop of Laon between *laboratores, oratores* and *bellatores* and by the three orders of the *L'Ancien Régime*. Cortés, however, like Qutb, is not actually attempting to replicate the order of the past, but rather to rediscover its spirit and to use it as a solution to the problems of the present.

Cortés warns his sovereign that unless a solution is found to the problems of poverty and social justice, socialism will provide one, though it will involve "pillaging the nations."[783] The only viable and peaceful solution is to recreate an equilibrium between charity and patience,

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[779] Ibid, 224.
[780] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 238.
[781] Cortés, "Carta to Reina María Cristina," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 155.
[782] "The classes in need never rose against the affluent ones, because the affluent classes practiced charity for them. If the rich had never lost the virtue of charity, God would have never permitted the poor to lose the virtue of patience." Ibid.
[783] Ibid, 167.

though it seems that Donoso expects the initiative to come first from the moneyed classes, since "patience will not enter the hearts of the poor if charity does not enter the hearts of the rich." Wealth accumulated through "gigantic egoism" (*un egoísmo gigantesco*) must be re-distributed through "large-scale charity" (*la limosna en gran escala*).[784] The Catholic solution of a system of charity provides the only acceptable social design in which order, freedom, hierarchy, and social peace can be assured. "Without charity," Cortés writes, "there is not nor can there ever be equitable distribution of wealth [for] only God is able to solve this problem, which is the problem of humanity and history."[785] Unless the Catholic solution is embraced and implemented by the leaders of Europe, socialism will prevail, for nothing else, however conceptually sophisticated, can counter its appeal. "If you want to fight Socialism," Cortés warns, "we need to look for the religion that teaches charity to the rich and patience to the poor; which teaches the poor to be resigned and the rich to be merciful."[786]

Sayyid Qutb's similar argument laid out in his *Social Justice in Islam* was discussed in the previous chapter. Qutb presents the alms-tax (*zakat*) as the mark of the absolute superiority of Islamic economics over capitalism and socialism. According to Qutb, Islam and Islam alone guarantees universal and comprehensive social justice, including equitable distribution of wealth through a complex system of checks and balances. *Zakat* embedded in social solidarity (*takaful ijtima'i*), including checks on usury and excessive wealth, social security for the disabled, and mutual responsibility, are elements of a system equalled by no other.[787] This apologetic perspective on the Islamic model of social justice is close to Donoso Cortés's description of Catholicism as the perfect provider of charity and social justice.[788] And both political theologians infuse their economics with the mythology of a lost Golden Age. Qutb declares that the greed and materialism seen in today's world came about because universal *Zakat* and the ban on usury had been forgotten. Cortés too claims that revolution destroyed an order originally created to protect the poor and rich alike.[789]

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[784] Ibid.

[785] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 238. Despite his dandy like appearance and his fondness for expensive clothes, Donoso Cortés practiced charity in secret, donating to the poor up to 20% of his income until the day he died.

[786] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 311.

[787] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 256-261.

[788] "The Church, in the order of thinking is the only one possessing the absolute, while in the order of action, it is the only one possessing the charity." Cortés, "Carta a Guizot," in *Obras*, tomo 5, 138.

[789] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 254.

In the light of arguments such as these, it can be argued that Cortés and Qutb both reduce socialism to a materialist economics incapable of addressing the complexities of human nature or provide genuine social justice. "What is socialism if is not an economic sect?" Cortés writes. "Socialism is the son of political economy just like the little viper is the son of the viper, devoured by his mother at birth."[790] Cortés's baroque language might sound bombastic to our modern ears, but it expresses a claim made also by Qutb: If liberalism is based on an absolutization and essentialization of the political, socialism is a form of self-referential economism based on an instrumental rationality that contradicts the ideal of social justice it claims to advance. This, as Qutb makes clear, is the inevitable result of materialism:

> In the formulation of Marx, the material world, in the form of economic activity, became the creator of morals, manners, minds, religions, and philosophies. In comparison with these gods of material order and economic force, an individual human being is worth very little, because he is a passive recipient and his mental activity is merely a secondary by-product of matter![791]

Socialism also commits the error of creating a state of perpetual war by raising the contingent, asymmetric concept of social class to the status of a transcendent category. For both Qutb and Cortés, the socialist vision of a perpetual class struggle makes social solidarity impossible.[792] Catholic civilization, in contrast, is organized around the institution of the Church, which provides common ground for rich and poor alike. Catholic civilization fosters a solidarity that is "one of the most beautiful and august (*más bellas y augustas*) revelations of Catholic dogma," a solidarity that assures "genuine unity of human nature and the close kinship that unites humans one and all."[793] Natural solidarity and human unity based on Islam, in contrast to the parochialism of *Jahiliyah* that depends on common territory, race, language, lineage, or common material interests are also held dear by Qutb.[794]

In the previous chapter, we highlighted the different contexts that were a factor in producing the thought of Qutb and Mawdudi. The same exercise is useful in relation to Qutb and Cortés. The Spaniard created his political theology in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution, in a period in which socialism, liberalism and anarchism had begun to express European secularization. Secularism had not, however, become hegemonic. Thus Cortés, despite his deep-seated

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[790] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 311.
[791] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 95.
[792] As we have seen in the third chapter, in the Qutbian view communism is not just an ideology of *shirk* and *Taghut*, but also a system of a perpetual *fitnah*.
[793] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 209-210.
[794] Sayyid Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, 46.

misanthropy, is still able to conceive of the Church as a powerful bulwark against man-made barbarity and the solution to the crises of his times, as he declares passionately in the following remarkable passage:

> This Church, placed in the world without human foundations, extracted man from an abyss of corruption and removed him from the night of barbarism. She has always fought the fight of God (*los combates del Señor*) and been triumphant in all the troubles she has seen. Heretics denied her doctrine, but she triumphed over them; all human passions rebelled against her empire, yet she triumphed over all of them. Paganism fought its last battle against the Church, and she cast it, defeated, at her feet. Emperors and kings persecuted her, but the ferocity of its executioners (*la ferocidad de sus verdugos*) was defeated by the steadfastness of her martyrs (*constancia de sus mártires*). She fights only for her holy freedom, and the world gives her the Empire.[795]

Qutb, on the other hand, contemplates and condemns a world that is collapsing under the full force of Western-shaped secularization, a world that is essentially post-Islamic, He is faced with colonialism, liberalism, socialism, fascism and nationalism, all of which were vying with the traditional Islamic *episteme*. His political theology was formed in a time of two global conflagrations, the beginning of the end of colonialism, and numerous nationalist revolutions. Thus his ideal is no longer a force of the present, and he turns to the past, in the form of the Golden Age of the first Islamic *ummah*:

> At one time this Message created a generation - the generation of the Companions of the Prophet, may God be pleased with them - without comparison in the history of Islam, even in the entire history of man. After this, no other generation of this calibre was ever again to be found. It is true that we do find some individuals of this calibre here and there in history, but never again did a great number of such people exist in one region as was the case during the first period of Islam.[796]

Despite this different orientation in time, Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés are neither prisoners of nostalgia nor ruled by the present. Rather, they offer a complete and universal theology of history. Their visions, after all, must compete with the Liberal thesis of the inexorable march of progress and, above all, the totalist Marxist philosophy of history. Thus both the Spaniard and the Egyptian gaze into the future of mankind. Donoso Cortés is widely regarded as the prophet of nineteenth-century conservative Catholic thought. He has been described as the "Cassandra of the age,"[797] "a good-humoured Jeremiah,"[798] the precursor of Spengler as a prophet of the decline of the West,[799] and "one of these rare thinkers who foresaw the trends of the times and warned of the

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[795] Cortés, *Ensayo,* in *Obras,* tomo 4, 38.
[796] Qutb, *Milestones*, 29.
[797] Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age,* 115.
[798] Guizot quoted in Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age,* 56.
[799] Thomas P. Neill, "Juan Donoso Cortés: History and Prophecy," *The Catholic Historical Review* 40 (1955): 385 – 410.

dangers that lay ahead."[800] He predicted that revolutionary socialism[801] would combine with traditional Russian expansionism to conquer a continent in which liberalism had weakened the social tissue and which had exhausted itself in empty parliamentary debates. Donoso's ultimate vision is that impotent liberalism and powerless Christian kings will fall before the socialist conception of social justice, paving the way for a catastrophic series of events that will radically change the course of history:

> The truth is that a tremendous problem is before us, and Europe neither recognizes it nor can solve it. For the man of good reason, good sense and penetrating wit, all this announces a near and dismal crisis (*una crisis próxima y funesta*), a cataclysm such as man has never seen…Today, gentlemen, all roads, even those directly opposed, lead to [the same] perdition. The road of yielding and the road of resistance lead to perdition. Where debility leads to death, we have feeble princes, where ambition leads to ruin, we have ambitious princes, where talent is the cause of perdition, God puts in charge expert princes (*principes entendidos*).[802]

Cortés goes on to say that Russia—which he uncannily predicted[803] to be the first nation to fall to socialism—would conquer the entire European continent: "the hour of Russia will arrive, then Russia can easily march, arms in hand, through Europe. Then, the world will witness the greatest fall of history.[804] The triumph of Russia, however, was to be short-lived. Following its conquest, Russia would, Donoso predicted, be "infected" with the same "poison" that had destroyed Europe and succumb to the same faith. Catholic civilization would triumph in the end, because Catholic civilization is the *summum bonum*:

> Catholicism fights in the name of the proletariat and is the religion of the poor and needy. Catholicism fights in the name of freedom, equality and fraternity, and it is the religion of freedom, equality and human fraternity. Catholicism fights in the name of a loving and merciful religion (*religion misericordiosa y amante*), the religion of perfect love and sublime mercy.[805]

As remarkable as Cortès`s predictions may seem, they were not entirely unique in his time. Prophetic impulses were widespread in in the wake of the 1848 Revolution. [806] Even *el*

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[800] Goetz Briefs, *Donoso Cortés, Christian Statesman and Political Philosopher* (St Louis, MO: Central Bureau Press, 1939), 23.

[801] "Socialism, gentlemen is pride and barbarity (*orgullo y barbarie*) like the Babylonian king it is the king and the beast (*rey y bestia*) at the same time" Cortés, "Discurso sobre la dictadura," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 283.

[802] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 312.

[803] "I think that a revolution in Saint Petersburg will be easier that one in London." Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 135. See also: Herrera, *Cassandra of the Age.* As Herrera points out, Cortés's black prophecies and his apocalyptic tone in an era of generalized optimism saved him from obscurity. Donoso predicted the participants and even the location of the Crimean war, the influence of Slavs and Germans for the future of the European politics, the disintegration of the British Empire and most importantly the Russian revolution.

[804] Cortés, "Discurso sobre la situación general de Europa," in *Obras*, tomo 3, 320.

[805] Donoso Cortés*, "Bosquejos histórico-filosóficos,"* in *Obras*, tomo 2, 533.

[806] Bruno Bauer—from the completely different ideological premises of Atheism and Idealism—will predict as well a systemic crisis of the European civilization produced by the conceptual bankruptcy of liberalism and by the emergence of Russia as a global expansionist power.

decisionismo, which was considered by Carl Schmitt to be the distinctive mark of Cortés critique of modernity, has its roots in the Romantic cult of the hero. The most important difference between Donoso Cortés and his contemporaries was the simple fact that his perspective was a pure expression of political theology.[807]

Like Cortès, Qutb peers into the future through a clearly theological lens. Though his account of the destiny of the West and role of Islam is more restrained than that of Donoso, he shares with him the vision of an imminent fall of Western civilization under the attack of communism and agrees that this is due to the philosophic vacuity and political impotence of liberalism, capitalism and Western democracy. Communism will triumph, at least initially, because it draws on the materialism that runs through all modern secular ideologies; but it too will finally fall victim, "no further that the time of our generation,"[808] to its agonistic bent and other systemic flaws. In the end, only the comprehensive Divine Sovereignty that is the monopoly of Islam will be left standing to resist the man-made tyranny of global communism.[809] In Carl Schmitt's terms, religion for both Qutb and Cortés is the *Katechon,* "the power that prevents the long-overdue apocalyptic end of times from happening now."[810]

From the comfort of our certainties, Cortés and especially Qutb's prophecies appear to be hasty projections or exercises in wishful thinking. At the time of their creation, however, the two political theologians envisioned a cosmic battle for the future of mankind that was plausible and attractive for those in their societies who did not believe in the optimistic vision of an inexorable march of progress for all mankind. Their visions, indeed, had an impact in the real world. Cortés's dark prophecies helped to shape the First Vatican Council and served for decades as one of the important conceptual sources of Franco's regime. And Qutb's failed predictions were resurrected and reinterpreted in the discourse of contemporary jihadism, which also features a distinct apocalypticism and a strong Manichaeistic tone.

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[807] As Federico Verderguer Suárez puts it in *Donoso Cortés en el Pensamiento Europeo del Siglo XIX*, "*El decisionismo* was neither the fundamental position of Donoso Cortés nor his major contribution to the political theory of the XIXth century. The most important contribution was that he signalled with all the clarity and in a striking manner that the essence of politics, of all political forms requires a theological working premise" (26).

[808] Qutb,*Mujtama' Islami*, quoted in Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty*, 159.

[809] Qutb's *Social Justice in Islam* strongly makes this point.

[810] Carl Schmitt, "Beschleuniger wider Willen, oder: Problematik der westlichen Hemisphare,*"* in *Staat, Grossraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969*, ed. Günter Maschke (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1995), 436. See also Julia Hell, "Katechon: Carl Schmitt's imperial theology and the Ruins of the Future" *German Review* 88, no. 4, (2009): 285-326.

Chapter 6: Abraham Kuyper and Sayyid Qutb as Political Theologians of God's Sovereignty

The final chapter of this study closes the circle by introducing as *comparans* the most prominent neo-Calvinist political theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). The diagonal, lens-comparison employed in the previous chapter is also used here to bring together the political theologies of Kuyper and Qutb. The comparison in this chapter also continues with the analytical tension between similarity and difference. We will see how the master concept of God's Sovereignty, which plays an essential role in both Qutb and Kuyper's critiques of modernity, results in different yet comparable perspectives on society and political action.

6.1 The Man with Ten Heads and a Hundred Arms: A *Sitz im Leben*

In April 22, 1897, Charles Boissevain (1842 –1927), an influential journalist, editor and owner of the leading Dutch newspaper *Amsterdam Algemeen Handelsblad,* called Abraham Kuyper: "*een tegenstander, die tien hoofden en honderd armen bezit*" (an opponent with ten heads and a hundred arms). This famous phrase aptly describes Abraham Kuyper's profound influence on Dutch politics, academia and the religious sphere of his time. Kuyper was regarded as "probably the most influential Dutch politician and theologian of the modern era,"[811] a man who "dominated two generations of Dutch political history"[812] while playing the role of "the versatile genius of Dutch Calvinism" who had done more than anyone else to "define the concept of Calvinistic culture."[813] Ideological enemies and theological disciples alike agree that despite his flaws and excesses, Abraham Kuyper was one of the most important Dutch public figures of modern times.

Abraham Kuyper's impact on the modern Netherlands and his accomplishments are remarkable by any standard. He created a new church, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, a very successful newspaper, *De Standaard,* the first independent Neo-Calvinist university, Vrije Universiteit (Free University), and the first modern Christian democratic political party, Die Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), which has continued as an influential force in modern Dutch politics. Kuyper was member of Parliament and served as prime minister from 1901 until 1905. His

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[811] Arie L. Molendijk, "Neo-Calvinist Culture Protestantism: Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures," *Church History and Religious Culture* 8, no. 2 (2008): 235.
[812] Dirk Jellema, "Abraham Kuyper's Attack on Liberalism," *The Review of Politics* 19, no. 4 (October 1957): 472.
[813] Henry R. Van Till, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 117.

perspective on confessional independence and sphere sovereignty was the formative force behind *Verzuiling* or "pillarization" defined by Michael Wintle as the "splitting of Dutch society into several vertical blocs based on common ideologies rather than on socio-economic class loyalties, resulting in a Catholic bloc, a Calvinist bloc, a Socialist bloc, and a fourth Liberal or neutral "pillar.'" Pillarization functioned until the end of the 1970s as the basic design of Dutch society.[814]

Kuyper finally influenced public theology and the political sphere on two continents. In America, his neo-Calvinist theology was the main source for the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). As John T. Timestra demonstrates, despite having only about 400,000 members, the CRNA has been very active in the American public scene. The CRNA founded five colleges—Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, being the most important—two political action committees, one political party, two labor unions, six magazines and three important publishing houses: William B. Eerdmans, Zondervan, and Baker Book House.[815]

In South Africa, Kuyper's seminal concept of *souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (sphere sovereignty) was an important factor in the South African Dutch Reformed Church's (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) legitimation of apartheid and crystallization of Afrikaans nationalism. Neo-Kuyperian Calvinist theologians such as J.C. Rooy, H.G. Stoker, and especially Stephanus Jacobus du Toit,[816] all of whom were very influential within the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, derived their religious justification of apartheid directly from Kuyper's concepts of divine election, common grace, God-willed diversity, and sphere sovereignty.[817]

Last but not least, Abraham Kuyper and his intellectual heirs, G. C. Berkouwer, Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Till, provided a faith-based alternative to the philosophy-based

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[814] The system was more or less unique in its Dutch form, and dominated the nation between about 1920 and 1960, "with only the elite of each bloc in contact with the elites of the other pillars, producing a succession of political compromises at the highest level in order to run the country smoothly, while the rank and file of the pillars' followings were able to live in almost hermetically sealed ideological isolation." See Michael Wintle, *Pillars of Piety: Religion in the Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century 1813-1901* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1987), 1-2.

[815] See John T Timestra, "Every Square Inch. Kuyperian Social Theory and Economics," in *Religion and Economics: Normative Social Theory* eds., James M. Dean and A.M.C. Waterman (Winipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 87.

[816] Stephanus Jacobus du Toit (1847–29 May 1911) was a former student of Kuyper at Vrije Universiteit who became one of the leading figures of nationalist political theology in South Africa. He was a clergyman, theologian and author who founded the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (The Society of True Afrikaners) in 1875, and the *Afrikaner Bond* in 1879, two structures regarded as the organizational premises for the future Apartheid regime.

[817] Tracy Kuperus, *State, Civil Society, and Apartheid in South Africa: An Examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State Relations* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1999), 67. The *Sonderweg* between Kuyper and the Apartheid is a controversial topic in both Dutch and South African scholarship. For a discussion of this connection, see George Harinck, "Abraham Kuyper, South Africa, and Apartheid," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23, no. 2 (2002): 184-187; Patrick Baskwell, "Kuyper and Apartheid: A Revisiting" *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 62, no. 4 (2006): 1269-1290.

evidentialist and rationalist "common sense" theology of Princeton theologians Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield, thus impacting the modern evolution of evangelical theology in North America.[818] Kuyper's perspectivism (the claim that reason is controlled by factors that are exterior to it) and his anti-evidentialist apologetics were also instrumental in the creation of reformed epistemology, an important paradigm in the modern Anglo-Saxon philosophy of religion.[819]

A detailed biography of Abraham Kuyper is outside the scope of this study.[820] However, as in the case of the other figures studied in this dissertation, a *Sitz im Leben* is necessary to contextualize the comparison. Abraham Kuyper was born on October 29, 1837, in Maassluis, Netherlands, in the family of Jan Frederik Kuyper, a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He was home-schooled for his primary education and went to Leiden for Gymnasium. Upon graduation in 1855, he enrolled at Leiden University, studying theology and philosophy. The political and religious climate of the Netherlands at the time the young Kuyper began his intellectual trajectory were structured by three essential forces: political nationalism, theological modernism and rationalism, and ideological liberalism.[821]

William I (1772 –1843), the first king of the Netherlands, considered nationalization and unification of religion as a precondition for modernization and successful nation building. Therefore, he abrogated the freedom of the Dutch Reformed Church along with the traditional synodical form of church government by divine decree. The king subsequently appointed the members of the Synod and created a department of worship, thus actively deciding the politics of the church.[822] A reaction was not long in coming. It took the form of a secession *(Afscheiding)*, led

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[818] Harriet A. Harris summarizes this seminal difference as follows: "Kuyper considers faith to be the starting-point of all knowledge. The Princetonians regard faith as assent to evidence. Crucial differences in theological method follow. Kuyper rejects a fundamental contention of the Princeton theologians; that the truth of Christianity can be established through scientific study carried out on the basis of common principles." *Fundamentalism & Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 224. The tension between the Warfieldian and the Kuyperian paradigms remains relevant within the North American fundamentalist and evangelical circles even today.

[819] Perspectivism is one of the two pillars of reformed epistemology. Apart from the claim that reason is controlled by factors that are exterior to it, perspectivism holds that the neutrality of believer and unbeliever is not axiomatic. Reformed epistemology was presented for the first time in the 1983 work *Faith and Rationality*, edited by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (who both taught at Calvin College), and has explicit roots in Abraham Kuyper anti-evidentialism.

[820] For the definitive Kuyper biographies see Jeroen Koch, *Abraham Kuyper: Een biografie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006), Louis Praamsma, *Let Christ be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper* (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 1985), and especially James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013).

[821] As we have seen in the second chapter, Qutb's evolution was conditioned by quasi-similar forces in his pre-Islamist phase.

[822] See Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 8, and Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 14.

by ministers from all regions of the Netherlands, who created new churches in the Reformed resistance tradition, to which the authorities responded with fines and even prison terms. A group of secessionists led by the minsters Hendrik P. Scholte and Albertus C. van Raalte subsequently immigrated to the US, where they created the Christian Reformed Church of North America.[823] As in Egypt, politicians had attempted to subordinate religion to the nation state, and religion rebelled. We will see that Kuyper had concerns about nationalism also similar to those of Qutb.

Very much like Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés, Abraham Kuyper matured in a cultural and political context dominated by a hegemonic liberalism.[824] Following the conservative reign of William I, the liberal progressive forces coalesced around the towering figure of Johan Rudolph Thorbecke (1798–1872), widely regarded as the most important Dutch politician and liberal doctrinaire of the nineteenth century. Thorbecke was the driving intellectual force behind the revision of the Dutch Constitution in the wake of the 1848 revolution. This constitutional overhaul transformed the Netherlands into a modern constitutional monarchy characterized by separation of powers, ministerial responsibility, and increased authority of the Parliament. The new constitution codified census-based male suffrage and a range of rights and freedoms associated with modernity, including freedom of education, assembly, election, and worship. As James D. Bratt points out, the Dutch version of liberalism was pragmatic, adaptive and flexible, with its adherents not at all "averse to using government to promote their interests."[825]

Between 1848 and 1888, the Netherlands functioned according an undisputed liberal paradigm, comparable to the long Egyptian liberal experiment and Spanish liberal decades discussed in the previous chapters. As we will see, it took the formidable force of Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party to successfully contest liberal hegemony and put an end to its virtual monopoly over the Dutch political scene, though without being able to reverse the rationalization, secularization and bureaucratization of Dutch society.

In the theological realm, Dutch Protestantism was dominated in the years in which Kuyper was being formed intellectually by three distinct paradigms: Groningen theology, ethical theology and theological modernism, with the first being dominant throughout the country.[826] Louis

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[823] Gerrit J. TenZythoff, *Sources of Secession: The Netherlands Hervormde Kerk on the Eve of the Dutch Immigration to the Midwest* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

[824] R.B. Andeweg, and G.A. Irwin, *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2003).

[825] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 66.

[826] Philip Willem van Heusde (1778–1839), professor of Greek and Latin at the university of Utrecht is regarded as the founder of the Groningen theology and the thinker who introduced Schleiermacher, Herder Lessing and the

Praamsma nicely sums up Groningen theology as "essentially a Christian humanism focused on the Christ as the perfect human, at the same times rejecting the strict rationalism in the biblical exegesis." Praamsma also notes that the Groningen theologians denied the inerrancy of the Bible. They "objected to the term *infallibility,* associated with the Scripture*,* speaking of "faultlessness" instead."[827]

Ethical theology was basically the Dutch wing of the German *Vermittlungstheologie* (mediating theology) and was thus heavily influenced by Schleiermacher, partially shaped by Søren Kierkegaard, and associated with Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (d. 1874) and Johannes Hermanus Gunning (d. 1905).[828] The theologians of this school called themselves "Irenicals" and openly favoured inter-confessional dialogue. They rejected at the same time the dogmatic exclusivism of orthodox Protestantism and radical anti-traditionalism of modernist theology.[829]

Modernist theology was associated with Leiden University and the towering figure of Johannes Henricus Scholten (d. 1856), the leading figure of the modernist current in the Netherlands. The other leading representative of this influential current was the prominent Dutch Protestant theologian Abraham Kuenen (d. 1891). [830] Dutch theological modernism focused on full implementation of the deconstructive hermeneutics of German higher criticism, especially in the exegesis of the Old Testament, following the perspectives of Edouard Guillaume Eugène Reuss

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German *Vermittlungtheologie*—which attempted to connect Protestantism with the modern science and historical-critical method—into the Dutch culture. See James Eglinton, "To Transform and to Transcend: The Neo-Calvinist Relationship of Church and Cultural Transformation," in *The Kuyper Center Review: Vol. 3, Calvinism and Culture,* ed. Gordon Graham, 163-184 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), 165.

[827] Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 15. As Praamsma notes, Kuyper will directly collide with the Groningen theology as early as 1868.

[828] Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye was a noted theologian, historian of religions and professor of Religious Studies at the universities of Leiden and Amsterdam. He is the author of the first manual of Religious Sciences titled *Lehrbuchs der Religionsgeschichte* (1887), translated as *Manual of the Science of Religion* (1891). Johannes Hermanus Gunning was an important theologian and professor of Ethical Theology at the University of Leiden.

[829] Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 16. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye who occupied the first chair of the history of Religions at the Amsterdam University is also regarded as one the founders of the modern science of religion He published the first manual of this academic discipline in 1891 and he coined the term "phenomenology of religion." For an analysis of the Dutch contribution to the creation of the modern religious sciences, see Arie L Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands,* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[830] Abraham Kuenen's work *De Godsdienst tot den ondergang van den Joodschen staat* (translated as *The religion of Israel*) is considered as the first systematic text containing the application of Hegelian evolutionary philosophy to the exegesis of the Old Testament. According to Kuenen, a historical critical perspective applied to the Old Testament will reveal that the religion of Israel was not a datum created by Revelation but the outcome of a long evolutionary process that took it from polytheism to etical monotheism. This perspective, connected with the development in Pentateuchal criticism, created by Graff and Reuss, is known as the Graff-Kuenen-Wellhausen school of criticism. See Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 4 (Atlanta, GA: The Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 351, and J.W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

(d. 1891) and Karl Heinrich Graff (d. 1869). Crucially, the modernist theological school repudiated the New Testament as a reliable historical source and applied a Spinozian rationalist understanding of scripture as a meta-allegory designed to assist human evolution towards freedom and responsibility.[831]

Scholten, the luminary of modernist theology who called himself "an apostle of reason," was an important influence on Kuyper during his years of graduate study at Leiden.[832] He even decided to become a minister after attending the lectures of Scholten, who subsequently became his mentor.[833] Other major influences on the young Kuyper were German idealism (Kant, Fichte, Hegel), the proto-romantic *Sturm und Drang* movement in German literature, and the works of his professor Matthias de Vries (d. 1892), the father of Dutch linguistics. Influenced by the Romantic vision and linguistic focus of de Vries as well as Herder, Kuyper, like Qutb, came to consider language the most essential manifestation of culture. As in the case of all political theologians discussed in this study, Kuyper's conversion was preceded by complete immersion in philosophical, theological and aesthetical modernity.[834]

In 1857 and 1858, Abraham Kuyper graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Leiden with degrees in philosophy and literature. In 1862, he earned his doctoral degree in divinity with a dissertation comparing Jean Calvin and the Polish reformer Jan Łaski, titled: *Disquisitio historico-theologica: exhibens Joannis Calvini et Joannis à Lasco de ecclesia sententiarum inter se compositionem* (Theological-historical dissertation showing the differences in the rules of the church between John Calvin and Jan Łaski).[835] As his biographers stress, the choice of Łaski (1560) as the counterpart for Calvin grew from the paradigm clash between the Groningen school

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[831] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 29.
[832] Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 13.
[833] One can argue that Scholten was for Kyper what al-'Aqqad and Quitana were for Qutb and Donoso Cortés, namely, a major early formative authority who introduced the future anti-modern political theologians to theologic and philosophic modernity.
[834] Kuyper would later say, "I once dreamed the dream of Modernism... [until] a gentle breeze from higher realms caused the horizon of my life to quiver and the truth appeared to me in the glory of my Lord and King." Kuyper quoted in Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 49.
[835] His dissertation was a revised and shorteed version of a 320-page study written during his undergraduate years for a national student research competition organized by the theology faculty at Groningen. Kuyper will win the gold medal and he is regarded today as one of the first modern scholars who wrote a scientific study on Laski. In 1866 Kuyper published a two-volume collection of letters and theological writings by Laski under the title *Joannis a Lasco Opera tam edita quam inedita* (Amsterdam: Muller, 1866). This work is still considered as "the foundation stone of modern Laski research." See Jasper Vree quoted in Michael S. Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church: John à Lasco and the Forma AC Ratio* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 6, and Jasper Vree, "The Editions of John *à* Lasco's works, Especially the Opera Omnia Edition by Abraham Kuyper, in Their Historical Context," *Nederlandsch archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 80, no. 3 (2000): 309-326.

of theology and Leiden-based modernism. [836] By contrasting Calvin, as the more rigid and dogmatic face of the Reformation, with a more accommodating Łaski,[837] Kuyper signalled the beginning of his escape from the influence of Scholten. As Bratt puts it, "in a way, the contest invited Kuyper to reject his Leiden master."[838]

In this period, Kuyper's growing intellectual dissatisfaction with the paradigms of mainstream theology became apparent. He finally reacted against both traditionalist, piety-centered and dogmatically repetitive orthodoxy and the theological minimalism of rational supernaturalism and modernism.[839] In the face of his growing discontent, Kuyper felt that he was no longer a fully committed Protestant or even a true believer: "My faith was not deeply rooted in my unconverted, self-centered soul and was bound to wither once exposed to the scorching heat of the spirit of doubt."[840] Like the young Qutb, Kuyper was far more interested during his youth in literature, philosophy and history than in the faith of his childhood.

In the summer of 1858, Abraham Kuyper met Johanna Schaay, a sixteen-year-old young woman from Rotterdam, whom he married, in accordance with Victorian norms, after a long engagement of five years. Johanna was essential to Kuyper's first conversion by providing a template for a radical change of perspective. She sent him Charlotte M. Yonge's wildly popular romantic novel *The Heir of Redclyffe*.[841] The story of the cynical hero Philip Morville, who is converted by his cousin Guy's exemplary ethical application of Christianity, had a tremendous impact on Kuyper's inner world.[842] He returned to Christianity with a renewed commitment. James D. Bratt characterizes this turn in Kuyper's life as "a religious conversion," even if he was "not

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[836] James Bratt notices that the Groningen theologians were looking for a distinctively Dutch church and Lasco's theology, centered on the person of Christ and the doctrine of the church was close to their theological perspective. Moreover, "Lasco had led Dutch-language churches in exile during during the Spanish persecution, and his 1554 catechism and the 1571 Synod at Emden, where he pastored, were the earliest in Dutch Reformed history." Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 129.

[837] For a biography of Lasco see James Amos, *John à Lasco: Polish Pillar of the Reformation* (Brendale: Whitefield Press, 1989), and for his influence in the shaping of Protestant exile in England see Dirk Rogers, *John à Lasco in England* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

[838] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 130.

[839] Ibid, 133. The theological rationalism had as a main figure the German theologian Julius Wegscheider (1771-1849). As Praamsma notes, Wegscheider's treaties *Institutiones Theologiae Christianae Dogmaticae*, published in 1815 was the standard dogmatics handbook of the time. See: *Let Christ be King,* 22.

[840] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 123.

[841] By 1878 the "The Heir of Redclyffe" had its 23rd edition, cementing its status as one of the most influential examples of Victorian fiction, influencing an entire generation of students, officers, writers and artists, including the pre-Raphaelite school of painters.

[842] Kuyper will rank "The Heir of Redclyffe" after the Bible as the most important book in his life. See Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 38.

yet a Calvinist, nor for the moment a theologian."[843]

This was Kuyper's first Christian conversion. His second conversion was to strict Calvinism, which he regarded as the only possible bulwark against a hegemonic modernity. The paradigm shift was produced by his encounter with what Kuyper would consider all his life as the most precious resource of Calvinism: the "little people" (*de kleine luyden*). In 1863, he was appointed minister for the Dutch Reformed Church in the small village of Beesd, in charge of a congregation of old fashioned, rigorist Calvinists who did not trust his still too modernist theological views.[844] The contact with lived, rigorously anti-speculative Calvinism essentially purged his understanding of Protestantism of any remnant of his former Leiden modernism. This is how Kyuper described this life-changing experience:

> I did not set myself against them, and I still thank my God that I made the choice I did. Their unwavering persistence has been a blessing for my heart, the rise of the morning star in my life. In their simple language, they brought me to that absolute conviction in which alone my soul can find rest—the adoration and exaltation of a God who works all things, both to do and to will, according to his good pleasure.[845]

With a renewed faith in the purity and salvific mission of Calvinism, Kuyper left Beesd in 1867 for Utrecht to become minister of the Domkerk Church. As Louis Praamsma points out, despite the orthodoxy of the church consistory and all his colleagues, Kuyper's rigorous Calvinism isolated him from his more accommodating colleagues. Furthermore, by taking a distinct "High-Church" theological position—which affirms the importance of the visible church and centrality of traditional liturgy and worship—Kuyper set himself on a collision course with the generally "Low-Church" perspective prevalent in urban Dutch Protestant circles.[846] Last but not least, Kuyper exposed his discontent with the official position of the Synod by rejecting the optional character of the Trinitarian baptismal formula professed. He forcefully argued that the Trinitarian formula is essential for the cultic life of the church and for theological integrity, against the position of the Synod that accepted alternative formulae for baptism such as "in the name of the

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[843] Ibid.

[844] Pietje Baltus, the thirty year-old, unmarried daughter of a miller from Beesd is an essential figure of this conversion, practically being Kuyper's teacher in lived Calvinist religiosity. See Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 22.

[845] Kuyper quoted in Praamsma, *Let Christ be King*, 49.

[846] According to Bratt, Kuyper's High Church position can be integrated in a more capacious movement including neo-confessionalists in German Lutheranism, Anglican Tractarians, the Protestant converts to Rome and the evangelicals in the US. See Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 53. For an analysis of the High Church position in the Church of England see: Nigel Scotland, "Evangelicals, Anglicans and Ritualism in Victorian England," *Churchman,* 111, no. 33 (1997): 249-265; Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain 1830-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

congregation" or "for the initiation into Christendom."[847]

This period is extremely important for Kuyper's intellectual evolution. As Bratt expresses it, "the salient themes of Kuyper's life emerged in one creative outburst between 1865-1870."[848] On May 18, 1869, Kuyper met Groen van Prinsterer, the leader of a small group of orthodox Reformed Christians in the Dutch House of Commons and the most important Calvinist politician in the country. This meeting was a seminal event in Kuyper's life, leading to his third conversion: the embrace of anti-modern political theology. Before we discuss Kuyper's political turn, it is necessary to provide a brief description of the Réveil movement, an important theoretical sources for his political vision.

The Réveil was a European pietistic Protestant school of thought representing orthodox reaction against theological modernism, philosophical rationalism and political liberalism. The theologian and composer of hymns Henri Abraham César Malan (d. 1864) founded the movement in Switzerland in 1817. He was subsequently deposed from office, and then in 1823, formally defrocked by the liberal-dominated consistory of Genève. From Genève, the movement spread across the continent, especially in aristocratic and high bourgeois circles, converting a significant number of intellectuals and political leaders.[849] The Réveil placed heavy emphasis on subjectivity, feeling and religious experience. It had a distinct literary, poetic dimension and a focus on the development of a national literature.[850] George Harinck notices that the Réveil was essential in "bringing the antithesis between modernism and orthodoxy into the open." The movement became "the ideological vanguard of those increasingly dissatisfied with modernism not only in theology and religion but in civilization as a whole."[851]

In the Netherlands, the main figures of the Réveil were Isaac da Costa (d. 1860) and

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[847] For an excellent analysis of Kuyper's public theology see John Halsey Wood, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*: *Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[848] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 53.

[849] In France, the Réveil was represented by Adolphe Monod (1802-1856) who was also deposed from office by the Reformed church of Lyons in 1832, while in Germany the movement evolved around the figures of Claus Harms (1778-1855) a Lutheran minister and musician from Kiel who published his own 95 Lutheran theses attacking the Papist involution of modern Lutheranism. In Scotland, the main representatives of the Réveil were Robert Haldane (1764-1842) an aristocrat who converted, left the Church of Scotland and established 85 independent churches, and Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), the founder of the Free Church of Scotland and considered one of the greatest churchmen and theologians of the Scottish nineteenth century.

[850] See John Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 59.

[851] George Harinck, "A Historian's Comment on the Use of Abraham Kuyper's Idea of Sphere Sovereignty," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 5, no.1 (Spring 2002): 280.

Kuyper's political mentor, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (d. 1876), both students of the Romantic poet and reactionary thinker Willem Bilderdijk (d. 1831).[852] Isaac da Costa was a Sephardic Jewish aristocrat from Amsterdam who had converted to Calvinism in 1821 under the influence of Bilderdijk. In 1823, he published *Bezwaren tegen de geest dezer eeuw* (*Objections to the Spirit of our Time*), a work regarded as one of the greatest distillations of the anti-Revolutionary ethos in the Netherlands.[853] Bilderdijk and Costa remained important sources of inspiration for Abraham Kuyper's political vision. Kuyper, says James Bratt, "never tired of quoting Da Costa's poetry or celebrating Bilderdijk's scorched-earth spirit, as well as his contempt for compromise and his holistic vision of a radically different world." The challenge, however, was "to make these usable for progressive ends."[854]

Groen van Prinsterer (d. 1846), secretary to the king and archivist of the Royal House of Orange, was another member of the Réveil. Though a political theorist and capable organizer rather than a poet, he converted during the early years of the Réveil. His *Ongeloof en revolutie. Eene reeks van historische voorlezingen (Unbelief and Revolution: A Series of Lectures in History)* represents the first systematic example of anti-modern political theology created in the Netherlands. *Unbelief and Revolution* prepared the ground for the first Dutch political party, The Anti-Revolutionary Party, and it sums up the ideas that would shape Kuyper's understanding of the political: the claim that Calvinism and not the French Revolution was the origin of Dutch civilization and the only source of genuine freedom; the link between the liberal denial of God's Sovereignty and oppression;[855] the distinctively anti-Christian character of modernity; and

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[852] Virtually unknown outside the Netherlands, Willem Bilderdijk was for Holland what Donoso Cortés was for the Spanish counter-revolutionary political theology. His radically anti-modern, anti-liberal discourse and his manicheistic perspective on the inexorable conflict between modernity and tradition was very influential in the genesis of the anti-Revolutionary political ideology. However, as Joris Eijnattevann points out, Bilderdijk was not a devout Calvinist and his theological views are hardly in tone with the mainstream Dutch Protestant theology. See Joris Eijnattevann, "Vestige of the Third Force: Willem Bilderdijk, Poet, Anti-Skeptic, Millenarian" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62, no. 2 (2001): 313-333.

[853] Hermann von der Dunk describes this work as the Calvinist counterpart to Joseph de Maistre's epoch-making counter-revolutionary work "Du Pape," published just 5 years before. See Hermann von der Dunk, "Conservatism in the Netherlands" *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no. 4 (October 1978): 741-763.

[854] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 53. John Bolt also notices that: "Da Costa's poetic eschatological, Christian historical imagination was essential to the eventual success of the Calvinist political program." See *A Free Church, a Holy Nation,* 57.

[855] "At bottom the Revolution is the world-historical war of religion (Gen. 3:15), the battle against the living God. — Piety and politics melt together before this supreme question: if there is no sin, there is no Saviour; if there is no sin, the cause of evil lies not in man, who is good, but in the form of government, in the lack of popular rule, in the corruption of society through priestcraft and tyranny." See: Groen van Prinsterer, ed. *Unbelief and Revolution: A Series of Lectures in History*, trans. Harry van Dyke in collaboration with Donald Morton (Amsterdam: Groen van Prinsterer Fund, 1973-1975), 32.

sovereignty of reason as the essential cause of the materialism and modern anomie. The Réveil and van Prinsterer's ideas in particular facilitated Kuyper's conversion from academic and pastoral theology to political theology and political praxis.

However, we must notice that Kuyper's admiration for Bilderdijk, da Costa and Groen van Prinsterer did not extend to the heirs of the Réveil in the Netherlands. The Réveil was essentially urban and aristocratic, and the rift between its sophisticated but mostly private piety and the strict and very visible Calvinism of the *de kleine luyden*[856] made Kuyper very aware of its limited applicability to political praxis. Kuyper goes as far as to characterize contemporary Dutch Réveil circles as suffering from a phobia of politics. Kuyper rather employed the revolutionary tradition of Calvinist resistance theology, embedded in a mass party as a weapon against the secularizing dynamics of modernity.

In 1870, Kuyper left Utrecht after preaching a farewell sermon titled "Conservatism and Orthodoxy," in which he attacked both the heirs of the Réveil for their parochial piety and the conservative Calvinists whose narrow-minded dogmatism made the world-oriented, revolutionary Calvinist tradition a formalist relic of the past.[857] He moved to Amsterdam's largest Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk) as the first strictly Calvinist minister in its recent history.

In 1871, Kuyper became editor-in-chief of the very popular Reformed weekly paper *De Heraut* (The Herald), and in 1872 he created the first successful militant Dutch Protestant political daily, *De Standaard*. As we have seen in the case of Qutb, Mawdudi and Donoso Cortés, Abraham Kuyper fully understood the importance of the modern press as the *sine qua non* instrument in creating for disseminating an anti-modern worldview. His articles and editorials entered virtually every Calvinist house in the Netherlands, helping to crystallize a modern Calvinist identity and renewed political consciousness among Dutch Calvinists from all walks of life. As James D. Bratt points puts it:

> The Standaard editorship was the one post Kuyper would hold for the rest of his career, and the role where he could combine all the others through which he passed in the meantime — preacher, teacher, and politician. The paper was the only place where most of his followers ever heard him, but there they heard him to great effect. For many it provided a post-elementary school education, a sustained induction into politics, culture,

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[856] This distance was rendered visible by the lack any contact between the conservative aristocratic men of the Dutch Réveil and the popular movement of secession *(afscheiding)*. See Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 49.

[857] We will return to this important early text, later in the chapter because it reflects a similar critique against the religious establishment as Qutb's attack on the bureaucratization of the sacred professed by the conservative *ulema*.

and social affairs.[858]

The aging Groen van Prinsterer having persuaded him to enter political life, Kuyper was elected in 1874 to the Lower House of the States-General as deputy from Gouda, representing the anti-Revolutionary group, though at the time it had no clear platform and no coherent ideological design. At the moment of his election Kuyper was forced to give up his ministerial career because the Dutch constitution did not allow a member of the House of Commons to be also serve as a cleric. From this moment on, Kuyper will be only a politician, a journalist and a church reformer. In 1875, he succeeded Groen van Prinsterer (who died in 1876) as the leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. He created an ideology for the party by distilling a coherent Neo-Calvinist political theology of unlimited sovereignty of God in all spheres of existence, seen as the only alternative to flawed popular sovereignty and state sovereignty. The treatise titled *Ons Program* published in 1878 in the *De Standaard* has been described as "a two-volume, 1,300-page open-university course in applied Calvinistic political philosophy, meant to be kept close at hand by the party faithful."[859]

Most historians consider the *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (ARP) the first Dutch modern mass party.[860] Consequently, as Michael Fogarty stresses, Kuyper single-handedly created "one of the most successful, and in many ways the most instructive political, economic and social movements to be found anywhere in the Christian world."[861] The growth of the party was remarkable. If at the first convention in April 1879 there were only twenty-eight delegates, in 1883 the party reached virtually all the Dutch provinces with ninety-five chapters, and in 1887 it had no less than one hundred and fifty four, along with twenty-one representatives in the Lower Chamber of the

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[858] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 83. Kuyper will write thousands of articles covering a large variety of topics and editorials virtually until the day he died. Kuyper also chaired of the Dutch Circle of Journalists in 1898 and he served as its honorary president since 1901.

[859] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 114.

[860] Hans Daalder, "The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society," in *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies,* ed. Robert A. Dahl (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 210. As Bratt points out, "Kuyper's model for a political party had five requirements: that it be defined by a common set of principles and policy goals (the "program" or platform); that it be composed of formally organized chapters in as many localities as possible; that delegates from these chapters gather at national conventions to nominate candidates for Parliament; that endorsed candidates and sitting MPs, like the local chapters themselves, be bound by the party platform; and that party operations be coordinated by a central committee. These might seem to be the obvious building blocks of modern political organization, but until this moment they still waited to be discovered." See *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 114.

[861] Michael Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957), 300.

Parliament and one elected senator.[862]

In 1879 Kuyper organized a nationwide petition against the Liberal School Bill put forward by the liberal Prime Minister Kappeyne van de Coppello. This legislation raised financial requirements to to a level that made it very difficult to maintain independent Christian schools. Kuyper's preoccupation with free religious education was one the pillars of his critiques of the Liberal status quo and may be compared with Qutb's insistence on the necessity of an integral Islamic education at all levels. The success of the petition resulted in the creation of The Free University in 1880. Kuyper, who was the first *rector magnificus* (academic president) of this orthodox Calvinist institution of high learning, intended it as an alternative independent from state and church to Leiden and Groningen universities. It was to be not a parochial, confessional seminary focused on theology, but a complete seat of knowledge, teaching everything from philosophy and law to the natural sciences and arts. The comprehensive perspective was rooted in Kuyper's conceptualization of a Calvinism that infuses all areas of human knowledge.

Abraham Kuyper was also at the center of the *Doleantiae* (the Suffering),[863] one of the most radical fractures within the Dutch Protestantism. The *Doleantiae* was a schism within the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) led by Abraham Kuyper and his followers, who were protesting against what they considered liberal decadence and totalitarian tendencies; Kuyper himself coined the name to describe the painful process of religious separation. After a series of conflicts culminating in the occupation of the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam on January 5, 1886, (a incident known as *Panelzagerij,* the panel-sawing, after the destruction of the panels used to block the entrance to the consistory chamber as a protest against the hegemony of the Synod),[864] all two hundred secessionist communities organized themselves as De Doleerende Kerk (The Suffering Church). [865] The *Doleantiae* lasted six years and radically changed the religious landscape of the Netherlands. In 1893, Kuyper's efforts led to a union between De Doleerende Kerk and the Christian Reformed group (created by the first *Afscheiding* or Secession in 1841),

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[862] Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 125. Bratt stresses the fact that Kuyper's masterful employment of the political journalism is the key of his success as party builder and political organizer.

[863]Followers were called *dolerenden* (the regretful separatists). For a historical analysis of The *Doleantiae* see Karel Blei, *The Netherlands Reformed Church, 1571-2005* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

[864] See J.H. Wood, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*, 1.

[865] See Praamsma, *Let Christ be King*.

resulting in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Reformed Church of the Netherlands).[866]

Kuyper's political career continued to rise, and in 1894 he returned to the House of Representatives as the deputy from Sliedrecht. He participated in expansion of the voting rights to the lower classes, but this political stance in favor of *de kleine luyden* combined with his authoritarian style of leadership and collaboration with Catholic political parties produced a significant schism in the ARP. Alexander de Savornin Lohman and the aristocratic faction of the party, which staunchly opposed any form of popular sovereignty, left the ARP to form the Christian Historical Union (*Christelijk Historische Partij*).

In 1898, Kuyper traveled to the US where he received an honorary doctorate from Princeton and toured Michigan, Iowa and Ohio delivering speeches to Dutch Reformed communities. At Princeton Kuyper delivered his paradigm-making *Stone Lectures*, a text that is fundamental for the history of modern political theology of Neo-Calvinism.[867]

The most important moment of Kuyper's political career occured in 1901 when the ARP, in an alliance with the Catholic party, won the general election. Abraham Kuyper became the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, serving at the same time as the Minster of Home Affairs. His tenure as Prime Minister saw the passing of a series of education bills, including one in which the Christian schools acquired state financing for the primary level, and another that granted the Free University of Amsterdam public status.[868] He was less successful in his foreign policy, and issues related to Indonesia and the Boer War, along with shattering of the ideal of social harmony founded on "pillarization" by the railroad strike of 1903 that forced him to send in the army, led to the ARP losing the election of 1905. Following a two-year long vacation, Kuyper returned to politics as a senator representing the province of South Holland and was re-elected chair of the party. For the next fifteen years, he exercised influence as "the old man of the party" and through his imposing public presence. He continued to actively contribute to the Dutch press and intellectual life until

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[866] In 2004, the Reformed Church of the Netherlands merged with the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to form the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. This newly formed structure is the most important Reformed church in the coutry with about 2,000 congregations and 1.8 million members. See Arjan Plaisier, Leo J. Koffeman, eds., *The Protestant Church in the Netherlands*: *Church Unity in the 21st Century, Stories and Reflections* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014).

[867] Peter Heslam calls this text "the manifest of Kuyperian Calvinism" and "the most complete cogent and visionary expression of Kuyper's thought." See Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuypers Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 1. For an analysis of the importance of Kuyper's *Stone Lectures* in the history of modern Calvinism and in the configuration of an Evangelical American public theology see also Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation*.

[868] Praamsma, *Let Christ be King,* 1985, 104.

his death at the age of eighty-two. Though he had a private funeral, it was attended by thousands. Abraham Kuyper's grave is adorned with a modest headstone engraved with the inscription, "Asleep in Jesus."

Kuyper's life may seem at first glance to be the mirror image of Qutb's. Kuyper during this lifetime was loved by followers and disciples on three continents and respected even by his numerous rivals and political enemies. He had a successful marriage with eight children and enjoyed a long and prosperous life. He also helped to create a democratic environment in his homeland in which tolerance and diversity were accepted as the functional norms of culture and society. Sayyid Qutb, on the other hand, never enjoyed real fame. He never married, and several of his family members were tortured by the Nasser regime. A lone radical, he spent the entire last decade of his life in prison and died on the gallows. He never exercised any political power or influence, leaving behind only a utopian vision shaped by a violent and unstable society and deep cultural crisis. Nevertheless, as we will now attempt to demonstrate, Kuyper's and Qutb's critiques of modernity, despite very significant differences, meet on essential grounds to the extent that they represent two facets of a systemically anti-modern, anthitetic political theology of God's Sovereignty.

6.2 Antithesis Political Theology in Abraham Kuypers's and Sayyid Qutb's Critiques of Modernity

The central claim of this study is that the antinomies *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut* are not idiosyncratic expressions of an unmediated abhorrence of modernity. On the contrary, they are essential categories embedded in a widespread antithetical political theology that attempts to produce a coherent critique of modernity based on the conviction that religion is the sole structuring force in the world. Thus Qutb's antinomic couples are not, as has been generally thought, singular products of his Egyptian carceral experience or the monopoly of Sunni radical Islamism. Rather, they have parallels in other politico-theological critiques of modernity and can be successfully compared with them. In this regard, Abraham Kuyper is a very suitable *comparans* for Qutb, since his critique of modernity exemplifies antithesis-based political theology distilled in Protestant space, and in the Calvinist world in particular.

The radical nature of Kuyper's theology begins with its construction upon antitheses. As Henry Van Til notices, his antithesis theology ran very much against the status quo. Both the

Liberal and ethical theologians of his day rejected the doctrine of absolute antitheses, "the former because they were committed to the principle of monism (the unity of the spiritual world), and the latter, because they believed in *"Vermittlung"* (mediating theology)."[869] For Kuyper, on the other hand, since "the basic antithesis assumes a more radical and universal character, school will form against school, system against system, worldview against worldview."[870] His political theology is thus organized around the universal conflict between two opposite worldviews, the Christian and the modern, both of which are thought to involve all-embracing and absolute principles (*Beginselen*). As David van Drunen notes, the dichotomy extends into society, since there is also an antithesis between believer and non-believer that is rooted in their different epistemological principles and extends to all areas of human behaviour.[871] This Manichean perspective of Kuyper led to a discourse of separation between the secular and the religious; to the pillarization, as he called it, of society and a doctrine of active resistance against modernity.

On the other hand, we find in Kuyper a public theology of common grace, emphasizing cooperation and even shared responsibility for a non-Christian world in addition to a clear dialogical ecumenism.[872] Conservative critics accused Kuyper of complete innovation in his concept of common grace, as it radically departed from Reformed doctrine in general and Calvin's conception of grace in particular. In 1886, the Synod of Hague went so far as to condemn Kuyper as sectarian and an exponent of Labadism.[873]

It was, in any case, the dominant antithetical side of Kuyper's thought that made him an important source for anti-modern political theology in evangelical circles in both North America and South Africa. Van Till asserts that Calvinism received "a new lease on life" through Kuyper

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[869] Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, 186.

[870] Abraham Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, trans. Hendrik de Vries (Layfayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 2001), 32.

[871] David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009).

[872] For a discussion of the "two Kuypers," see Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuypers Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998). Kuyper expressed his doctrine of common grace in various texts, but the most comprehensive treatment was given in his massive three volumes work *De gemeene gratie.* Abraham Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie*. 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Kampen, J.H. Kok, 1902 -05).

[873] Jean Labadie (1610-1674) was a French former Jesuit priest coverted to Protestantism who founded a religious community in the Netherlands and Germany based on his doctrine of the church as the "spotless community of reborn" composed ony by the elect, who are the oly oes worthy to receive the Holy Communion. Labadie also argued that the church is always reformable and the hierarchy is essentially meaningless. Labadism was condemned by both Lutheran and Dutch Reformed churches. We discussed in the first chapter how the accusation of *Kharidjism* was cast against the Muslim Brotherhood in general and against Sayyid Qutb in particular.

through his positing of "the absolute antithesis between the basic principles of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of darkness." For Kuyper and his followers, the "doctrine of the antithesis belongs to the most basic principles taught in the Scriptures."[874] As is the case with Qutb, Mawdudi and Cortés, it is a matter of a profound paradigm clash between two incommensurable life-systems, "wrestling with one another, in mortal combat." Modernism, which derives its principles exclusively from the sovereignty of the human subject over the entire world, collides with Christianity, professed by "all those who reverently bend the knee to Christ and worship Him as the Son of the living God, and God himself."[875]

Kuyper nevertheless believes that modernity is far from being a disjointed, chaotic force. On the contrary, modernity conquered the world as an all-embracing, hegemonic life-system possessing a specific *Weltanschauung* and significant seductive force. Modernity, says Kuyper, is "a most coherent system."[876] Consequently, as early as 1871, Kuyper stressed the necessity of respecting modernity and the need for accurate knowledge: "Whoever disrespects the enemy is not combating him but the specter of his own imagination. From that mode of combat I wish to abstain. It is above all appreciation for Modernism that gives me the grounds for opposing it."[877] In its theological expression, modernity according to Kuyper is "fascinating in its deceptive beauty," though with a "soft glow of tragic sadness."[878] In the end, after all the conceptual sophistication is pealed off, modernism appears in the all too familiar form of heresy: "Modernism is not even new. All through the centuries it has brought about sorrow in the Church of Jesus and will continue to ferment until the Day of Judgment."[879]

Kuyper's view of modernity here is comparable to that of Qutb, who appreciated the formidable nature of *Jahiliyah* and its ideological expressions. It should be remembered, however,

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[874] Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, 180. Kuyper's disciple, Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) will systematically employ antithesis as the foundational concept in his critique of philosophy. For Dooyeweerd, antithesis is the basic model of all philosophical constructions and reflects the fundamentaly religious premise of all structures of human thought. See Herman. A Dooyeweerd, *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. vol. 1, part 3 (NY, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

[875] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (New York, Cosimo Classics, 2009), 11. It is evident that the source of Kuyper's meta-antithesis is to be identified in the seminal Augustinian antithesis between the City of God and the City of Man. Donoso Cortés had also been very influenced by Augustinian dichotomy when he developed his antithesis political theology of the conflicting civilizations. See chapter 4.

[876] Abraham Kuyper, "Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, ed. James Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 92.

[877] Ibid, 90.

[878] Ibid, 91.

[879] Ibid.

that for both political theologians, the antithesis between religious and modern worldviews is not a product of a specific historical context. Rather, it is the real underlying structure of human history and master-narrative of mankind's adventure on earth. For Qutb, *Jahiliyah* is perennial, appearing first as a reaction against the Islamic revelation and first *ummah* and currently in a more complex and hegemonic guise. All *Jahiliyah*s are expressions of the same malign continuum and ultimately the mirror image of pure Islamic monotheism.

In his 1891 opening address to the Utrecht convention of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, suggestively titled *Maranatha* (an Aramaic word appearing in 1 Cor 16:22 that means "the Lord is coming" or "come, O Lord"), Kuyper defined modernity as an *"appalling anti-Christian world power"* rooted in the French Revolution. The French Revolution is seen by him as producing not only a regime change, but also a radical paradigm shift affecting institutions, laws and customs. The worship of God, in Kuyper's view, was replaced by worship of man; Scripture was repudiated in favor of the cult of reason; and finally, God's Sovereignty was discarded for a man-made sovereignty. Consequently, an openly anti-Christian force (*anti-christelijke macht)* shaped the entire century. All Christians in all walks of life must resist this force in order to preserve their identity and to assure the future of Christianity.[880]

Believers confronted by this all-embracing Juggernaut have only one solution: "to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power."[881] This powerful world-system and life-system[882] is to be found in Christianity, and more precisely in Calvinism. Notice how for both Qutb and Kuyper, comprehensiveness is a datum of religion, making it the only force able to match the hegemony of modernity.[883] As Kuyper forcefully puts it, only a purified, uncompromising religious worldview can counter the force of modern *Weltanschuung*:

> With such a coherent world and life-view, firmly resting on its principle and self-consistent in its splendid structure, Modernism now confronts Christianity; and against this deadly danger, ye, Christians, cannot successfully defend your sanctuary, but by placing, in opposition to all this, a *life- and world-view* of your own, founded as firmly on the base of your own principle, wrought out with the same clearness and glittering in an equally logical consistency.[884]

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[880] Kuyper, "Marantha," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 211.

[881] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 11.

[882] Kuyper uses the term *Wereldbeschouwing* and John Bolt notices that Kuyper considered the English translation of it as "world-view" as too intellectualist and restrictive. The *Weltanschauung* covers more dimensions and has experiential and social-practical dimensions. See Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation,* 8.

[883] We have seen that Qutb conceptualizing *shumuliyyah* (comprehensiveness) as one of the cornestones of the Islamic and it is the direct consequence of God's Sovereignty applied to all spheres of existence.

[884] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 11.

For Kuyper, Calvinism is much more than a Protestant denomination. It is a peculiar form of religion, carrying a specific religious consciousness and a distinct theology. Crucially, Calvinism offers a comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between Christianity and the world and church and state, decisively shaping both culture and science. In the same manner as Qutb's integral definition of Islam, Kuyper presents Calvinism as a "an all-embracing system of principles, rooted in the past and able to strengthen us in the present and to fill us with confidence for the future."[885] Kuyper claims that every life system, whether religious or secular, is structured by a specific root principle (*Beginsel*) from which all its functional concepts are derived. Decades later and in a completely different cultural and religious context, Qutb will argue in the same foundationalist fashion, stating that the core, transcendental principles of *Tawhid* and *Hakimiyah* are the basis of the Islamic concept and therefore placed in an *a priori* opposition with the essential principles of modernity rooted solely in human hubris:

> Thus, the characteristic of "movement within a fixed boundary around a fixed axis seems to be a deep property of all of God's creation, and it is also clearly exhibited in the nature of the Islamic concept. The Oneness of God, known as *tawhid,* is the first and paramount constituent of the Islamic concept, as it is the fundamental truth of the Islamic faith. It is also one of the chief characteristics of the Islamic concept because, among all the belief systems and philosophies currently prevailing among human beings, only the Islamic faith can be characterized as having a pure form of monotheism. [886]

More importantly, Qutb claims—in the same fashion as Mawdudi and Cortés—that the modern *Weltanschauung* systematically distorts religious concepts, using and abusing them as ideological props for legitimizing political ideologies. In other words, as we have seen in the previous chapters, for Qutb, Mawdudi and Cortés, all modern ideologies are essentially secular religions.[887] Kuyper, however, is reluctant to openly make this decisive theoretical move. For him, modernity has a certain autonomy from religion. Granted, it is a malign and potentially destructive autonomy, but it is, nevertheless, autonomy. Unlike Cortés, who penned his critique in a period in which political modernity had just begun its full assault against the old religious-political order, and in contrast with Qutb and Mawdudi who operated in a paradigm in which separation between religion and politics in the vein of Mark: 12:17 was not fully operational, Kuyper lived in functional democratic environment structured by a growing secularization and fully shaped by

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[885] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 32.
[886] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, 122.
[887] "We may equally contend that each system of life is a *din* (religion) in the sense that religions function in society as the philosophical mooring that determines the fiber of life in that society" Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future*, 15.

political modernity. In this context, despite his insistence that only Calvinism provides a genuine guarantee of freedom and equality, Kuyper could not deny the autonomy of political modernity without appearing to be out of touch with the praxis that he intended to shape through his political theology.

Kuyper's and Qutb's perspectives are nevertheless congruent in their organic vision of religion. For both, the religious *Weltanschauung* expresses the perfect unity of life, belief and transcendence, cementing a community that is marked by a structural organic solidarity.[888] Kuyper consistently argued against both dogmatic conservatives and secular critics that religion cannot be confined within the walls of the church. The church is more than an institution with a specific tradition, a clerical hierarchy and a dogmatic infrastructure. It is a living organism, present in all the tissues of the world and deeply connecting creature with Creator: "In its essence, for the Calvinist, the Church is a spiritual organism, including heaven and earth, but having at present its center, and the starting-point for its action, not upon earth, but in heaven."[889] The organic nature[890] of the Church is rooted in the irreducible pluriformity of society and essential unity of mankind, which radically collide with the limitative, parochial and mechanical character of the state:

> The entire human race is from *one blood.* The conception of *States,* however, which subdivide the earth into continents, and each continent into morsels, does not harmonize with this idea. Then only would the organic unity of our race be realized politically, if *one State* could embrace the entire world, and if the whole of humanity were associated in one world empire.[891]

Note here how for Kuyper the creation of the state is made unfortunately necessary by mankind's fall, which dissolved the organic bonds of solidarity. Thus the state is, despite its sophisticated political theory and triumphalist rhetoric, the sign and direct product of our species' failure to live by what Qutb calls *al-wahdah al-kawniyah al-kubra* (the great universal unity).

In 1869, even before his political turn, Kuyper published *Eenvormigheid, de vloek van het moderne leven* (*Uniformity: The Course of Modern Life*) based on a lecture given in Amsterdam

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[888] The Scottish Presbyterian theologian James Orr's 1893 work "The Christian View of God and the World" was an obvious inspiration source for Kuyper's conceptualization of *Weltanschauung* as the organizing principle of human history. Both Orr and Kuyper are considered the two main Protestant theologians of *Weltanschauungen.* See, David K. Naugle Jr., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002).

[889] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 59. The first systematic treatment of the distinction between the Church as an institution and the Church as an organism was presented in Abraham Kuyper's inaugural Sermon, delivered at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam in 1870 and titled *Rooted & Grounded*. See Abraham Kuyper, *Rooted & Grounded*: *The Church as Organism and Institution*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013).

[890] We have seen in the third chapter how important organicism is for Qutb's understanding of ummah and life world.

[891] Abraham*, Lectures on Calvinism,* 79.

in the same year. Already in this work the antithesis between modernity and Christianity is portrayed in terms of an implacable conflict between the divine, organic unity (*Eenheid*) of God's revelation, which creates and nurtures pluralism and diversity, and the malign and deceptive totalism of modernity. We saw in the previous chapter how the concepts of unity (*gran unitad)* and comprehensive whole (*todo organico*) play a significant role in the thought of Donoso Cortés as well. For Kuyper, unrestrained modernity necessarily leads to "a reckless leveling, the elimination of all diversity and a false deceptive unity under the uniformity of death."[892] Behind its rhetoric of universalism and diversity, the real project of modernity and its ideological products, is to unify the life-world by force, through centralization, bureaucratization and statism.

Thus Kuyper, in line with Qutb and Donoso Cortés, stresses that the totalism and universal tyranny inherent in the cult of an omnipotent state are the logical outcomes of a hegemonic modernity. "The State," Kuyper writes, "embodied in Caesar, itself became God." It became a "god-State, which could not tolerate any other gods beside itself [and] thus came the passion for world-dominion."[893] In place of the crushing unity of systematic uniformity, Kuyper proposed God's unity based on holism and organicism as prescribed by the Scripture: "God's unity is not based on sameness of a model but on the oneness of a body where every member retains its place." In a society shaped by God's revelation, diversity is encouraged, cherished and protected, such that "religion alone can stand for life against the death of uniformity."[894]

Qutb operates the same equivalence between organicism, *fitrah* and the Islamic universalistic community, opposing these to artificial, mechanical and inherently anti-universal modernity. Qutb passionately believes that "the whole Islamic community is one body and feels all things in common" so that "whatever happens to one of its members the reminder of all members is also affected."[895] In remarkably similar language, Kuyper described the religiously-shaped national community as:

> A God-willed community, a living, human organism. Not a mechanism put together from separate parts; not
> a mosaic… but a *body* with members, subject to the law of life; that we are members of each other, and thus

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[892] Kuyper, "Uniformity: The Course of Modern Life," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 32.

[893] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader,* 457.

[894] Kuyper, "Uniformity: The Course of Modern Life," 35. Qutb strenuously argued that *Nizam al-Islam* is authentically pluralistic, allowing the perfect ratio between individualism and collectivism and between diversity and unity.

[895] See chapter two. It should be stressed that the distinction between organic and mechanic appears very early in Qutb's perspective under the influence of al-'Aqqad's Romantic aesthetics.

the eye cannot get along without the foot, nor the foot without the eye.[896]

Let us pause to sum up the converging organicist views of Kuyper and Qutb. For both, the unity of God (*Tawhid* in the latter's case) implies the existence of a society that evolves through natural growth, following the organic connection between revelation and human history.[897] This society can be at the same time fully diverse and pluralistic, since it is organically unified by the all-encompassing sovereignty of God, as Qutb says:

> The system to be established in the world should be based on complete servitude to God alone, deriving all its laws from Him only. Within this system, every person is free to adopt whatever beliefs he or she wants. This is the practical meaning of the principle that `all religion must be to God alone.' Religion means submission, obedience, servitude and worship, and all these must be to God.[898]

We also see that in both cases, a significant consequence of the pervasive, insurmountable antithesis between the modern and the religious worldviews is a doctrine of separation from institutionalized religion and from what is regarded as a systematically anti-religious society. Kuyper and Qutb considered this spiritual and ontological separation as the mandatory starting point for religious renewal, purification of faith and re-Christianization or re-Islamization of society. It is for this reason that Kuyper devotes his early work *Maranatha* to the topic of separation, stressing that the members of the ARP should not "join or connive" with non-believers and secular persons "acceed to their council," and most importantly, "abandon the country to them." Those who believe in Christ as the only sovereign ruler must defend the Christian faith within the political realm, "arresting the spirit of apostasy" and actively rejecting essentially anti-Christian political modernity.[899]

The consequences of Kuyper's political theology of separation were significant: the creation of *Vrije Universiteit,* the *Doleantiae*, and finally the blueprint for *Verzuilin* or

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[896] Abraham Kuyper, *Het sociale Vraagstuk en de Christelijke Religie* (Amsterdam: Wormser, 1891), 45.

[897] After meeting with Groen van Prinsterer and embracing a political perspective on Calvinism, Kuyper will read Edmund Burke entire body of work and the influence of political philosophy of conservatism will impact his perspective of organic growth as the engine of history. Kuyper explicitly claimed Burke as an important source for the Anti-Revolutionary political theology. See Mark J. Larson, *Abraham Kuyper, Conservatism, and Church and State* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 7. On a different theoretical avenue, Peter Heslam argues that Kuyper borrowed his organicism from the German theology, specifically via Schleiermacher and Rothe and from German idealism, mainly Kant. See Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuypers Lectures on Calvinism*, 133-34. In the same vein, Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that: "Kuyper did not share the social conservatism characteristic of many Romantics; Kuyper was not a Dutch Edmund Burke." See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920)," in *The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature*, eds. John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 292. Qutb on the other hand, constructed his organicism via a combination of Qur'anic exegesis, Mawdudi,'s texts and Alexis Carrel's critique of modernity.

[898] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 7, 10.

[899] Kuyper, "Marantha," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 214.

pillarization, which in many respects represents the ultimate synthesis between denominational separation and social cooperation.[900] In Kuyper's words: "The Christianization of society would involve bringing all aspects of human life into conformity with Christian principles and the separation of society from the institutional church would help to purify the church from its corrupting involvement in the world."[901]

Qutb also expounded a doctrine of spiritual and psychological separation from all aspects of modernity, which he termed complete mental and emotional uprooting ('*uzlah shu'uriyah* or *mufasalah shu'uriyah*) "We must," he says, "free ourselves from the clutches of *Jahili* society, *Jahili* concepts, *Jahili* tradition and *Jahili* leadership." Emotional withdrawal is designed to protect the believer from compromise "Our mission is not to compromise with the practices of *Jahili* society, nor can we be loyal to it."[902] This programmatic intransigence secured Qutb's place as the main theoretist of the first generation of jihadists. His excommunication of modern society reached a level of radicalism that is obviously absent in Kuyper's perspective. Kuyper's Manichaeism, quite different from that of Qutb, is tempered by his notion of common grace and belief that in the end, even the most radical secular modernist can be converted by the grace of God mediated by human action.

Despite these differences in tone and intensity, it is clear that Kuyper and Qutb professed a comparable political theology of decisive separation from modernity as both *forma mentis* and a system of values. Thus, they consistently argued for a *cordon sanitaire* to protect the community of believers from the anomie of modernity. Separation laid the ground for a purified counter-polis structured solely by God's Sovereignty, as Kuyper says: "We wish to retreat behind our own lines…in order to prepare ourselves for the struggle ahead."[903]

It must be stressed that in spite of Kuyper's and especially Qutb's rhetoric of purity in action, they did not intend that believers should physically cut all connections with society or take refuge in private, defensive piety. On the contrary, an enclave mentality and refusal to engage modernity are taken to be signs of a lukewarm, tamed religiosity. What Qutb and Kuyper envisioned, albeit

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[900] Kuyper's call for the separation from the rest of society followed by the development of an independent and purely Calvinist sphere of life (*levenskring*) reflects more or less Groen van Prinsterer's motto: "In isolation lies our strength" (*In het isolement ligt onze kracht*).

[901] Kuyper, "Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 195.

[902] Qutb, *Milestones*, 34.

[903] Abraham Kuyper, *De verflauwing der grenzen: rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit oktober 1892* (Amsterdam: Wormser, 1892), 47. Also quoted in Peter S. Heslam, "Prophet of a Third Way: The Shape of Kuyper's Socio-Political Vision," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 11-33.

in very different contexts is rather a temporary retreat that would allow believers to purge themselves of the insidious and pervasive and influence of modernity. Temporary retreat was to be followed by a re-conquering of culture and society in the name of God's Sovereignty. As Kuyper explains:

> The error, which is frequently committed, is this: men associate the Christian religion only with the world of feeling…. But it is a mutilation of the Christian religion to confine its working to the area of emotional life. It professes not only Christ, but the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and therefore it has at the head of the Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth". But in this there is also the explicit commitment that the Christian religion must also have and give a conviction regarding our relation to nature, authority, and fellow men; and also regarding human nature and its attributes. That is, a conviction regarding just those life-phenomena which together determine the social question.[904]

Activism aimed at the conquering of culture and society is paired in the thought of both Kuyper and Qutb with a strong anti-intellectualism. Rejection of theoretical reflection and sharp criticism of the dogmatic isolation of conservatism are important common grounds between the two. Kuyper, like Mawdudi and Qutb in their own space, created a Calvinist message that was traditionalist but also flexible, praxis-oriented, and militant. He created a political theology designed to address modernity on its own terrain. He consequently saw Christian "Anabaptist isolationism" that refused to participate in progress as deepening the crisis of meaning and surrendering culture to "the forces of unbelief." What we find in Kuyper's late works *De Gemeene Gratie*, *Pro Rege* and *Lectures on Calvinism* is the reconfiguration of Calvinism as "a vanguard in the cultural realm," that was fashioned by the Calvinism of the sixteenth century but functions as a force of the present that is "setting the tone and tempo" of social and cultural life.[905]

As is the case of Qutb's concept of vanguard (*tali'ah*), Kuyper's perspective on authentic Christian action carried by God's people as dictated by the Scripture and for the sake of God's Sovereignty is the logical counterpart of his doctrine of separation. Only after systematic and consistent intellectual and moral purification is Christian (or Islamic) organized and militant involvement in life possible, embracing "state and society" as well as "art and scholarship."[906] This irresistibly recalls Qutb's political theology as the carrier of realism (*al-waqi'yah*), with Islam as a dynamic movement (*harakah*) challenging an equally complex and dynamic *Jahiliyah*.

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[904] Abraham Kuyper, *Calvanism and Class Struggle*, trans. Dirk Jellema (Grand Rapids, MI: Peit Hein Publishers, 1950), 18.
[905] Abraham Kuyper, "Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 175.
[906] Syste Ulbe Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper" in *Communication and Confrontation: A Philosophical Appraisal and Critique of Modern Society and Contemporary Thought* (Assen/Kampen: Royal Van Gorcum Ltd., 1972), 1. Zuidema's study is perhaps the best discussion of the complex relationship between the doctrine of the common grace and the concept of Calvinist action.

Like Qutb, who mistrusts the pious veneration of the past that ends up passively accepting the *Jahiliyah* of the present, Kuyper regards ruin gazing and nostalgia for the Golden Age of Calvinism as entirely counterproductive, for "the past does not return, all repristination is nonsensical [and] every attempt at reaction is condemned to fail inasmuch as it denies the claims of the present."[907]

Comparable with Donoso Cortés's perspective, Kuyper regards modernity as essentially a massification of the political in which ochlocracy (mob rule) is the practical outcome of democratic theory. Kuyper nevertheless admits, in the same manner as de Tocqueville, that universal suffrage, the modern press and the industrial revolution has made the triumph of democracy inevitable. Every strategy for re-Christianization of social space must begin with a lucid understanding of this reality, as Kuyper writes: "Be sure of this: you no longer have a choice between aristocratic privilege and democratic broadening. That time has long since passed. With or without your participation, you will inevitably see a development in a more democratic spirit."[908] Seen through a pragmatic and realistic lens, Calvinism is for Kuyper not a theoretical doctrine living by "the grace of beautiful ideas," but rather the only alternative to modernity, for it has "roots in existing reality" and possesses a deep understanding of political, economic, cultural and social praxis.[909]

Kuyper's pragmatic approach to political theology caused his theoretical work to be regarded as second-rank reflections not in any way equal to accomplished Christian theological thought.[910] Like Qutb, Mawdudi and Cortés, Kuyper was neither a dogmatic theologian nor an academic political theorist (though he was, of course, a master tactician, great organizer and prolific writer in multiple genres). Another reason for Kuyper's lack of popularity among the mainstream theologians of his generally optimistic times was that he declared modernity to consist of the ineluctable advance of nihilism, with "no real God*,* no real prayer*,* no real divine government*...*no real sin*,* no real ideal, no genuine history*,* no true criticism, no dogma that could

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[907] Kuyper, "Uniformity: The Course of Modern Life" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 38.

[908] Kuyper, "Marantha" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader,* 222.

[909] Kuyper, "Conservatism and Orthodoxy: False and True Preservation*,*" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 78.

[910] George A. Harinck judges that "as a theoretical thinker, Kuyper did not surpass his contemporaries… In the Netherlands of the 1930s and 1940s, Abraham Kuyper's theories were certainly not generally cherished as everlasting hallmarks of Christian thought" See "A Historian's Comment," 211. Despite two honorary doctorates, Kuyper was not elected a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences and his relations with the mainstream academic world were often streined to the point of open conflict.

withstand scrutiny, nor a real church."[911] This perspective also meets those of Sayyid Qutb and Donoso Cortés's in its diagnosis of the present as a systematic crisis of all values.

These parallels between Kuyper, Qutb, and the other figures treated in this thesis as well as the similar structure of their thought overall reveal the remarkable cross-cultural and cross-religious continuity of anti-modern political theology. Kuyper's theory, however, is more variegated and ambiguous. It involves more structural tensions and inner contradictions than Qutb's does. Kuyper's vacillates in places between rejection of modernity and admiration for sophisticated philosophical discourse, especially of Kant and Marx.[912] Sayyid Qutb's critique of modernity, in contrast, is consistently and radically uncompromising. It does not allow in any degree for accommodation of *Jahiliyah.* Despite these characteristics, one element in Kuyper's vision remains constant: God's Sovereignty as the *sine qua non* condition for the existence of Christian worldview and the center of the genuine Christian society and culture. Kuyper's neo-Calvinism is indeed a political theology of God's Sovereignty in action.

6.3 Qutb and Kuyper on God's Sovereignty

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"[913] This is without doubt the most frequently quoted text of Abraham Kuyper's decades-long writing career. It expresses his conviction that God's Sovereignty is the only desirable alternative to the two sovereignties of modernity: the "atheistic popular-sovereignty of the Encyclopedians, and the pantheistic state-sovereignty of German philosophers."[914] Peter Heslam observes that even if Kuyper did not use the term, his sociopolitical vision was designed as a "Third Way—an alternative to the ideologies of individualism, on the one hand, and to collectivism, on the other."[915] Though Kuyper develops his conception of sovereignty in the three seminal texts *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (1880), *Lectures on Calvinism* (1898) and *Pro rege: of Het koningschap van Christus* (1912), this subject along with the related

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[911] Abraham Kuyper, "Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader,* 118.

[912] Kuyper considers Marx as "a man of outstanding learning and scholarly insight…who stood up among economists in terms of knowledge and power of thought." Kuyper as quoted in Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, 99.

[913] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 461.

[914] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 90.

[915] Peter Heslam goes as far as considering Kuyper as "the prophet of a Third Way in politics." See Helsam, "Prophet of a Third Way." It is interesting to note that Margherita Picchi sees Qutb's socio-economic vision as an Islamist Third Way. See Picchi, "Islam as the Third Way: Sayyid Quṭb's Socio-Economic Thought and Nasserism."

one of common grace is the leitmotif of his entire critique of modernity.[916] He emphasizes on many occasions that a Neo-Calvinist critique of modernity would be edgeless and powerless against sophisticated liberalism and socialism without a strong definition of the master-concept of sovereignty. Qutb's own sovereignty (*Hakimiyah*) responds to the same challenges and, despite important differences, plays the same role as Kuyper's *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring.* Thus Qutb and Kuyper, in different contexts, formulated a systematic political theology founded on sovereignty that would challenge secular sovereignties.

Kuyper and Qutb also develop their theories of sovereignty as part of larger and more complex configurations. In *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring,* Kuyper describes Divine Sovereignty in a very direct fashion as a necessary corollary of belief in God. The very definition of Christian faith includes God's Sovereignty as a living principle of individual and collective Christian identity in this world. This is expressed forcefully, though not atypically, in the following passage:

> The original, absolute Sovereignty cannot rest in any creature but must coincide with God's Majesty. If you believe in Him as Planner and Creator, as Establisher and Determiner of all things, your soul must also proclaim the Triune God as the only and absolute Sovereign.[917]

Kuyper also makes sovereignty the first dogma of Calvinism, at the same level as the doctrines of election, universal grace, regeneration, and necessity of scriptural Revelation. Similarly for Sayyid Qutb, God's Sovereignty is always derived from or connected with *Tawhid,* the essential condition for understanding *Shari'ah,* and it is a prerequisite for faith (*Iman*).[918]

Perhaps the most noteworthy area of similarity between Qutb's and Kuyper's notions of sovereignty is their focus on a zero-sum game between God's Sovereignty and all other sovereignties developed by mankind. This antagonistic perspective, as we will see, leads Qutb and Kuyper to very different practical solutions. Nevertheless, the antithesis remains significant for both. Kuyper writes that the "perfect and absolute Sovereignty of the sinless Messiah at the same time contains the direct denial and challenge of all absolute Sovereignty on earth in sinful man."[919]

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[916] In this context, John Bolt claims that "Kuyper's entire social ontology, his tirades against pantheism and materialistic evolutionism, his defense of the family and the labor union, his distinction between the church as insititute and as organism—in short, all the passions to which he devoted his journalistic career—were shaped by sphere sovereignty" See John Bolt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Search for an Evangelical Public Theology" in *In Evangelicals in the Public Square*, eds. J. Budziszewski and David Weeks 141–61 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 144.

[917] Abraham Kuyper, *Sphere Sovereignty in Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader.* In this context, Van Til will also point out that "God's Sovereignty is the atmosphere in which the Calvinist lives, the milieu in which he acts as a cultural being. It means that religion is not of life a thing apart, but the end-all and be-all of man's life under the sun."

[918] See: Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty*, 29. Also: Shepard, "Islam as a 'System.'"

[919] Kuyper, "Sphere Soverignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 467.

Similarly, for Qutb, *Hakimiyah* represents "a challenge to all systems that assign sovereignty to human beings in any shape or form [and] a revolt against any human situation where sovereignty, or indeed Godhead, is given to human beings."[920]

Kuyper stresses that all *autonomous* man-made sovereignty is a priori lacking in legitimacy, for "authority over man cannot arise from men." "No man," he says, "has the right to rule over another."[921] Mindful of the danger of being seen to advocate anarchy and no doubt also conscious of the need for governance, Kuyper allows at the same time that humans may own a limited, delegated authority. He communicates this view in terms of the three fundamental theses of the Calvinist political faith. The first is the undisputed monopoly of God over legitimate sovereignty: "God only—and never any creature—possesses sovereign rights, in the destiny of the nations… He rules them by His ordinances."[922] The second thesis proposes that direct governance by God was interrupted by sin. Man-made authority is essentially an unfortunate consequence of the Fall, without which there would be no need for governance, since God would be sovereign directly over humankind in a pre-political state of innocence. Finally, the third thesis is that the only legitimate authority consequently available to mankind is second rank, derivative and limited. "Man," says Kuyper, "never possesses power over his fellow-man in any other way than by an authority which descends upon him from the majesty of God."[923] God's primordial Triune sovereignty will be thus expressed in delegated form as a threefold human sovereignty: the Sovereignty *in* the State, the Sovereignty *in* Society and the Sovereignty *in* the Church.

Kuyper's political theology derives important consequences from this initial thesis. For Kuyper and Qutb alike, God's Sovereignty applied to all spheres of existence is the sole source of and guarantee of human liberty. Without Divine Sovereignty, all man-made authority "necessarily and immediately becomes the right of the strongest."[924] As we saw in the second chapter, Qutb's *Hakimiyah* is also distinctly universalistic and emancipatory:

> Islam is a system given by God and it aims to establish the fundamental principle of God's sovereignty and people's servitude to Him alone. It gives practical implementation of this principle in the form of a human society where people are totally free from servitude to anyone other than God. Thus, people are governed

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[920] Qutb, Sayyid *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol. 7, 7.

[921] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 82. Kuyper explicitly renders visible the right of resistance against the abuses of all forms of man made authority: "nor can a group of men, by contract, from their own right, compel you to obey a fellow-man… in the sphere of the State I do not yield or bow down to anyone, who is man, as I am." See Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, 53.

[922] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 85.

[923] Ibid.

[924] Ibid, 82.

only by God's law, demonstrating His authority, or, in other words, His Godhead.[925]

In the same register, Kuyper emphasizes:

> When God says to me, "obey," then I humbly bow my head, without compromising in the least my personal dignity, as a man. For, in like proportion as you degrade yourself, by bowing low to a child of man, whose breath is in his nostrils; so, on the other hand do you raise yourself, if you submit to the authority of the Lord of earth.[926]

It should be said that Kuyper constantly stresses the profound universality of Calvinism even though it is one of many Protestant denominations, and not even the majority one in the Netherlands. It is on the basis of this view that he regards Calvinism as carrying a universal emancipatory force. Qutb's *Hakimiyah*, as we saw in the second chapter, also founds his ideas about emancipation and universalism. He expresses this in terms remarkably similar to Kuyper. For Qutb, the establishment of Islam as "a system given by God" that "aims to establish the fundamental principle of God's Sovereignty and people's servitude to Him alone" leads surely to "practical implementation …in the form of a human society where people are totally free from servitude to anyone other than God."[927]

Kuyper's and Qutbs emancipatory universalism is directly opposed to the main driving force of political modernity, the ideology of nationalism. For Kuyper, when properly conceptualized beyond a parochial, narrowly defined orthodoxy, the Calvinistic confession of God's Sovereignty "holds good for all the world, it is true for all nations and corrects all authority, which man exercises over man."[928] Kuyper insists that ecclesiastical nationalism is also foreign to the spirit of the true Calvinism. He regards the very concept of a national Church as "a Heathen, or at most, a Jewish conception." The Church of Christ is seen not as a national but ecumenical body which makes "the whole world its domain."[929] In an era in which the ideology of nationalism was the driving force of political modernity, Kuyper, like Qutb, goes against the powerful paradigm of nationalism to propose a religiously based universalistic model as the solution for the tribalism plaguing the modern world. This universalistic perspective on Calvinism as a global solution to the crisis of modernity directly challenges the emancipatory claims of not only nationalism but also both liberalism and socialism. Once again, we see how the political theologies of Kuyper and Qutb are close in their basic conception despite significant intellectual and cultural

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[925] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol.7, 19.
[926] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 82.
[927] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an,* vol.7, 19.
[928] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 85.
[929] Ibid, 65.

distance.

Another important consequence of the pre-eminence of God's Sovereignty is rejection of theocracy, a perilous temptation for anti-modern political theologies.[930] This theocentric, but not theocratic dimension is also stressed by Qutb, Mawdudi, and Cortés. Theocracy is viewed as focused on sovereignty only in theory; in practice, it allows man-made powers and authority to encroach on Divine Sovereignty. In Qutb's terms, since Islam does not accept priestly mediation between God and His people and rejects monopoly over interpretation and codification of the revelation, theocracy is associationism or *shirk*, the violation of monotheism that is the cardinal sin of Islam.[931] Just so, Kuyper emphasizes the dichotomy (which he believes has not been adequately recognized) between "religion for the sake of man" and "religion for the sake of God." Religion for the sake of man refers to religious experts who serve as intercessors for other believers, while religion for the sake of God "inexorably excludes every human mediatorship" and is realized in "the general priesthood of believers."[932] Calvinism does contain the germ of this idea since it proclaims equality within the Church and styles its leaders "Minister," in the sense of servants.[933] In his typical emotionally charged style, Kuyper condemns the human mediation that damages Divine Sovereignty and thus renders religion inauthentic:

> Only where all priestly intervention disappears, where God's sovereign election from all eternity binds the inward soul directly to God Himself, and where the ray of divine light enters straightway into the depth of our heart, only there does religion, in its most absolute sense, gain its ideal realization.[934]

Kuyper's abhorrence of theocracy is expressed even more forcefully in the platform of the Anti-Revolutionary Party called *Ons Program*. "We do not desire," *Ons Program* says, "that Reformed Churches receive the power to dictate to the civil authorities how they must apply the

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[930] Kuyper himself was accussed by his political adversaries of theocratic tendencies. Among scholars, D.T. Kuiper also associates Kuyper with theocracy. See D.T. Kuiper, "The Historical and Sociological Development of the ARP and CDA," in *Christian Political Options* (The Hague: AR-Partijstichting, 1979), 10–32.

[931] At this point, it is important to remember that Donoso Cortés, on the Catholic side, also forged an often-overlooked anti-theocratic argument when responding to the criticism against his *Ensayo*. See Ch. 4, 286.

[932] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 49. Kuyper is reiterating in a modern context one of the most important concepts of classical Reformation. See Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 202-3.

[933] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 61. Martin Luther is the Reformer who gave the concept of the priesthood of all believers its most clear formulation and obviously served as Kuyper's source of inspiration. "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) And therefore this 'sacrament' of ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church." See Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" in *Three Treaties* (Philadephia: Fortress Press, 1970), 248.

[934] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 49.

Word of God to the political arena." In fact, in a "pluralistic society (*gemengde gemeenschap*), not only do we not desire such a theocracy but rather we oppose it with all our might."[935] Another of Kuyper's concerns about theocracy is its tendency to engender "tyranny and national corruption (*volksbederf*)." Qutb warns of the same danger as he links monopoly over the sacred by a priestly class with *Taghut*. Last but not least, Kuyper argues that theocracy is essentially an anachronism relevant only to the territory of Israel in the time of the Old Testament. Only in that place and period did God *directly* rule over His chosen people. Thus any attempt to directly apply the Old Testament in the present context is at best utopian, and at worst, an actual obstacle to the re-Christianization of modern societies. For Kuyper, the Anabaptist and Quaker perspectives that programmatically aim at duplicating Biblical Israel as a complete code of Christian Law are essentially absurd (something with which Calvin himself concurred).[936] Qutb also regards attempts at repristination as counter-productive, on the grounds that the first Qur'anic generation is the paragon of excellence that cannot be reproduced in the present.

Nevertheless, both Kuyper and Qutb stress that God's direct sovereignty is realizable in the modern world. This insistence is properly understood as theo-centric rather than theocratic, since the Dutchman and Egyptian (along with Mawdudi and Cortés) consider that a system in which God's Sovereignty reigns supreme should not and in fact cannot be achieved through coercion, as Kuyper points out:

> Our foundational principle must not be based on an effort to re-impose Christendom my means of direct or indirect coercion. Rather, if Christianity is to regain its free and unfettered territory it must begin in faith, a faith that appeals to and thus emancipates the conscience of the nation and of individuals. Only this way can the Christian faith rule our social and civic life.[937]

Thus far we have demonstrated that Kupyer's political theology is founded, like that of Qutb,

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[935] Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1880), 46. In this context, Mark J. Larson convincingly argued that Abraham Kuyper's rejection of the theocratic temptation is in direct continuity with Jean Calvin's denial of any authority of the of the clergy in civil affairs. See Larson, *Kuyper Conservatism, and Church and State*, 10.

[936] It is noteworthy to observe here that despite this openly anti-theocratic position, Kuyper's political theology—along with Dooyeewerd's perspective—are one of the most important theoretical sources for the Dominion Theology of the Christian Reconstructionist movement. Created by Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) as a radical Calvinist theocratic political-theological movement, the Christian Reconstructionism openly argues for a full implementation of the Biblical Law in all spheres of society and for a re-construction of the United States as totalist theocracy. See, Rousas John Rushdoony's magnum opus *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (New York: Philipsburgh Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1973) and Gary North and Gary DeMar, *Christian Reconstruction: What It Is, What It Isn't* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991). It is interesting to note that Kuyper is not quoted or even mentioned in Gary North's work, which is widely considered a manifesto of contemporary Christian Recostructionism.

[937] Kuyper quoted in John Bolt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Search for an Evangelical Public Theology," in *Evangelicals in the Public Square,* 146.

on a universalistic conception of Divine Sovereignty that is envisioned as emancipatory, opposed to nationalism, and theocentric rather than theocratic. We will now proceed to discuss their very different practical instrumentalizations of the concept of God's Sovereignty.

The most basic and striking of these instrumentalizations is Kuyper's pragmatic care for political structures, in contrast to Qutb's sole focus on the community or *ummah*. Qutb argues for a completely Islamized society unified through God's Sovereignty and structured exclusively by *Shari'ah*. The Islamic state is for him more or less an epiphenomenon in relation to the real objective, which is reconstruction of a universal, authentic and fully Islamic *ummah*. In the Egyptian's view, once *Hakimiyah* pervades all levels of society, culture and politics, all forms of *Taghut*, which are born of human sovereignty, are erased along with all ideological expressions of *Jahiliyah*.[938] *Shari'ah* replaces all *Jahili* legal orders and dissemination of the message of Islam is unhindered in all spheres of existence. In this vision, specific political regimes are not very important. Qutb, as I have mentioned, is not an apologist for the Islamic Caliphate and does not provide a political theory of the Islamic state. His objective is to create or rather re-create *Nizam al-Islam*, a more capacious structure than a mere state. Put differently, Qutbian political theology aims to provide the theoretical and praxical infrastructure for a radically different alternative to the entirety of modernity and not a mere alternative to the modern state in the form of a reinvented Caliphate.

Kuyper's model of a society based on sovereignty is, in contrast, contrived to function within the modern, secular and democratic context of the Netherlands.[939] The seminal Kuyperian notion of "sphere sovereignty" (*Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*) is key to this scheme. Sphere sovereignty is a theologico-political construction aimed at guaranteeing a safe space for the Calvinist community within the secular state. Sphere sovereignty is at once "a defense of metaphysical

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[938] "It does not wish to establish a kingdom for any one of God's servants, but to establish God's own kingdom. Hence it has to move forward throughout the earth in order to liberate the whole of mankind, without discrimination between those who are within the land of Islam and those who are outside it. The whole earth is populated by human beings, who are being subjected to different types of tyrannical authority wielded by fellow human beings." Qutb, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'an*, vol. 8, surah 9, 25.

[939] Peter Heslam observes that there are a series of remarkable similarities between Kuyper's concept of sphere sovereignty and the perspective on sovereignty theorized by the German historian and legal theorist Otto von Gierke (1841–1921) in his magnum opus titled *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* (The German law of Associations), published between 1868 and 1913. For Gierke as well the distinction between Staat and Gesselschaft is very clear and the later is composed by a plurality of autonomous spheres or associations: schools, churches and guilds. The state itself is just another sphere and its only superiority resides in its conflict mediation function. Heslam concludes his analysis by arguing that "the wealth of similarities does ensure that the influence on Kuyper's thought of the liberal and pluralist strand in German organicism is beyond reasonable doubt." See Heslam, "Prophet of a Third Way," 18.

pluralism in the social realm" and "a rejection of all forms uniformitarianism and monism."[940] In Kuyper's minimalist view, a Christian country and society outside the Calvinist "sphere" can be regarded as Christian even if personal faith is in steep decline. The adjective 'Christian' does not describe the spiritual state of the inhabitants of such country, but only witnesses to the fact that public opinion, the overall mind-set, ruling ideas, moral norms and laws and customs clearly betoken the influence of the Christian faith.[941] This is profoundly different from Qutb's maximalist vision in which all existing Muslim societies not ruled exclusively by God's Sovereignty are illegitimate. According to Qutb, it is "not sufficient for people to become Muslims unless they acknowledge that all sovereignty belongs to God alone," reject "all claims that sovereignty belongs to anyone else," and have "no loyalty whatsoever to *Jahiliyah* societies and their leadership." [942]

In Kuyper's pragmatic account of earthly reality, God's Sovereignty functions in two spheres: "the mechanical sphere of State-authority and the organic sphere of the authority of the Social circles." What is paramount is that Kuyper's political theology does not fully separate religion from politics. He does, however, erect a *cordon sanitaire* between the state and all other spheres, including religion. All these are completely autonomous since they "have nothing above themselves but God."[943] No government, whatever its political theory or ideology, can impose legislation or coerce individuals or institutions. Domestic, social, artistic, scientific, and ecclesiastical spheres are independent from political power by default; and "God rules" [944] also over the spheres of individual conscience and faith

In this theological construction, the state is "the sphere of spheres," which "encloses our human life in an encompassing whole." [945] Crucially, the sovereignty of the state is is derived from Divine Sovereignty, for God "exercises dominion in the sphere of the State itself, through his chosen *magistrates*." In other words, state sovereignty is limited and derivative, existing only for the sake of God. It is thus neither secular nor profane, for it is an entity placed under "the majesty

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[940] Bolt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Search for an Evangelical Public Theology," in *Evangelicals in the Public Square,* 144. George Harinck notes that Kuyper's cotemporaries never really scrutinized the concept of sphere sovereignty. In the 1930s, the critic basically rejected it as philosophically unsound and only through Dooyeweerd's essential reconfiguration of sphere sovereignty as a systematic philosophical theory this concept really permeated the academic circles. See Harinck, "A Historian's Comment," 16.
[941] Kuyper, "Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 199.
[942] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol.7, 89.
[943] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 91.
[944] Ibid, 96.
[945] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 472.

of the Lord" through the "conscience of the persons invested with authority."[946]

State sovereignty has a particular place and function. This can be seen in the fact of it being posterior to the sovereignty of the other spheres, which "existed of old" even before the "Royal Child of Bethlehem" covered them "with his shield" as "an essential part of the order of creation and plan of human life."[947]State sovereignty, however, inevitably tends toward hegemony and becoming an obstacle to individual and social freedom and autonomy at the levels of both individuals and associations. The French Revolution is the paradigmatic example of a radical displacement of God's Sovereignty. This traumatic event replaced a legitimate form of derived sovereignty with the absolute popular sovereignty.

> Revolution took the crowned head of the Sovereign and placed the crown upon a sovereign people. A terrifying event, born of thirst for freedom but also of hatred for the Messiah, and which only served to increase the harassment of freedom! For the Sovereign of that one balloting day, through the medium of that ballot box, involuntarily placed himself on the next day under absolute guardianship.[948]

Kuyper's critique also reflects the traditional distrust by Reformed thinkers of state benevolence. In this regard, the German Calvinist jurist and political philosopher Johannes Althusius (d.1638) is the most obvious forerunner of Kuyper in his conceptualization of sphere sovereignty.[949] Althusius's and Kuyper's visions of society are somewhat similar, as both envision a diverse society composed of inter-connected spheres. James W. Skillen and Stanley W. Carlson-Thies notice that Althusius rejected the dominant medieval interpretations of sovereignty not as a contractual individualist, but rather based on a political theory of "covenantal pluralism."[950]The same covenantal pluralism structures Kuyper's sphere sovereignty. The notion of covenantal pluralism is, however, quite different from what may be characterised in Qutb's case as covenantal totalism. Qutb's *Hakimiyah* remains complete and undivided over a unified and universal *ummah*, with no federalism possible.

For Kuyper, the relationship of the ecclesiastical sphere with the state is unique. It is always entirely independent of the state, with the Church possessing its own organization, hierarchy and

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[946] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism,* 104.

[947] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 469.

[948] Ibid, 471.

[949] James Bratt also notices that Kuyper and Althusius are so close in their visions that the conspicuous absence of any quotes from Althusius in Kuyper's work is remarkable. See James Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper's Calvinism," in *John Calvin Rediscovered: The Impact of His Social and Economic Thought,* eds., Edward Dommen and James D. Bratt (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 86.

[950] James W. Skillen and Stanley W. Carlson, *"*Religion and Political Development in Nineteenth-Century Holland," *Thies Publius* 12, no. 3 (Summer, 1982): 20.

confession of the truth. The Church is ruled by the same sovereign as all of creation: "in Christ…the Church has her own King."[951] Kuyper clearly rejects the Constantinian sacralism[952] that plagued both Catholic and Orthodox Christianity by allowing the state to legislate in the sphere of religion. He rather theorizes state and Church as two separate but complementary spheres, existing "side by side" by "mutually limiting each other"[953] as each exercises its delegated authority in its own sphere.

At this point, it will be useful to compare Kuyper's conception of the relationship between state and Church with Luther's and Calvin's doctrines of the two kingdoms. Martin Luther firstly described this re-configuration of the basic Augustinian antithesis in his 1521 work *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*. Here Luther divides the humanity into two classes, the first belonging to the Kingdom of God, which is ruled by Scripture, and the second to the kingdom of the world, which is ruled by law. Based on this basic ontological dichotomy, God ordained two governments: "the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that . . . they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace."[954] The two kingdoms are separate and opposed: "Christ's government does not extend over all men" and "Christians are always a minority in the midst of non-Christians."[955] In his 1532 *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount,* Luther is even more emphatic: "We must not drag [Christ's] words into the law books

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[951] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 106.

[952] For a theological critique of the Constantinian sacralism and the Constantinian shift, see John Howard Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Yoder, firstly developed the concept of the Constantinian shift, argues that by fusing the Church, The State and the World, Constantine's conversion dramatically changed the history of Christianity, opening the way to the deification of the state and of a political instrumentalization of the Christian faith: "What the churches accepted in the Constantinian shift is what Jesus had rejected, seizing godlikeness, moving in hoc signo from Golgotha to the battlefield." See Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources," 145. See also Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976).

[953] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*, 470. It is very significant that Kuyper's deep seated belief that the state does not have the right to legislate on the religious matters lead him to militate for the revision of rejection of the thirty-sixth article of the Belgic confession. Kuyper wanted to eliminate the last part of following provision: "Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted." Eventually, the text was eliminated in the 1958 revision of the Confession.

[954] Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," in *Luther's Works,* vol. 45 of *Christian in Soceity*, trans. J. Schindel and W. Brandt, 81-129 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962).

[955] Luther, "Temporal Authority," in *Luther's Works,* 89.

or into the secular government... With the secular area [Christ] has nothing to do."[956]

Calvin also posited a strict separation between the spiritual and temporal as separate realms ruled by different institutions and having different though complementary functions. The spiritual kingdom is the salvific space of redemption ruled by Jesus Christ via his Gospel and his Church, while the temporal kingdom is concerned with the present affairs of the people and it is ruled by the civil authorities, via the natural and civil and the natural law.[957] Calvin's perspective on the Two Kingdoms has a distinctive eschatological dimension that involves a certain degree of ambiguity when compared with the Lutheran position. Without extensively elaborating on this topic, we should notice that Calvin also insisted on strict separation between the spiritual and temporal as separate realms, ruled by different institutions and having different yet complementary functions. In this context, David van Drunen convincingly argues that the Two Kingdom dichotomy is a "remarkable constant" of Calvin's theology and that it reveals Luther's continuing influence on the Reformation. Calvin's heirs, however, attempted—in various forms and formulas—to fuse together the Two Kingdoms into a Kingdom of Christ that "penetrates every legitimate institution," a difference that van Drunen finds "striking"[958] enough that he regards the Neo-Calvinists, including Kuyper, "ambiguously placed" in relation to the Reformed notion of two kingdoms. Timothy Palmer, on the other hand, argues that Kuyper's emphasis on God's Sovereignty makes him an opponent of any distinction between God's realm and the rest of His creation.[959] In Palmer's reading, Kuyper is reluctant to accept the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms for fear of allowing alienation from Jesus Christ and disruption of the relationship between the Church and believers. And indeed, Kuyper did argue that the Kingdom of God embraces all things

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[956] Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Mount*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 21, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Leman (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 90.

[957] "Let us first consider that there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal' jurisdiction (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life—not only with food and clothing but with laying down laws whereby a man may live his life among other men holily, honorably, and temperately. For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outward behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other, the political kingdom. Now these two, as we have divided them, must always be examined separately; and while one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority." See John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 847.

[958] VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 4.

[959] "All of life falls under the kingship of Christ. There is no neutral ground for him" See Timothy P. Palmer, "Two-Kingdom Doctrine: A Comparative Study of Martin Luther and Abraham Kuyper," *Pro Rege* 37, no. 3 (2009): 13-25.

visible and invisible, including people, land and nature, such that "His kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, of all spheres, of all creatures."[960]

In the final analysis, Kuyper's relation to the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms is uncertain. He both reluctantly accepts and obliquely rejects it in different places in his voluminous body of work. The point I ultimately want to make is that Kuyper's concept of sphere-sovereignty cannot be analyzed through dogmatic theology. It does not entirely fit into the Reformed theological and hermeneutical tradition and, though Kuyper claims that its origins lie "in the heart of the Scriptures,"[961] the citation of scriptural warrants is thin and the concept of a sphere unclear overall. The same can be said about Qutb's *Hakimiyah*. Insisting that the ideas of either thinker be theologically correct is worse than useless, as it encourages us to dismiss their work as deformed and porous. It is by looking at Kuyper and Qutb as political theologians and shifting our perspective to ideology that we are able to think outside of the categories of orthodoxy and heterodoxy and appreciate the remarkable persuasive power of sphere sovereignty and *Hakimiyah*.

6.4 Kuyper's Critique of Liberalism

Kuyper and Qutb each represent the anti-speculative strand in political theology. It is this perspective that infuses their critiques of liberalism. According to Kuyper, intellectualism is a symptom of the apotheosis of the individual subject who has an atomistic view of culture, society and politics. By denying the organic character of life, the radical individualism of liberalism reveals its artificiality.

Kuyper further argues that liberalism "made an incomprehensible error when in ill-considered lopsidedness, took refuge in intellectualism."[962] Even if intellectualism is not malign in its own sphere, it becomes self-defeating when it seeks hegemony.[963] Intellectualism, which is restricted to a narrow circle of "highly educated gentlemen," is also profoundly elitist and thus

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[960] Abraham Kuyper, *E Voto Dordraceno. Toelichting op den Heidelbergschen Catechismus* (Kampen: Kok, 1895, 4: 465-66) quoted in Timothy P. Palmer, "Two-Kingdom Doctrine," 25. Palmer concludes: "For Kuyper, then, Christ is the redeemer of all of life, contrary to the two-kingdom doctrine and VanDrunen's perception of this" (25).

[961] See Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader,* 480-481. Kuyper will also add "Hebron's tribal law for David's coronation; Elijah's resistance to Ahab's tyranny; the refusal of the disciples to yield to Jerusalem's police regulations; Lord's maxim concerning what is God's and what is Caesar's and Calvin's "magistratus inferiores" as the main scriptural and dogmatic foundations of his conceptualization of Sphere Sovereignty."

[962] Kuyper, "Common Grace" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 261.

[963] As Kuyper puts it, "When it claims the power that will control human life." See: "Common Grace" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 261.

incapable of mobilizing or even comprehending the desires and aspirations of the masses. Sphere sovereignty, on the other hand, avoids the trap of intellectualism and proceeds directly to a praxis-oriented, emancipatory political theology:

> You may also expect sphere sovereignty to be the signature of our academic work. This too I take up from the practical side: it leads not to abstract, dry scholasticism but to firmness of principle, depth of insight, clarity of judgment-in a word, to sanctified intellectual power, a power to resist whatever superior force would limit freedom in and of our life.[964]

Qutb also considers *Hakimiyah* to be the mirror image of Western speculative political theory:

> The declaration that all sovereignty belongs to God alone, as does Lordship over the universe, is not a theoretical, philosophical and passive proclamation. It is a positive, practical and dynamic message, which seeks to bring about the implementation of God's law in human life, freeing people from servitude to anyone other than God alone.[965]

The similarities here between the thought of Kuyper and Qutb are not incidental or superficial. Kuyper, like Donoso Cortés before him, truly understood how modernity displaces power from the aristocracy to the masses, and that abstract theories and scholastic arguments do not, consequently, have a real political impact. Similar to Qutb, Kuyper characterizes liberalism as basically unnatural, as divorced from "the impulses of the instinctive life" through which the masses supposedly understand existence.[966] More importantly, liberalism produces a partial, class–driven pseudo-equality. In regard to the Netherlands of the nineteenth century, liberal elitism is manifested in legislation that gives voting rights only to citizens with a certain economic status. Moreover, according to Kuyper, Dutch liberals rule the Netherlands through the Second Chamber of the Parliament, which represents only the narrow interests of the bourgeoisie.[967]

Apart from its epistemological limitations, liberalism in Kuyper's perspective is a cause of the social crisis that followed the French Revolution. "Liberalism is anti-social, and the social need which now disturbs Europe is the evil fruit of the individualism which was enthroned with the French Revolution."[968] Opposed as it is to the natural, organic character of society that reflects God's order, liberalism, despite its focus on popular sovereignty, ends up legitimating an omnipotent state. Because liberalism "considers the people as ever unruly," it "extends the state

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[964] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 472.

[965] Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, vol.7, 8.

[966] Kuyper, "Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 266. It is noteworthy to mention that in this regard, Kuyper is heavily influenced by Gustave LeBon's classic work: *Psychologie des Foules,* published in 1896.

[967] Abraham Kuyper, "Manual Labor," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centenial Reader*. It is important to remember that Kuyper's ARP actively militated for universal suffrage. In *Ons Program,* Kuyper usese the term "*liberalistische coterie*" (liberal coterie) in several occasions in order to fully illustrate the sectarian, elitist dimension of Liberalism and it "unjust electoral system" See Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 136.

[968] Kuyper, "Social Question," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 84.

power."[969] Kuyper here reiterates a commonplace of the anti-modern political theology examined in this study, namely that the liberal formula for popular sovereignty is structurally weak and inevitably degenerates into purely opressive state sovereigty.[970] Though the individual is, in theory, at the centre of the liberal vision of society and politics, liberalism inevitably deprives individuals of genuine political power and makes them, effectively, worshippers of the state.

The only way to confront sacralization of the state and secularization of religion is to recognize all forms of man made sovereignty for what they are: feeble reflections of Divine Sovereignty and products of the human inability to comprehend and accept the true order of existence. All the political theologians analyzed in this study and especially Kuyper, Cortés and Qutb would agree with Carl Schmitt's famous description of the relationship between the political and the theological:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure.[971]

At this point, three additional observations must be made about Kuyper's perceptions of liberalism. First, as many of his critics have stressed, Kuyper (like Cortés from a Catholic perspective) deliberately reads liberalism in a very one-dimensional fashion.[972] He consistently conflates various schools of thought in order to set up a monolithic concept that is an easier target for his ideological critique. As ever, academic-style accuracy is of little importance for praxis-oriented anti-modern political theology. Kuyper's aim is not produce an analysis to be published in a scholarly journal. The objectives are always apologetics, polemics, and mobilization.

Secondly, unlike Qutb and Cortés, Kuyper takes liberalism very seriously. This difference in perspective can be in partly explained by the specific context of the nineteenth century

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[969] Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 137.

[970] We had seen that Donoso Cortés and Sayyid Qutb share the same vision on liberalism as the most conceptually porous ideological product of the political modernity, one that has very poor chances of success against socialism.

[971] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36. It has to be notice here that Erik Peterson's influential essay, *Monotheismus als politisches Problem,* published in 1935, represents the most powerful critique of both Schmitt and the entire concept of political theology. Peterson claims that there is an intrinsic relation between monotheism and totalitarianism and that in essence a genuinely benign Christian political theology is a contradiction in terms. See, Erik Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935). For a discussion of the epoch making dispute between Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson in the context of the social Model of the Trinity, see Paul Fletcher, *Disciplining the Divine: Toward an (Im)political Theology* (Burlington: Ashgate Publications Co., 2009).

[972] Qutb and Mawdudi also operated the same ultrasimplification of liberalism for both rhetorical and ideological purposes.

Netherlands, where liberalism was the dominating political ideology and socialism was yet to have obtained any substantial ground. At the moment of its creation, the Anti-Revolutionary Party was the first modern political movement able to challenge the virtual monopoly of the liberals over the Dutch political scene. Thus, a perspective that focuses both on the structural weaknesses and the inner force of liberalism was an ideological imperative for Kuyper. Qutb, on the other hand, lived in a time in which the Egyptian liberal experiment colapsed under the combined assault of nationalism and socialism. Moreover, Egypt after the 1952 Revolution was exposed to Soviet influence, despite Nasser's focus on pan-Arabism and his repression of the Egyptian Marxists and communists. In this context, Qutb's insistence that communism represents the main ideological force of modernity and his perspective on liberalism as structurally weak are explained by the difference in historical and geo-political contexts.

Thirdly, Kuyper delivered his critique of liberalism from within the democratic political tradition. Despite his ambiguity toward democracy, he defined himself and his vision as an intrinsic part of Christian democracy: "Christian Democrat, that is the title of honor for every true Calvinist… I have always been, and hope to die as, a Christian Democrat."[973] Kuyper was acutely aware of living in a "Christian country of mixed population" (*een Christenland van gemengde bevolking*) in which conservatives, liberals, Roman Catholics, socialists, positivists and atheists coexisted and competed in one social, cultural and political space.[974] The diversity of Dutch society in Kuyper's time makes a democratic system based on cooperation and dialogue the only pragmatic option. Moreover, Kuyper consistently argues that Calvinism and not secular modern ideologies is the source and ultimate warrant of social diversity and political freedom.

Qutb is quite different from Kuyper also on this third element of his approach to liberalism. His description of *Nizam al-Islam* as the paragon of religious diversity barely disguises a monoglossic perspective in which there can be no cooperation whatsoever with *Jahiliyah*. If Kuyper's anti-modern political theology was ultimately forced by the Dutch context to be relational and dialogical, Qutbian political theology remained monological and totalist to the very end. The difference, however, is not absolute, for Kuyper's relationship with the concept of democracy was a complicated one. Although Anti-Revolutionary Neo-Calvinism integrated the

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[973] Kuyper quoted in Dirk Jellema, "Christian Democrat." James Bratt also emphasizes the essential Chrisitian Democratic vocation of Abraham Kuyper, claiming "Kuyper started from, rather than [came] to, a pluralist posture. He was more forthrightly and consistently democratic." See Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 77.
[974] Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 411.

concept of democracy into their political lexicon in the late 1880s, the strong connection between the French Revolution, political liberalism and the term "democracy" was only severed after the World World II,[975] with Hendrikus Colijn (1869–1944)—Kuyper's successor as the leader of ARP and prime minister of the Netherlands—declaring as late as 1920 that "the tendency of revolutionary democracy to destroy all authority in all spheres of life, is in essence the denial of God's authority."[976] During Kuyper's own early career, he had "the reputation of a dangerous populist rather than democratic statesmen,"[977] and his political mentor Groen van Prinsterer always associated democracy with the godlessness of the French Revolution.

Kuyper's perspective on democracy is comparable to that of Qutb from one point of view. Neo-Calvinism in general and Kuyper in particular consider democracy a mere electoral instrument rather than ethos-carrying system of values. What is, in any case, finally important for both political theologians is the kind of authority democracy installs, as Kuyper makes clear:

> Authority of one creature over another arises, first of all, from the fact that God confers it, not to abandon it himself, but to allow it to be used for his honor. He is sovereign, and he confers his authority upon whom he wills, at one time to kings and princes, at another to nobles and patricians, and sometimes to the whole nation at once. American democracy is as useful an instrument for the manifestation of his sovereign glory as Russian despotism. The question is not whether the people rule, or a king, but whether both, when they rule, do it by virtue of Him.[978]

In this regard, Clifford B. Anderson argues that Kuyper was essentially forced by the reality of the democratic heterogeneity of Dutch society to accept the liberal political system, while remaining in reality only partially and provisionally committed.[979] I essentially agree with this analysis, but one should also keep in mind that Kuyper was eventually intrumental in creating a very successful Christian Democratic movement founded on militant neo-Calvinism.[980] In this wise, Kuyper is perhaps closer to Mawdudi than to Qutb, for the Egyptian was neither a builder of

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[975] George Harink, "Neo-Calvinism and Democracy: An Overview from the Mid-Nineteenth Century untill the Second World War" in *The Kuyper Center Review* ed. John Bowlin, vol. 4 of *Calvinism and Democracy* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

[976] Quoted in Harinck, *Neo-Calvinism and Democracy*, 15.

[977] Clifford B. Anderson, "Liberalism vs. Democracy: Abraham Kuyper and Carl Schmitt as Critics of Democracy," in *The Kuyper Center Review*, ed. John Bowlin, vol. 4 of *Calvinism and Democracy* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 56.

[978] Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of Our Constitutional liberties," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52, no. 207 (1895): 661.

[979] Anderson, "Liberalism vs. Democracy," 56.

[980] As early as 1873, Kuyper openly accepted Democracy as inevitable: "the future of our church is *for* democracy…I accept this not as a necessary evil, but as willed by God and in agreement with the nature of Christendom." See Abraham, Kuyper, *Confidentie: Schrijven aan den weled. Heer J. H. van der Linden* (Amsterdam: Höveker, 1873), 77.

political movements nor a constructive ideologue, and his political theology bears virtually no trace of any accomodating or synthetic vocation.

6.5 Kupyer's Critique of Socialism

A great strength of Kuyper's Christian Democratic political theology was its ability to transform traditionally elitist and aristocratic anti-revolutionary discourse into a persuasive critique of both the ultra-individualism of capitalism as justified by liberalism and the collectivism of socialism. In order to accomplish this, he focuses his discourse on social justice as a specifically Calvinist concept and forges his critique of socialism as a defense of workers' rights. [981]

Kuyper's speech: "Calvinism and the Class Struggle" (1891) summarizes the main elements of his critique of socialism.[982] His starting point involves a reiteration of Groen van Prinsterer's position that locates the conceptual core of socialism in the ethos of the French revolution. According to this account, the corruption of the political elites and oppression of the lower classes conferred a quasi-legitimacy on socialist critique. Thus socialism is a particularly dangerous combination of "truth mingled with error."[983] Kuyper's leitmotif is simply that all ideological configurations produced by modernity, regardless of their epiphenomenal differences, actually share the same origins. They are "a single spiritual family bred from the same stock."[984] On this subject, Kuyper's perspective and that of Qutb are congruent. As we have seen, Qutb also argues that liberalism and communism are, in the end, expressions of the same godless *Jahiliyah*, which can only be resisted by a comprehensive and totalist Islamic model.

Another significant point of convergence between Kuyper, Donoso Cortés and Sayyid Qutb is the view of socialism as a quasi-religion, parasitic upon the monotheism of Christianity or Islam and actively attempting to appropriate their concepts and values. Thus Kuyper writes that:

> We have thus been placed in the rear guard. And that not only through the leaders given us by God, but as strongly by the Socialists themselves, who constantly appeal to Christ in support of their Utopias; who

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[981] See Bratt, *Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat,* 215.

[982] Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Piet Hein Publishers, 1950).

[983] Groen van Prinsterer quoted in Abraham, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle,* 15. It is interesting to note that Prinsterer and Kuyper share the same perspective with Donoso Cortés by presenting Christianity as the only force that can defeat the ideological offspring of the French Revolution. Prinsterer stressed that: "at the bottom the Revolution is the world-historical *war of religion* (Gen. 3:15), the battle against the living God." Groen van Prinsterer, *Unbelief and Revolution*, 32. Kuyper meets Donoso Cortés when he presents the French Revolution, despite its "deeply sinful character that separated nature from history, and substituted the will of the individual for the will of the Creator of nations" was in effect God's punishment for the individuals in positions of power who had misused the authority and power entrusted to them." See Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle,* 22.

[984] Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle*, 24.

continually hold before us serious mottoes from the Holy Word; indeed, they have so strongly felt the bond between the Socialist need and the Christian religion that they have not hesitated to present Christ Himself as the great prophet of Socialism.[985]

Recall that an important objective of Qutb's critique of modernity was the dismantling the Arab socialist political ideology created mainly after 1952 that presented the Prophet Muhammad as the first socialist in history. Kuyper also rejects any association between Jesus and socialism, indignantly declaring that "there never was found in our Savior the cruelty of the Socialist who, for a bettering of the lot in this short span of time of our temporal existence, wildly and recklessly would cut off every prospect of a glory that shall be eternal."[986]

Jesus may not have been a socialist, but he was indeed on the side of the poor. Through Jesus's message opposing material gain and preaching charity as well as piety, Christianity was endowed with a form of solidarity and metaphysically anchored ideal of social justice that could never (in Kuyper's view) be reduced to the narrow materialism and atomism proclaimed by the French Revolution. Kuyper rails against the French Revolution as a force that "destroyed that organic tissue, broke these social bonds, and finally, in its work of atomistic trifling, had nothing left but the monotonous self-seeking individual, asserting his own self-sufficiency."[987] According to the Dutch political theologian, the Revolution betrayed the ideals of equality and fraternity by keeping the French farmers and workers who were the backbone of the revolutionary army in the same subordinate position as the *Ancien Régime* did, so that the "equality of which men had dreamed turned out to be even more shocking inequality; and instead of the promised 'fraternity,' they received a revised version of the fable of the wolf and the lamb."[988]

Kuyper, Qutb and Donoso Cortés all insist that the egalitarianism professed by socialism is counterfeit. This theme is repeated in their different religious and historical contexts. Socialist egalitarianism is a bastardized version of the genuine equality that stands at the center of revealed monotheism. Socialist egalitarianism is rhetorical camouflage for oppression and inequality. In chapter four of this dissertation, we demonstrated how Qutb and Mawdudi captured the ideographs of equality and social justice to be used in their critiques of socialism and capitalism. Donoso Cortés and especially Kuyper do the same.

Kuyper begins by noting the perenniality of the social problem in human history and

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[985] Ibid, 20.
[986] Ibid, 26.
[987] Ibid, 32.
[988] Ibid, 36.

asserting that Christianity must therefore rediscover its social dimensions. He then proceeds, in terms strongly reminiscent of Cortés's and Qutb's dark diatribes, to characterize post-revolutionary modern societies as profoundly corrupted by extreme individualism and institutionalized greed.[989] Finally, he asserts that Christianity should take control of the concepts used in social discourse in order to salvage both society and politics:

> The beautiful word "social" should not be considered the private preserve of Social Democracy. Pre-eminently entitled to the term is Christianity. The beautiful picture which the holy apostle Paul gives us of the social character of the church (I Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 4:16) is—making the necessary allowances—applicable also to our human society. Rightly viewed, it must even be professed that in the church of Christ the original organism of humanity, now purified, lives again.[990]

Consequently, "woven together with the social question…and deeply moved by a holy pity," Calvinism must respond to "the crying need"[991] of the proletariat and peasants who are oppressed, forgotten and disenfranchised. A coherent, pragmatic and scripturally sound Calvinist critique of socialism is in Kuyper's perspective the only solution to "the cancer which is destroying the dynamic of our society in such disturbing ways; for indeed, the material need is terrifying and the oppression is great."[992]

Without the Christian ethos of compassion, equality and solidarity, the polarization of society between between "possession and non-possession," "salary giver and wage earner" and "rich and poor"[993] will become endemic and destroy the entire social order. All that will happen in the promised earthly classless paradise of socialism is that freedom and diversity will vanish and all spheres will be absorbed into the Leviathan of a deified state. For Qutb as well as for Kuyper, socialism is both the triumphant conqueror of modernity and the expression cause of its absolute demise. In Kuyper's terms: every phase of our social history "grows its own evil and evil can be exorcized only through piety and charity" to which it should be added solidarity and action.[994]

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[989] "Obviously, if thereis no change, it will become increasingly less a heavenand increasingly more a hell on earth. Our society islosing touch with Christ; it lies bowed down in the dust before Mammon, and from the relentless goad of the most-brutal egoism the very foundations of the earth stagger, as the Psalmist would complain (Ps. 82:5, 11:3). Every tie-beam and anchor of the social structure is disturbed; disorganization brings demoralization; and inthe increasing wantonness of some contrasted with the steadily growing want of others, one detects something of the decomposition of a corpse rather than of the fresh bloom and muscular strength of sound health." Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle,* 41.

[990] Ibid, 42. Qutb's theory of *Zakat* as the conceptual center of the Islamic doctrine of Social Justice—which is presented as a priori superior to any non-Islamic ideologies and economic doctrines—is constructed in similar terms. See chapter 4 of this work.

[991] Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle,* 48.

[992] Ibid, 49.

[993] Kuyper, *Antirevolutionaire staatkunde*, 497.

[994] Ibid, 620.

In sum, for both Kuyper and Qutb, socialism—notwithstanding its significant philosophical attraction and textual charisma[995]—is narrowly materialist. This leaves it with a weak metaphysics and condemns it to be the carrier of a partial, derivative universality that can never rival the authenticity of the Christian or Islamic worldview. In Kuyper's perspective, liberalism and socialism were able to triumph only due to the degeneration and deformation of orthodox Calvinism and with the complicity of the official hierarchy of the National Church. It will be recalled from the third chapter that Qutb also attacked both the Westernized intelligentsia and narrow-minded *ulema* of his day as being essentially the fifth column of *Jahiliyah*.

Kuyper is at the same time acutely aware of the danger of the Neo-Calvinist focus on the social question and its defense of the "common people" against the aristocratic elitism of liberalism being misinterpreted. The Anti-Revolutionary Party, he cautioned, must not permit itself to be "dragged along by State-Socialism" even though "we stand directly opposed to the individualism of the Liberal party."[996] Despite a closeness of Neo-Calvinism to the Left generated by their common opposition to liberalism and the pseudo-Christian perspectives of Fourier and St. Simon, the two were, in Kuyper's view, worlds apart: "If our demands sound like those of the most active radicalism, they bloom on roots altogether different from theirs [for] we expect everything from faith, they expect nothing."[997] As in Qutb's absolute distinction between Islam and *Jahiliyah*, all ideological configurations of modernity are incommensurable with the criterion of faith. Expressed in a systematic, pragmatic and comprehensive way, such faith is ultimately incommensurable with all modern ideologies. The metaphysical and the political are finally whole again only within a comprehensive political theology under the banner of God's Sovereignty.

Our argument in this study has been that, if a more flexible but controlled comparative framework of analysis is employed, it can bring together in a *Familienähnlichkeit* four disappointed children of modernity: a Spanish aristocrat who loved the poor, a Dutch Calvinist minister turned politician, a Pakistani journalist who created the first modern Islamist political party, and an Egyptian teacher who became the first martyr of radical Islamism. In the end, their

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[995] Kuyper, in contrast to Qutb, actually read Karl Marx and Carl Bernstein along with Hegel and Kant and appreciated the author of Das Kapital as "a man of outstanding learning and high scholarly sense," considers the Marxist critique of the Hegelian philosophy of law as "masterful" and sees *Das Kapital* as "primarily a scholarly study." Kuyper, *Calvinism and the Class Struggle,* 42. Kuyper was as well a strong adversary of Hegelianism and neo-Hegelianism in which he saw the philosophical premises for the deification of State.

[996] Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 112.

[997] Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of Our Constitutional liberties," *The Bibliotheca Sacra*, 52, no. 207 (July, 1895), 675.

radical critiques function as the essential significant Other that reflects back our conceptualizations of modernity and forces us to continually refine and adjust our understanding of the strong connection between the theological and the political.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Sayyid Qutb as a Political Theologian: A View from the Other Side

7.1 Re-Framing Political Theology

This study has faced two challenges. The first is one that plagues all studies of radical Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism, and those on Sayyid Qutb in particular. In the last fifty years, the field has been subjected to a puzzling array of analytical and methodological perspectives crossing the domains of the various social sciences. The challenge is to identify a reasonably fresh perspective that can yield a clear heuristic perspective. In this regard, we believe that the explanatory power of approaches to Sayyid Qutb drawing on political science and Islamic studies and portraying him as the chief theoretician of Sunni radical Islamism have basically exhausted their potential. When Qutb's critique of modernity is analyzed from the perspective of political theory, his work appears to lack documentation, analytical clarity, and even conceptual depth, leading us to dismiss him as unsophisticated and idiosyncratic. This is especially so since his thought runs counter to the traditional understanding of the political as the domain of instrumental rationality. Contaminated, as it were, by metaphysics and challenging the hegemony of reason over politics, Qutb's vision can only serve as a radical Other mirroring Western political theory. And when the criteria of classical Islamic studies and Islamic exegesis are applied, Qutb's work comes across again as un-scholarly, theologically incorrect, and conceptually porous.

It is, in fact, misleading to treat Qutb as an academic political theorist or ex-cathedra theologian. Qutb himself deemed these two professions to be plagued by the intellectualism pervading our excessively abstract modern worldview. He was convinced that theoretical reflection on the political and dogmatic theologizing lead to lukewarm piety, blind formalism, alienation from praxis, and political impotence. We tend to forget that Sayyid Qutb is a "prosecutorial," [998] or more precisely, inquisitorial thinker not interested in systematically analyzing the systems of his ideological rivals. His objective was rather to forge a radical Islamist model as the only authentic, salvific path for all humanity while annihilating all alternatives.

Consequently, this study has attempted to provide a novel perspective on Qutb's critique

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[998] We borrowed this term from Guy Oakes who used it to describe Carl Schmitt. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism,* trans. Guy Oakes, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1986), xii.

of modernity as an essentially anti-modern, antithesis-driven Sunni Islamic political theology. Qutbian discourse is analyzed as a complex configuration inscribed in a wider cross-religious and cross-cultural anti-modern political theology. His critique is treated as a coherent, praxical conceptualization of religion designed to inform and orient resistance against a hegemonic modernity. The present analysis has ventured, if I may say so, into uncharted waters since there is to my knowledge no comparable study of Qutb as a political theologian.[999] It is my hope that this foray outside the familiar frameworks of political science and Islamic Studies to the relatively unfamiliar field of political theology has provided the fresh perspective that is so sorely needed.

The second challenge faced in this study was generated by the complicated status of political theology in academia. Standing at the intersection of political theory, political philosophy and systematic theology, political theology remains, despite its long history, a field with a complicated pedigree and even more complicated intellectual heritage. The high tradition of political theology, as Kantorowitz (see below) has demonstrated, played an important role in medieval constructions of authority, but subsequently receded into the shadows.

The twentieth century saw a renewed interest in political theology as a potential source for analyzing expressions of discontentment and resistance, which are often articulated in theologico-political terms. The field has consequently begun to emerge from the periphery of contemporary debates about modernity and its global impact. In 1922, Carl Schmitt's *Politische Theologie* rehabilitated political theology as an important explanatory category. Schmitt's appropriation of political theology is essentially polemical, inscribed in a legal-philosophical critique of political liberalism. In Schmitt's reading, political theology describes the umbilical cord that still connects politics with metaphysics, no matter how much that may be denied. This connection in Schmitt's view is essential even in a post-religious world in which the boundaries between immanent and transcendent self-images of society have dissolved in the hegemonic meta-narrative of triumphant

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[999] This theoretical absence concerns chiefly the Sunni Islamic space. In the literature focused on the modern Shi'ite Islamic space, political theology is not seen as a *corpus alienum*. Hamid Dabashi is perhaps the theorist who provided the most systematic analysis of radical political theology within the modern Shi'a Islamic thought. Dabashi argues for the necessity of understanding of the Iranian Islamic Revolution as a seminal event, anticipated by and later justified through a systemic, hybrid and highly charismatic political "theology of discontent." See Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*: *The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993). In the same vein, Mahmoud Sadri also claims that modern thinkers like Abdolkarim Sorush, Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar are the clear indication of "the coming of age of the indigenous Islamic political theology reclaiming its pluralistic and democratic elements." See Sadri, "Sacred Defense of Secularism: Dissident Political Theology in Iran," in *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth Century Iran*: *A Critical Survey,* 189.

secularization. For Schmitt as well as for his heirs, our modern space is saturated by "secularized theological concepts" which structure our understanding of the political despite its claimed autonomy. As Claude Lefort puts it, the theological-political survives in spite our sustained efforts to "make politics a reality sui generis, and to relegate religion to the domain of private belief."[1000]

The history of political ideas has recast and re-appropriated political theology, beginning with Ernst Kantorowicz's 1957 epoch-making *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. In this regard, the long and complex history of political theology is essentially the evolution of the seminal concept that appears as the axis of this dissertation—to wit, sovereignty. In this vein, recent studies such as W.J. Torrance Kirby's *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* and Eric L Santner's *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and The Endgames of Sovereignty*, along with classical works such as Martin Waltzer's *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* and Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, re-evaluate political theology as a formative force in the history of Western political ideas. As Jacob Taubes puts it, the relation between political theory and political theology is "not a derivative affair but touches the very centers of both" so that "even a theology that claims to be apolitical altogether and conceives the divine as the totally foreign…may have political implications."[1001]

Political theology has also stood at the center of Catholic and Protestant conversations with post-Wesphalian modernity. The works of the theologians of revolutionary hope Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Solle, of the Latin American liberation theologians Gustavo Gutierrrez and Leonardo Boff, of the theologians of radical orthodoxy John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward and Philip Goodchild, and last but not least the post-liberal radical political theologians Clayton Crockett and Paul Fletcher, all testify to the presence of a revised lexicon of political theology employed in the critique of secular modernity. In many respects this new reconfiguration of political theology is conceptualized as what Metz aptly calls *Korrektivtheologie*, an attempt to make theological critique pragmatic and publicly engaged. Thus Jürgen Moltmann describes the new political theology as non-academic and non-speculative, an a-theology that critically challenges the self-justifications of those in power by "withdrawing

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[1000] Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of Theological-Political?" in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, eds. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 148.
[1001] Jacob Taubes, "Theology and Political Theory," *Social Research* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1955): 58.

legitimation from tyranny in the name of its victims" and re- integrating "the revolutionary traditions of the Bible and Christian history" into the modern world. [1002] For Johann Baptist Metz as well, political theology embedded in a renewed theology of the Cross is the only answer to a distorted, bourgeois Christianity whose subjects are ready to surrender their rights to the state in exchange for selfish freedom from the suffering of the others.

Lastly, the concept of political theology is re-appropriated by the Continental post-structuralist philosophy influenced by Jacob Taubes's criticism of Carl Schmitt's authoritarian perspective. Thus political theology was put into conversation with philosophical reflections on power, the sovereign subject, modern technologies of exclusion, and the political messianism that was currently experiencing a revival. As a result of this turn, political theology plays a direct or indirect role in the works of Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy, Zlavoj Zizek and Alain Badiou, all of whom are not otherwise associated with theology.

It is within the context of this re-conceptualized political theology that we have attempted to cast Sayyid Qutb's critique of modernity in a new light. These intellectual developments have allowed us to avoid reducing Qutb's complex discursive order to a distortion of Western political rationality (normally defined as the monopoly of the Western *episteme*). Instead, we offered a reading of Qutb as the *exemplum* of a Sunni political theology that devised and implemented a rhetorical and conceptual strategy designed to take control of the concept of sovereignty. In order to achieve this, we placed Qutb's political theology in a controlled comparative model that might offer new understandings of radical Islamism.

Our analysis began from two basic assertions. The first is that Sayyid Qutb is an antithesis political theologian deeply involved in a critical conversation with cultural, religious and political modernity. The second is that Qutb should not be analyzed in isolation *sub specie aeternitatis* or as an idiosyncratic expression of a purely reactive, Egyptian-made Islamic radicalism. Rather, his work should be placed in a more capacious frame of family resemblance along with other seminal examples of antithetic, anti-modern political theology. We will now proceed to assess the results of our inquiry by summarizing its main findings, in the hope of contributing further to the developing field of comparative political theology.

[1002] Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society,* 57.

7. 2 Sayyid Qutb as a Modern Political Saint

In his 1969 *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, Martin Walzer introduced what he termed the "political saints." The haunting figure of the political saint is key to Walzer's re-assessment of the role of Calvinism in the history of Western political thought.[1003] Political saints in Walzer's formulation are those radically oppositional figures in the realms of religion and politics that saw themselves as divine instruments of change. Their task as they saw it was complete destruction of the corrupt status quo and its replacement by an integrated, holy Commonwealth built from the ground up solely in accord with the word of God. Born of the radical displacement of the Reformation and counter-Reformation, the Calvinist political saints[1004] of the sixteenth century created and enforced a theologically justified doctrine of resistance against a corrupt political order that eventually shaped Western political theories of tyrannicide.

Walzer speaks further of "in-office' and "out-of-office" political saints. The Huguenot Monarchomachs such as François Hotman (d.1590), Théodore de Bèze (d.1605), Philippe Du-Plessis-Mornay (d.1623) and George Buchanan (d.1582) embody the "in-office" figure. The Monarchomachs were chiefly lay aristocrats, and their theory of resistance via the lesser magistrates was devised to face an uncompromising religious and political adversity. Their political theology was essentially transformative, aimed as it was at a reconfiguration of the political order by converting the elites and transforming feudal lords into "conscious magistrates" able and willing to enforce a fully Christian political order.[1005] The Monarchomachs were at their core interested in political theory, focused on constitutional design and a specific philosophy of

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[1003] See Martin Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).

[1004] Quentin Skinner's famous critique of Walzer's Calvinist exclusivism is too important to be ignored. According to Skinner, the Lutheran arguments for rightful forceful resistance, formulated first by the Lutheran Magdeburg Confession of 1550 and the Hessian constitutional theorists of resistance (1529), functioned as an indisputable source and model for the later Calvinist theories of resistance which are in effect parasitical upon the Lutheran matrix. See: Robert M. Kingdon*, "Calvinism and Resistance Theory*, 1550–1580," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700,* ed. J.H. Burns, 193-218 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Quentin Skinner, *The Age of Reformation*, vol. 2 of *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 206-214. For a focused analysis on the Magdeburg Confession and its importance for the resistance theory see David Mark Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 2001). The Magdeburg Confession seen as as a main theoretical catalyst for the entire paradigm of Calvinist resistance theory has been recently questioned and even rejected as an ecumenically justified historiographical mythology. For a very good summary of the revisionist argument see Cornel Zwierlein, "L'importance de la Confessio de Magdebourg (1550) pour le Calvinisme: Un Mythe," *Historiographique Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 67, no. 1 (2005): 27-46.

[1005] See Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, 109.

history.[1006]As Walzer clarifies, their resistance was systemic, moderate, and defensive, amounting to a "highly rationalized, disciplined act of constitutional and moral obligations."[1007]The private, individual right of resistance against a legitimate ruler who degenerates into a tyrant cannot be admitted, since the ruler's authority was *ab initio* approved by the consensus of the Commonwealth. De Bèze was very clear on the imperative of non-private disobedience: "I maintain that no one in private station is allowed to set himself in open violence against a tyrant to whose domination the people of its own free will previously consented."[1008]

Last but not least, the resistance of the political saint-in-office is based on Natural Law, common will of the people and society's common good. It is a political theology encapsulated in legalistic discourse. This apparently purely political vision seems to justify Quentin Skinner's argument that the Huguenots' transformation of a purely religious theory of resistance based on the Pauline imperative of obedience into a genuinely political theory of revolution and crystallized around a contract-based definition of intermediate authority was "epoch-making." [1009]

Using this conceptual framework, we can identify Abu al-A'la Mawdudi and Abraham Kuyper as political saints-in-office on the basis of their disciplined re-sacralization from above and resistance to modernity through participation in the political process and conversion of both the political elites and the masses.

Walzer associates "out-of-office" political sainthood chiefly with "the fierce diatribal rhetoric"[1010] of the Marian Exile theologians such as John Ponet (1514-1556), John Knox (1514-1572) and Christopher Goodman (1520–1603). Calvinist radicalism, as Quentin Skinner terms it, rejects the Calvinist doctrine of passive obedience and the traditional Augustinian thesis of the ruler as being ordained by God even if he fails to perform the duties of his office. According to John Ponet, Goodman, and Knox, a tyrannical ruler (in this case, the Catholic Queen Mary Tudor) is no longer to be regarded as Christian but rather an idolater and must be resisted first by the inferior magistrates and, as a last resort, the entire citizenry organized as a unified congregation of

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[1006] See Cheng, "The theology of the Calvinist resistance movement," J.F. Southworth, "Theodore Beza, Covenantalism, and Resistance to Political Authority in the Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2003), and especially J.H.M. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*: *Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), along with the classical work by John Thomas McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
[1007] Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, 54.
[1008] Théodore de Bèze, *On the Rights of Magistrates Concerning the Rights of Rulers Over Their Subjects and the Duty of Subjects Towards Their Rulers*, trans. Henry-Louis Gonin (Capetown/Pretoria: H.A.U.M., 1956), 38.
[1009] Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 335.
[1010] Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, 112.

the Commonwealth.[1011]

Starting from the strict covenantal theory of the legitimate ruler, the out-of-office saints of the Marian Exile argued that tyrannical rulers are nothing more than private felons. As such, they are outside of the law and can be resisted by any subject. This right of resistance, moreover, is not just a legal possibility but a sacred duty imposed on all believers at all times. In opposition to both the mainstream Calvinist position and that of the more radical Monarchomarchs, the Marian Exile theologians rejected the interdiction of individual disobedience. Moreover, in certain contexts in which active disobedience is necessary and the lesser magistrates are incapable of performing the task, not only the entire body of church, but also a small minority of elite believers, or even one divinely guided individual is allowed to resist rulers who degenerate into idolatrous tyrants.[1012]

Sayyid Qutb's political theology (as both radical exegesis of the Qur'an and political ideology) recalls the radical discourse of Walzer's out-of-office political saint. Walzer's distinction between the out-of-office political saint and saint-in-office helps us understand a very real and important difference between Qutb and Mawdudi, who have often been placed together in the rather vague category of Islamic fundamentalism. The cases of Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper, who are comparable to Abu al-A'la Mawdudi in their capacity as saints-in-office, underline this difference.

Thus Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* is best understood as a foundational, if under-analyzed, text of political theology produced by the first modern Muslim out-of-office political saint of the twentieth century. The profoundly radical, iconoclastic dimension of Qutb's exegesis is consistent with the vocation of a fire and brimstone political saint unwilling to tolerate or compromise with non-Islamic conceptual or ideological alterity. In this regard, the difference between him and Mawdudi is easily discernable and should not be underplayed. It is when Mawdudi's political theology of gradual Islamization from above, consistent with the ideal type of political in-office-saint, and Qutb's radical political theology of revolutionary Islamization via an elect few, consistent with the ideal type of out-of-office saint, are put together that we see a coherent anti-

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[1011] As Skinner noted, this position is in effect a radical break with the entire tradition of the Lutheran-Calvinist doctrine of lawful resistance.

[1012] John Knox's *The First Blast of The Trumpet Against The Monstruous Regiment of Women* (1558), John Ponet's *Shorte Treatise of Politike Power* (1556), and George Goodman's *How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyed of Their Subjects, and Wherein They May Lawfully be by God's Word Disobeyed and Resisted* (1558) represent some of the most important expressions of the religiously justified theory of resistance produced in the Western *episteme* and remain seminal configurations of the pre-modern radical political theology of God's Sovereignty.

modern Sunni Islamist political theology.

7. 3 Antithesis Political Theology

The present study was designed as a thematic analysis of a complex critique of modernity produced in Sunni Islamic space. The study claims that far from being a wholesale and pathological rejection of modernity, this discursive order possesses conceptual stability secured by extensive use of normative distinctions and a structure based on dichotomies. This set of distinctions and structures serve as the infrastructure for subsequent expressions of a specific understanding of political modernity as a global hegemony. The antinomies of this discourse are not merely simple binaries representing a conflict between good and evil in a low-level Manichean repudiation of modernity. They are the cornerstones of an anti-modern political theology and key vectors for a radical political hermeneutics, in which they are employed to stem the uncontrollable proliferation of meaning brought on by modernity. They are the elements of the rhetorical and discursive strategies used by Qutb and his ilk to capture, reconfigure and disseminate powerful ideographs such as social justice, equality and freedom.

In this regard, we have seen how the antitheses *Nizam al-Islam* versus *Jahiliyah* and *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut* are the axes of Qutb's critique of modernity. These binaries, which permeate Qutb's rhetoric and direct its strategies, are intended not as mere theory, but rather irreversible life choices for individuals and the community which impact their very existence. Although Sayyid Qutb has often been portrayed as a radical theorist of *Hakimiyah* and *Jihad*, his work has not been discussed in terms of the basic antitheses that lie at the heart of his thought. This study has attempted to address that gap by demonstrating that antitheses are the very instruments of Qutb's critique of modernity.

Qutb's radical dualism is never relativized or even nuanced. It remains intransigent, systematic and all-encompassing. The entire Qutbian discursive order is structured by antitheses. Islam versus. *Jahiliyah* is the antithesis that concentrates all the antagonisms of world history into a single final battle for the future of mankind. *Hakimiyah* versus *Taghut* is a functional antithesis focused on the implementation of God's direct and undivided sovereignty over all the world and spheres of human life in opposition to all systems contaminated by man-made sovereignty. From these two essential antitheses there arise second-rank dichotomies that greatly augment the persuasiveness of Qutb's discourse.

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Qutb's antithetical view of the world emerged early in his life. Under the influence of the Arabic literary Romanticism of the 1920s, he expounded an antithesis between the mechanistic and organic that remained a pillar of his discourse until the very end. He cast the Islamic system as the epitome of an organic, ethical community and blueprint for a perfectly integrated universal society. According to Qutb, the Islamic system is the only structure that is completely harmonious with human nature as created by the divine will. All modern ideologies, on the other hand, are at bottom artificial, mechanistic, and materialist. They may seem philosophically sophisticated but represent, in truth, a mutilating worldview. Only the Islamic model offers a society that is more than a product of social engineering created according to an abstract ideological ideal.

As we saw in the fourth chapter, the dichotomy between parochialism and universalism derived from the master antithesis between Islam and *Jahiliyah* serves as the chief criterion for evaluating and ultimately rejecting the ideologies of modernity, nationalism, socialism and liberalism. This dichotomy allows Qutb to position Islam, the sole authentic expression of monotheism or *Tawhid*, as universalistic and the only source and guarantee of genuine equality. The antithesis between parochialism and universalism is vital to Qutb's objective of gaining control over the ideograph of equality.

The antithesis between atomism and holism also plays a crucial role in Qutb's critique of socialism and liberalism. He consistently presents his Islamic system as the only viable synthesis between a free and productive individualism and the horizontal solidarity of an ethical community. All other formulas are fatally flawed by either atomism (as is liberalism) or oppressive collectivism imposed by hegemonic statism (as seen in socialism). Liberalism is the harbinger of an anomie in which no genuine form of solidarity is possible, while socialism dissolves all individual freedoms into a God-like state. The Islam that creates a community in the image of the first Muslim *ummah* is the only genuine alternative. This community of believers both nurtures individual differences and functions as an organic whole, thus offering perfect freedom and social solidarity together.

Another antithesis that looms over Qutb's perspective on history and modernity is the distinction between friend and enemy. Carl Schmitt regarded this antithesis as the *sine qua non* for the existence of the political and the cornerstone of all political theology.[1013] Moreover, as Schmitt

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[1013] "Thereby the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses." Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 27.

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stresses, friend and enemy are not symbols or metaphors carrying normative, purely spiritual meaning. Rather, they "are to be understood in their concrete and existential sense" outside the realms of economics, morality or psychology. [1014] Qutb's political theology is certainly antagonistic. To employ Chantal Mouffe's influential distinction, his political theology proposes an unbridgeable antagonism between irreconcilable enemies rather than "agonism," i.e. a conflict over interpretation between adversaries who do not fundamentally question the legitimacy of their opponents' perspective. [1015] For Qutb, there is and cannot ever be any ambivalence, negotiation, or compromise in the zero-sum game between Islam and *Jahiliyah*. To compromise would be to jeopardize the very existence of Islam. Deeply embedded in *Jahiliyah*, there is a profound and systematic enmity towards Islam that is, according to Qutb, one of the most important constants of human history. The theme of universal conspiracy against Islam thus plays an important role in Qutb's understanding of history; it is more than simple anti-Semitism or low-level rhetoric. As Carl Schmitt points out, all political terms are intrinsically polemical, and in the absence of the friend-enemy antithesis, key terms such as society, class, sovereignty, dictatorship, and state "turn into empty and ghostlike abstractions." [1016] Qutb would be in perfect agreement with Schmitt's observation. He ceaselessly argues that virtually all contemporary political notions must be interpreted in light of the antithesis between Islam and *Jahiliyah*. Everything that falls outside this dichotomy is deemed purely speculative and springing from empty intellectualism. The concepts that populate Qutb's political theology are intended not for debate, but combat. Their function is to persuade and mobilize by making the distinction between friend and enemy central to the ethos of Muslims living in the contemporary world.

There is, however, an important difference between the perspectives of Schmitt and Qutb. While Schmitt identifies the state as "the organized political entity that decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction," [1017] Qutb's political theology successfully contests the monopoly of the state over the antitheses friend versus enemy and Islam versus *Jahiliyah*. By privatizing these antitheses, Qutb creates the premise for a purely Islamist definition of the political. The implications of this move are very large. By placing Muslim societies that do not follow his model in the camp of

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[1014] Ibid, 28.
[1015] Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (New York: Verso, 2013), 36.
[1016] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 28.
[1017] Ibid, 30.

Jahiliyah, Qutb denies the power of both the state and religious establishment to define Islamic authenticity. This allowed his jihadist heirs to freely offer their own definitions of friend and enemy. The real legacy of Sayyid Qutb may be his reconfiguration of the friend versus enemy antithesis and thus   the contesting of state monopoly over violence.

When Qutb's antitheses are compared across the religious and cultural divide with commensurable constructions produced by other theologically-oriented critics of modernity, we find significant similarities. Juan Donoso Cortés speaks of two radically antithetic civilizations, *la civilización filosófica* and *la civilización católica*, caught in an "absolute antagonism" (*un antagonismo absoluto)*; and Abraham Kuyper insists on a universal conflict between the two opposing worldviews of Christianity and modernity, both of which are founded on principles (*Beginselen*) that are all-embracing and absolute. We have tried to demonstrate that despite historical, geographical and empirical distance, the perspectives of not only Qutb and Mawdudi but also Cortés and Kuyper are conceptually linked. They are, in fact, different but congruent expressions of the same theologico-political experience of the world. They are involved in a critical conversation with the same secularizing, hegemonic modernity and engaged in an attempt to create a coherent counter-paradigm.

7. 4 Sovereignty: Above and Beyond A Master Signifier

Reflection on the political inevitably involves the concept of sovereignty. What is fascinating about sovereignty is that it has many different interpretations and instrumentalizations in different contexts. Sovereignty is an open concept. From Thomas Hobbes to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and from François Hotman to Giorgio Agamben, the specter of sovereignty has haunted Western political thought, creating and contesting its ideologies. Sovereignty has been the driving force behind every performance of authority and the heart of political theology. The evolution of sovereignty from divine to monarchic, then to state, popular, global and imperial[1018] punctuates Western thought. Despite its effect on our conceptions of the political, sovereignty remains paradoxical and complex, allowing what James Tully called "the remarkably constant

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[1018] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri conceptualized the contemporary form of sovereignty as transcending the traditional national boundaries and giving birth to a new Empire. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

problematisation of legitimacy and obedience."[1019]

Sovereignty also has many levels. It is a multidimensional notion covering a host of concepts, including *imperium, autoritas, jurisdiction, dominion, potestas and officium.*[1020] It is not, however, a static concept, but rather performative and dynamic, constantly trying to overcome the division between abstract theory and praxis. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, the meaning of sovereignty is always a product of its use in different language games that cut across political ideologies and religious and cultural divides. Sovereignty consequently takes on different meanings. It can describe the action of God, nature, king, citizen, nation, history, the West, reason, science, tradition, humanity, race or the market.[1021] To complicate things even further, sovereignty is a conceptual field embracing ontology as well as epistemology, action as well as knowledge, and philosophy along with ideology. In this regard, as Raia Prokhovnik points out, the personal, embodied sovereignty of the king or ruler competes with the impersonal sovereignty of the office holder and the sovereign *Demos*. The sovereign subject also often collides with the sovereign nation. Sovereignty, indeed, legitimizes both hegemony and resistance; it creates stable paradigms but also enables change.

Thus the genuine mark of sovereignty is a systemic and fertile ambiguity. It is a multi-faceted concept that brings together the ruler and the ruled, control and cooperation, and affirmation and negation. Our obstinate attempts to tame the concept of sovereignty by capturing it in theories are nothing more than academic wishful thinking. Sovereignty is nevertheless perennial; it is not a remnant of unaccomplished and passé modernity. As William Connolly observes, the problem of sovereignty persists after two millennia of theorizing "amid an intensification of ambiguities and uncertainties that have inhabited it all along."[1022] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that in a post-nationalistic world, sovereignty has not at all disappeared, but rather "taken the new form of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire."[1023] We constantly produce configurations and formulas of sovereignty despite our constant wish to

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[1019] James Tully quoted in Raia Prokhovnik, *Sovereignties*: *Contemporary Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 8.
[1020] Prokhovnik, *Sovereignties*, 20.
[1021] See: Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990): 368; Prokhovnik, *Sovereignties*, 119.
[1022] William Connolly, "The Complexities of Sovereignty," in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life,* eds. Matthew Calarco and Steve DeCaroli (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 23.
[1023] Hardt and Negri, *Empire,* xii.

relegate it to the past, to depoliticise it—and de-theologize it.

Sovereignty is, moreover, paradoxical. William Connolly points out that the very idea of rule of law in any state is possible only through the existence and performance of a sovereignty that is designed to transcend that very law. Carl Schmitt refers to the same paradox in defining the sovereign as someone "who decides on the exception (*Ausnahme*)."[1024] As Giorgio Agamben says, this means that "the law is outside itself," or "I, the sovereign, who am outside the law, declare that there is nothing outside the law [*che non c' è un fuori legge*]."[1025] This *aporia* has been addressed in various formulas ranging from the philosophical fiction of Rousseau's wise legislator and Hobbes's Leviathan to the perspectives of international relations that seek to de-politicize, pluralize or unbundle sovereignty as an attribute of the international legal order.[1026]

Sovereignty is also a profoundly dangerous concept. Since it is above normal legal and political orders, it is not accountable to, as Raia Prokhovnik puts it, "any further authority or power."[1027] In this regard, Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* (man who is banned) offers a chilling analysis of the excessive and unaccountable sovereignty of modern times. The logical consequence of such sovereignty is the ban, that being "the force of simultaneous attraction and repulsion that ties together the two poles of the sovereign exception: naked life and power, *homo sacer* and the sovereign." [1028] Through sovereignty, modern politics becomes bio-politics. Its subjects are stripped of political significance and reduced to the spectral existence of *homo sacer*. The naked life (*vita nuda*) is the locus of a politics that truly becomes the living exception. Consequently, the concentration camp is not the horrible exception, but the model, the rule, "the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen."[1029] For Agamben, totalitarian mass incarceration and scientifically designed genocides are part of the logic of a sovereignty that seeks to transform all politics into

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[1024] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 1985, 5.

[1025] Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* 18. Agamben calls this form of exception a relation of exception, describing an "extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion" (18).

[1026] For an analysis of the reconceptualizations of sovereignty within the modern interneational relations theory see Prokhovnik, *Sovereignties*, 35-86; Daniel Phillpot, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stephen D. Krasner, *Power the State, and Sovereignty: Essays on International Relations* (London, Routledge, 2009).

[1027] See Prokhovnik, *Sovereignties*. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue in the same vein that "The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally." See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 360.

[1028] Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* 86.

[1029] Ibid, 171.

biopolitics and all existence into bare life.

Last but not least, sovereignty is Janus-like. Legal or juridical sovereignty and political sovereignty circumscribe the essential question of ultimate and legitimate authority. Deleuze and Guattari summarize this duality of sovereignty by recasting a fundamental distinction operated by Georges Dumezil in his analysis of Indo-European mythology. For Dumezil, sovereignty always has two poles. At one, we encounter the magician-king who rules by "capture, bonds, knots, and nets"; and at the other, we have the jurist-priest who exercises his authority through treaties, pacts, and contracts. The figures of this functional dichotomy are the Rex and flamen, raj and Brahman, Romulus and Numa, Varuna and Mitra, Uranus and Zeus, Odin and Tyr, "the despot and the legislator or the binder and the organizer."[1030] However, as Deleuze and Guattari warn, this distinction is "only relative" since such figures "function as a pair, in alternation, as though they expressed a division of the One or constituted in themselves a sovereign unity."[1031] In light of Dumezil's analysis, the vacillation of sovereignty between constructive legalism and unmediated decisionism of the sovereign is revealed to be not a product of our modernity, but rather a perennial expression of the political as old as the *zoon politikon* himself.

What can Sayyid Qutb's political theology of Divine Sovereignty add to this account? This study has argued that Qutb is the first Sunni Muslim political theologian who made sovereignty the center of a radical Islamist critique of modernity. It was also demonstrated that Qutb's vision of God's Sovereignty is not merely a backward, visceral rejection of modernity, but rather a sophisticated critique of all forms of modern sovereignty. His critique (along with that of Pakistani Islamist Abu al-A'la Mawdudi) is comparable to those of the seminal anti-modern Catholic and Protestant political theologians of Divine Sovereignty Juan Donoso Cortés and Abraham Kuyper. The least, then, that Qutb can teach us, is that sovereignty as the pillar of critical reflection on modernity is not the monopoly of the Western *episteme.* This is not an inconsequential thing in a world that is more pluralistic than ever.

But there is more we unrepentant moderns have to learn from Sayyid Qutb. If we dare to appreciate Qutb outside and beyond the contexts of Islam and Egypt and focus our theoretical gaze on his thought and life also with the aim of learning about ourselves, we discover that his

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[1030] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 424.
[1030] George Dumezil quoted in Ibid, 424.
[1031] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 351.

perspective from the other side of the theologico-political continuum provides a specular Other that widens our understanding of the complex and puzzling concept of sovereignty. The case of Qutb is helpful in this way because his political theology as an out-of-office saint remains to date the paradigmatic expression of an uncompromising, all-encompassing, concrete and direct Divine Sovereignty, a perspective that seems to have vanished from our post-modern Western *episteme* but still structures contemporary visions that refuse to separate the metaphysical and political. Without taking into account Qutb's political theology, our understanding of sovereignty remains incomplete, lacking a much-needed even if uncomfortable contrast. I will conclude by pointing out aspects of Qutbian Divine Sovereignty that differ from the reflections of the Western thinkers summarized above.

For Qutb, sovereignty is not multidimensional and pluralistic. On the contrary, it is very definite and clear. *Hakimiyah* is direct, comprehensive and non-negotiable Divine Sovereignty, to be applied to all spheres of existence in accord with God's ultimate revelation disclosed in the Qur'an. Sovereignty is not ambiguous and has no analogue. It is an attribute of the Creator that structures the entire history of His creation and enforces His law.

Furthermore, God's Sovereignty applies to the concrete space of political, economic and social praxis. There is no dichotomy or tension between the abstract theory of sovereignty and the real world. *Hakimiyah* is not nor will it ever be an open-ended notion. It has no competing meaning. It has virtually no abstract or scholastic dimension to overshadow its praxical orientation.

Hakimiyah does, as Western perspectives on sovereignty also suggest, infuse all domains of existence, including ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, culture and politics. This plurality of spheres does not, however, result in polyglossia. Qutbian sovereignty is profoundly monoglossic. Only the voice of God's Sovereignty legitimately speaks in the world of men. Qutb ensures that the tension between embodied and impersonal sovereignty is dissolved by making the ruler, whether king, president or parliament, purely an instrument of God's Sovereignty with extremely limited space for normative content. There is hardly any space for the impersonal sovereignty of the office holder, and the concept of the sovereign demos is completely absent. Qutb forcefully rejects both state sovereignty and popular sovereignty as bastardized versions of Divine Sovereignty produced by a modernity that has lost its transcendent axis. There is no collision between the sovereign individual subject and sovereign nation in Qutb's perspective. Simply put, when the locus of absolute sovereignty is God, no tensions, divisions or antinomies are possible.

Ruler and ruled are united in perfect equality as subjects of the only real sovereign: the Lord of all creation.

Sovereignty for Qutb is perennial, but in a different way from that spoken of in Western thought. While *Hakimiyah* changes and adapts its form, as the essence of God's plan for mankind, it remains unchanged at its core. As the enforcer of *Tawhid*, it functions as an *axis mundi*, connecting metaphysics with politics—the ultimate authority of the divine with its human instrumentalizations. There is no *aporia* or paradox embedded in this concept of sovereignty either. God's Sovereignty is unequivocal, direct and all-encompassing.

Referring to Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty, we see that in Qutb's understanding, the mark of sovereignty cannot be a decision over exception, simply because there are no exceptions to God's law. God's revelation is universal, definitive and all-inclusive. The transcending of a legal order not created by a human agent is impossible *a priori*, for the temporary holder of political or juridical authority is simply a steward of the Law set apart from the rest of the believing community only by knowledge and piety. As Carl Schmitt points out, God as a sovereign over and in the world of men expresses himself through the "'exception' of the miracle" and "gives way to a new concept of a legal order which 'reject[s] the exception in every form.'"[1032]

Sovereignty in Qutb's view is always absolute. It is not accountable to any superior power or authority. However, unlike man-made sovereignties, this uncontested, unaccountable sovereignty is completely benign, emancipatory and finally salvific. Qutb would probably agree with Agamben's harsh indictment of modern sovereignty; a leitmotif of his political theology is that all man-made forms of sovereignty lead to oppression, tyranny and totalitarian enclosure. There is no alternative to *Hakimiyah* in the form of a less accomplished or different type of sovereignty. The other side of the coin is simply pure, unadulterated tyranny of man over man: *Taghut.* To again use Agamben's terminology, for Qutb the inevitable end-result of all human forms of sovereignty is the "naked life." When the masks of progress and civilization fall, modern man as the living force and product of *Jahiliyah* is the alienated, materialistic *homo sacer.* For Qutb, universal totalitarianism is inscribed in the very logic of all man-made sovereignty. Man-made sovereignty is thus irredeemable. The idea of a benign sovereignty that can preserve human freedom and social unity is either the pipe dream of academics or a mask for *Jahiliyah.* Only

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[1032] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 31.

Hakimiyah represents pure sovereignty that stands above the human temptation to oppress, dominate and exclude. Only *Hakimiyah* can unite the world of men under the law of God and secure liberty through submission to the True Sovereign.

Lastly for Qutb, sovereignty is never dual. The distinction made by many Western thinkers between juridical and political sovereignty is completely absent from the Qutbian perspective. Since the political can never be autonomous from the religious, political sovereignty localized in a state or as an attribute of a ruler is incompatible with the ideal of *Hakimiyah*. In this model, distinctions between king and legislator, binder and organizer, and Rex and flamen collapse into the arch-figure of God as the ultimate source of sovereignty. If Carl Schmitt is right and the key concepts of modernity are ''secularized theological concepts," Qutb's political theology combats the dynamic of modernity that gives birth to the political through neutralizing the transcendental and religious. A close reading of his work, however, shows that in the end, he was painfully aware that his battle against pervasive and powerful modernity was already lost. This realization, perhaps even more than his death, makes him a tragic figure.

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