

THE 'AQĪDAH IN THE DISCOURSE OF SAYYID QUṬB

By:

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Abstrak

Makalah ini menganalisis pemikiran Sayyid Quṭb tentang 'aqīdah yang merupakan asas pandangan alam Islam. Kajian ini dikemukakan ekoran terdapat beberapa dakwaan yang menuduh bahawa fahaman 'aqīdah Sayyid Quṭb adalah menyeleweng dari tafsiran sebenar. Perbincangan makalah ini merangkumi perbincangan ringkas tentang metodologi Sayyid Quṭb dan penilaian tentang perbezaan fahaman beliau tentang Tawḥīd 'Ulūhiyyah dan Tawḥīd Rubūbiyyah dengan fahaman Salaf. Ini melibatkan isu-isu seperti isu hubungan iman dan amalan, peranan akal, sikap beliau terhadap 'Ilm Kalam, isu iman bertambah dan berkurang, kedudukan Khabar Āḥād, isu kafir-mengkafir, di samping isu-isu berkaitan pandangan beliau tentang fahaman Mukta-zilah, Khawarij dan isu Nabi Isa.

Katakunci: 'Aqīdah, Sayyid Quṭb, Pandangan Alam Islam, Salaf, Ilmu Kalām, *Tawḥīd al-'Ulūhiyyah*, *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah*, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah

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Abstract

The paper analyzes Sayyid Quṭb's understanding of the 'aqīdah which is the foundation of the Islamic worldview. The study is timely for there are some allegations that Quṭb deviates from true 'aqīdah and becomes an exclusivist in his interpretations. It gives a brief account of his methodology and examines some of the allegations that his interpretation does not conform to Salaf by differing with early scholars on the meaning of *tawḥīd al-'ulūhiyyah* and *al-rubūbiyyah*. The discussion covers such issues as practices as pre-condition for īmān, denying the role of reasoning, criticism of 'ilm al-kalām, the view that īmān neither increases nor decreases, denying the authority of *khbar āḥād*, charges that both rulers and individual Muslims as infidels, al-Mu'tazilah doctrine as non-Islamic, Prophet Jesus died before his ascension, and al-Khawārij.

Keywords: 'Aqīdah, Sayyid Quṭb, Islamic worldview, Salaf, 'Ilm Kalām, *tawḥīd al-'ulūhiyyah*, *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*, *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*

Introduction

In the world of contemporary Islamic discourse many remarks are made on the understanding of the 'aqīdah¹ by Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966 C.E),² one of the ideologues of Islamic resurgence with alleged extremist tendency in the 20th century. He is bitterly criticized for his unique understanding of the 'aqīdah, expelled from *ṣalafi* school of thought and considered as deviated from *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*.³ Several arguments are made that he has gone

¹ It refers to the fundamental creed of Islam.

² A scholar of the twentieth century Egypt, he was a journalist, a poet, a storywriter, a literary figure, a critic, an activist, a political analyst, a great writer, a novelist, an orator, a reformer and an ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood. And last but not least, he is the *mufassir* of the Qur'ān.

³ Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidi (1986), *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān fī al-Mīzān*, Jaddah, Saudi Arabia: Dār al-Manārah, p. 41.

astray from true realization and comprehension of the fundamentals of the 'aqīdah. One of the most serious allegations is that he charged Muslims of his age as infidels.

The majority of those who hold divergent views on his understanding of the 'aqīdah do not seem to keep their difference within Islamic framework which considers it as an integral part of healthy tradition. Even though intellectual differences are regarded as God's mercy, yet Quṭb is not tolerated but expelled from Islamic framework on the ground that he has deviated from the main stream of Islamic thought and committed serious doctrinal errors. It is argued that Quṭb has gradually advanced towards ignorance, deviation, fraud, forgery, and then to deception.⁴

Quṭb was transported from the world of *īmān* (faith) to the world of prisoner's dock, where he was sentenced to death on the basis of the alleged deviation, misleading, and unbelief. The authorities led him to the death sentence for they had power, authority, and were in control of law and enforcement without realizing that they have transferred him to the next world, where God will make His conclusive judgement.

It seems that Islamic history is not free from alleging scholars. Due to theological and juristic differences some scholars were condemned and even charged as infidels in the past. Suffice it to say that Mu'tazilites⁵ were accused for a crime committed on advocating the Qur'ān as God's creation, which has given rise to controversy and thus many were subjected to imprisonment, torture, persecution and exile.⁶ Al-Ṭabarī (d.310 A.H) faced persecution for his understanding of the 'aqīdah and history still remembers Hanbalites'⁷ mutiny on him. Al-Rāzī (d.606 A.H) was accused of winegrowing in his life and after his death for

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ They are the followers of the school of *al-Mu'tazilah* founded by Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā. This school believed that man is free, capable and responsible for doing good or bad but he will be punished or rewarded by God for his deeds.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ They were followers of Hanbalite school of jurisprudence founded by Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (780 A.H-855 A.H)

his interpretation of the 'aqīdah.⁸ Facing the allegation of committing *shirk* (associating partners to God) and worshipping stars, Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728 A.H) underwent a severe trial and consequently remained in prison till his death.⁹

Like some early scholars, Quṭb also faced allegations for his understanding of the 'aqīdah. The most crucial allegations are that he does not follow *al-Salaf* (scholars of early Islam) in his doctrine but engages in *al-Ash'ariyyah* approaches,¹⁰ sees action as a pre-condition for *īmān*, subscribes to that *īmān* neither increases nor decreases, rejects *khābar āḥād* (tradition reported based on one person or source) in matters of the 'aqīdah, criticizes *'ilm al-kalām* (scholasticism), differs with early scholars in interpreting *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah* (unity in divine power) and *al-rubūbiyyah* (unity in divine lordship), charges Muslims as infidels, advocates *al-mu'tazilah* principles, and takes his sides with *al-khawārij*¹¹ and some others.¹²

This paper, therefore, investigates above allegations by critically analyzing his statements in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (henceforth, *Zilāl*) in particular and other works in general to find out genuineness of those who claim that Quṭb has deviated from the mainstream of Islamic thought. In order to understand the issues, a brief study is made about his methodology in explaining his 'aqīdah and his earnest concern for Qur'ānic approaches. Quṭb's objective in explaining the 'aqīdah is also explored to have a clear picture as enshrined in *Zilāl*, for many Muslims regard it as an encyclopaedia of contemporary Muslim thought, though

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ This school was founded by Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī. (206 A.H-324 A.H) It believes in vision of God, freedom of will, causality of the world.

¹¹ This school was founded and led by 'Abd Allāh ibn Wahhāb al-Rasībī in 12 A.H. The opponents of arbitration were expelled from the ranks of 'Alī's followers and declared heretics, who were charged with going against the consensus of the *Ummah* are called *al-Khawārij*.

¹² *Ibid.*

there is also a belief that it is one of the most controversial Qur'ānic exegesis influencing Muslim youths worldwide.

Qutb's Methodology

Qutb believes that the Qur'ān alone must rule human life in all aspects, as nothing else can rescue modern humanity immersed in a number of critical problems and total ignorance of the truth.¹³ Thus he implies that man-made laws cannot serve and are not effective in solving human problems, for these laws have emerged as a result of different ideological and philosophical foundations and worldviews.¹⁴ He strongly believes that implementing God's programme as revealed in the Qur'ān is not left to any one's option or desire. This is rather a matter of *īmān* or *kufr* (unbelief). He supports it by the direct assertion of the verse of the Qur'ān.¹⁵

Qutb argues that the Qur'ān can never be appreciated by living neutrally in relation to world affairs nor can it be properly understood without examining the *jāhiliyyah*¹⁶ (non-Islamic or secular) way of life. According to him, those who can re-live the arduous circumstances and environments of Qur'ānic revelation are the only people to whom the words of the Qur'ān have any real meaning. He further argues that those who struggle to resume the Islamic life in a given environment afresh; the Qur'ān also co-operates with them by filling their hearts with its secret treasures

¹³ Rashid Raashid (1993), *Studies on the Political Dimensions of Sayyid Qutb's Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, M.A. Thesis, The University of Sydney, p. 12.

¹⁴ The current crisis and chaos in the present day world as discussed and elaborated by several scholars is empirical evidence in support of Qutb's argument.

¹⁵ "It is not fitting for a Believer, man or a woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path." (*Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, 33: 36).

¹⁶ The term literally means 'state of ignorance' or 'pre-Islamic paganism'. The context here is non-Islamic systems and secular man-made ideologies and systems.

and fragrance. And they are the only people for whom the Qur'ān serves as true guide and light.¹⁷

Quṭb frequently insists on the need for living in the shades of the Qur'ān before one tries to explain it. By this he means that proper understanding of the Qur'ānic message is only possible by re-living the life of early Muslims. And it is only through this dedicated manner that the original interpretation of the Qur'ān be achieved. During the period he lived in the shades of the Qur'ān, he also claims to have read the works of other writers who dealt with various aspects of human knowledge. But through the proper study of both the Qur'ān and the disciplines of social sciences and humanities he realised that there was a huge gap between aptitude and effectiveness of the Qur'ān on the one hand and various human writings on the other.¹⁸

Quṭb seems to rely only on authentic and trustworthy sources which, in his view, are nothing but the Qur'ān and Sunnah (Prophet Muḥammad's patterns of life) through which he is eager to liberate man from various sediments of secular culture. According to him the most crucial issue is the serenity of 'aqīdah and its role and implication because secular culture has misled some predecessors when they attempted to interpret the 'aqīdah and were eventually influenced. In his *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī*, he spares a heading entitled *kalimah fī al-manhaj* (a statement on the methodology) in which he elaborates his methodology of the discourse.

Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah and al-Rubūbiyyah

The term *al-ulūhiyyah* according to Quṭb is comprehensive and it has many characteristics, manifestations and domains. It is regarded as true foundation of the worldview of Islam. It embodies essential features such as *al-rubūbiyyah* (lordship) *al-ḥākimiyyah* (sovereignty), *al-qawwāmah* (guardianship), *al-*

¹⁷ Rashid, *Studies on the Political Dimension*, p. 13.

¹⁸ Sayyid Quṭb (1977), *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 5th edition, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, vol. 9, p. 142.

sulṭah (power), and *al-tashrī'* (legislation). He quotes the Prophet as saying that it is necessary for every believer to advance towards God by establishing the reality of *al-ulūhiyyah al-wāḥidah*, and *al-qawwamah al-wāḥidah* in the life of man and administration of the universe. To him, these two are the manifestations of *al-ulūhiyyah* and for *al-ḥākimiyyah* there is no partner to God.¹⁹

According to Qutb *al-ulūhiyyah* has two aspects, the life of man and the administration of the universe. The heart reverts to the ultimate reality of one single godhead, guardianship, effectiveness, management, and ownership. The final judgement is made by the only One eternal God, the sovereign of the dominion.²⁰ He argues that among the key characteristic of *al-ulūhiyyah* is the legislative power of God (*fa akhaṣṣu khaṣā'is al-ulūhiyyah al-tashrī' li al-'ibād*) for man and society. He further argues that in this regard the polytheists associate partners with God and other deities with Him in various forms. Their polytheism is based on this principle.

According to Qutb the above is not the only aspect of *shirk* (polytheism). But he divides it into three kinds: *shirk* in respect of creed, *shirk* in religious rites and *shirk* in the revealed law of Islam. The core *shirk* is the recognition of someone other than God as the only characteristic of *al-ulūhiyyah* in respect of any one of the above three kinds in organizing the circumstances of life.²¹ Qutb strongly asserts that *al-ulūhiyyah* in the true sense refers to recognizing God as the Creator, the Provider, the Life-giver, the Destroyer, the Powerful ruler and the Governor of everything²² as it also means *al-ḥākimiyyah*, *al-tashrī'*, *al-qawwamah*, and *al-sulṭān* i.e. *al-rubūbiyyah* over the people.

Qutb further argues that *al-rubūbiyyah* is one of the elements of *al-ulūhiyyah* for it is the essence of legislation, training, rule, subjugation, and judgement for man. In fact *al-ulūhiyyah* is more comprehensive and all-embracing than

¹⁹ Qutb, *Zilāl*, vol. 1, p. 383.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1063.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1763.

al-rubūbiyyah, which is one of the constituents of *al-ulūhiyyah*, which has two domains. The first is creation, sustenance, living, mortification, supposition, administration, and facilitation of the cosmos, rule by His secrets and His laws and patterns. The second is sovereignty (*al-hākimiyyah*), guardianship (*al-qawwāmah*), power (*al-sultān*), and legislation (*al-tashrī'*), direction for human life, submission, and devotion to God. These are *al-rubūbiyyah*. Hence Quṭb asserts that power or authority in Islam is God in everything.

Quṭb remarks *al-ulūhiyyah* by surrender and administration of the universe i.e. cosmological order and distinguishes *al-rubūbiyyah* by submission and administration of the life of man. *Al-Rubūbiyyah* refers to *al-hākimiyyah* and there is neither governing nor legislation except by God. In fact *al-rubūbiyyah* primarily refers to invalidating the legitimacy of every ruling that pursues power over the people by other than God's *sharī'ah* and His commandments.²³ *Al-Rubūbiyyah* is the permanent issue which revolves around the mission of Islam against *jāhiliyyah* and it refers to the issue of religiosity, sovereignty, compliance (with the *sharī'ah*) and obedience.²⁴

According to Quṭb, the coherence between *al-ulūhiyyah* and *al-rubūbiyyah* is like the coherence between the root with the branch and the entirety with the part. *Al-Rubūbiyyah* is one of the characteristics of the attributes of God's *al-ulūhiyyah* and the explanation of its characteristics is *al-qawwāmah*, and *al-hākimiyyah*.²⁵ Quṭb asserts that the polytheists during the revelation recognized *al-ulūhiyyah* and conformed to it and it was not the subject of difference with the Prophet. The polytheists during early Islam accepted the concept of *al-ulūhiyyah* which referred to administration of God in matters of the universe, in creating and in providing sustenance.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1346.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1910.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1833.

Qutb strongly argues that the polytheists only denied *al-rubūbiyyah*. It implies that they rejected the principle that God alone is the ruler, legislator, sovereign, protector, guardian, and powerful and offered these positions to their leaders, scholars, or customary practices. Qutb quotes the verses of *sūrah Yūnus* 3-9 and regards the subject matter as an explanation of various aspects of *al-ulūhiyyah*. These verses speak about creation, implication, administration of the cosmos and the systems around it, and the rule by His laws and patterns. Qutb believes that these things refer to *al-ulūhiyyah* and not *al-rubūbiyyah*, which is the basic issue in the 'aqīdah. The issue of *al-ulūhiyyah* was never rejected by the polytheists, because they believed in the existence of God for the nature of man is not against it except in rare and distorted situations with severity of deviation. But they associated masters with God directing their worship towards them to be nearer to God and making them as intercessors. Like this they pursued the characteristics of *al-rubūbiyyah* and legislated what was not permitted by God.²⁶

In this regard, Qutb differs with Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728.A.H) who explains the meaning that *shirk* in *al-ulūhiyyah* refers to making partners to God in His service, His worship, His love, His fear, His hope, or His authorization. God does not forgive this *shirk* except through repentance unto Him.²⁷ He also says that *shirk* in *al-rubūbiyyah* refers to rejecting God as the Creator with administrative commands and prohibitions and whoever attributes these characteristics to other than God is considered to have committed *shirk* in the Lordship of God.²⁸

Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the authentication of *al-ulūhiyyah* obligates the authentication of *al-rubūbiyyah* and the denial of *al-ulūhiyyah* imposes the denial of *al-rubūbiyyah*. Then he says that *al-ulūhiyyah* is the goal and it is the prerequisite for every beginning.²⁹ Thus he reiterates that

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1861.

²⁷ 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Qāsim (1398 H), *Majmū'at Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah*, n.p: Dār al-'Arabiyyah, vol. 1, p. 91.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 37.

the polytheists denied *al-ulūhiyyah* and acknowledged *al-rubūbiyyah*. The former was the basis of their difference between them and the Messenger. And it was *al-ulūhiyyah* which the Prophet disputed with Arab polytheists, for they associated partners with God in matters of *al-ulūhiyyah*. As for *al-rubūbiyyah* the polytheists were in agreement with it.

In this regard, Ibn Ubayy al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī follows Ibn Taymiyyah and argues that *al-rubūbiyyah* refers to God alone as the Creator of everything and *al-ulūhiyyah* refers to God alone should be worshipped without any substitute.³⁰ He says that *al-rubūbiyyah* is linked with *al-ulūhiyyah*. And the required *tawḥīd* is the *tawḥīd al-ilāhiyyah* (belief in one divine God) which comprises of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*.³¹ The polytheists denied only the position of *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah* and acknowledged *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*.

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb argues in his *Kashf al-Shubḥāt* that the polytheists conformed to the testimony that God alone is the Creator and Provider, and there is no partner to Him, and that He provides sustenance and gives life and death. He administers the universe and that all the seven heavens and whatever are in them and the worlds and whatever are in them and everything obey Him. And everything is under His command and power.³² He argues that *tawḥīd* which they repudiated was *tawḥīd al-'ibādah* (unity in worshipping one God).³³

Sulaymān ibn 'Abd Allāh argues about *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*. According to him, *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah wa al-mulk* (unity in one lordship and dominion) is confirmation that God is the Lord of everything, and He is the Creator, Master and Provider. And that He gives life and causes death. He is both beneficial and harmful. He alone responds to supplication in case of emergency. Every matter (*amr*) or decision belongs to Him. And in His Hand

³⁰ Ibn Ubayy al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī (1381 H). *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdat al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, 4th edition, n.p: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, p. 76.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³² Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1391H), *Majmū'at al-Tawḥīd al-Najdiyyah*, Makkah: Maḥba'at al-Ḥukūmat al-Su'ūdiyyah, p. 69.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

everything is good. He is all powerful on what He wishes and there is no partner unto Him in it.³⁴

He says that *tawhīd al-ulūhiyyah* establishes *tawhīd al-ilāhiyyah* with all sincerity to God in everything such as love, fear, hope, trust, desire, fright and supplication. All acts of devotions whether they are exoteric or esoteric must be to Him alone and there are no partners to Him.³⁵ He asserts that the polytheists recognized *al-rubūbiyyah* without *al-ulūhiyyah*. And this *tawhīd* does not qualify a servant in achieving the objectives of Islam. Thus it is necessary to bring, along with that, *tawhīd al-ilāhiyyah*, because God narrates about the polytheists that they had only acknowledged *tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah*.³⁶

Role of Human Reasoning

In view of the fact that Qutb is contented with *nuṣūṣ* (texts) of the Qur'ān and he relies only on it in his discourse on the 'aqīdah. Hence, he is different from others on the role and importance of human reasoning. For this difference he is alleged to be obstructing the importance of reasoning from action and rejecting its role in understanding theological doctrines. It is argued that Qutb ignores the intellect and calls on Muslims to reject it to the extent that they should not think that it is everything and thus becoming its enemy and thinking process. They also reiterate that Islam, according to Qutb, is calling for rejection of the intellect and thinking process and surrendering to blindness without resorting to consciousness or individual human reasoning. However, these allegations are made by rationalists who advocate rationalism as the only source of methodology.

The issue whether or not Qutb is truly against the use of intellect deserves clarification. Hence, some of Qutb's intellectual discourses are analyzed to understand his stance. It is apparent that Qutb gives importance to the

³⁴ Sulayman ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Shaykh (n.d), *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Hamīd Sharh Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, n.p: al-Maktabat al-Salafiyyah, p. 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

intellect and explains relation between the intellect and the revelation. This makes it obvious that he stresses the importance of the intellect in understanding various characteristics of the Islamic worldview. He also explains relation between the intellect and the revelation and the function of the former in receiving the latter. He believes that the intellect is a gift of God and it is capable of receiving the revelation and comprehending its meanings. He states that when the intellect is left to one's own devices far from the revelation it will put his mind to straying from truth to deviation, lack of vision, lack of evaluation, and lack of contemplation and reflection.

Quṭb does not agree with those who believe that the intellect functions as a substitute for the revelation. He rejects the belief of those who subscribe to the view that the intellect is more useful than the revelation. He strongly emphasizes that God has made only the revelation as the authentic source and not the human intellect. He continues by explaining the relation of the intellect with the revelation that the former follows the latter and not vice-versa. He says that when the intellect is in the company of the revelation it will guide him with His endowed guidance and if not it will lead him to ignorance. He further reiterates that the role of the intellect is to receive God's message and to understand what it receives from the Messenger but not to dominate the religion and its injunctions.

Thus Quṭb does not accept rationalistic approach of 'Abduh (d.1905 C.E) in understanding the meanings of the text. He argues that the major flaw of this school lies in depending on Western thought.³⁷ According to 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād man follows a gradual process in developing his *'aqīdah* as he develops gradually in other sciences and technologies. By this process man first follows the stage of the concept of plurality of gods, then the stage of understanding and having ability to give preferences, and lastly the stage of the Unity of God. Al-'Aqqād believes that man cannot reach the stage of the Unity of God except

³⁷ Quṭb. *Zilāl*, vol. 3, p. 1637.

after passing through a number of stages. Qutb strongly condemns this view of al-'Aqqād, for it conflicts with the *nuṣūṣ*, and argues that he is biased due to the Western scholars' influence on Comparative Religion and their line of thinking has affected his Islamic thought.³⁸

Qutb is aware that 'Abduh had to deal with the community whose thinking was almost static and it had closed the doors of *ijtihād*. The use of intellect which is necessary in understanding the *sharī'ah* (God's laws) and deriving legal rulings from it was totally absent. People relied on works of writers of the period of intellectual stagnation, whose discussions mainly focussed on religious thoughts and innovations. On the other hand, the contemporary Muslim community deals with the intellectual period, especially after scientific advancements, intellect had almost become god in the West, and then in this way intellect based philosophy gained supremacy.³⁹

Recognizing the role of human reasoning Qutb strongly believes that its use alone would not serve the purpose of understanding the divine reality. However, as it is obvious, 'Abduh who was a rationalist amongst the exegetes used human reasoning in interpreting the Qur'ān. It is true that when 'Abduh determined to refute the theories of those who rejected the absolute truth, he began to prove the truth of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth with intellectual reasoning. He fought against innovations, ignorance and the commonly held wrong beliefs, which are superstitious in Islamic thought, with a view to reviving *ijtihād*. In addition, he began to prove that Islam attaches importance to intellectual arguments in worldly and religious affairs. He started to disprove allegations of the Westerners that Islam believes in total divine compulsion and absolute human reliance on God. Qutb believes that in this way when 'Abduh initiated a struggle against intellectual stagnation in the East and the intellectual mischief in the West, he considered the intellect

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1885

³⁹ Sayyid Qutb (1982), *The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept*, Delhi: Hindustan Publications, p. 21.

equivalent to the revelation for the purpose of counsel and guidance of humanity.⁴⁰

Quṭb also argues that ‘Abduh has denied any difference between inspiration and intellect; and he did not adopt this stance about the intellect that it should give up whatever it cannot grasp, for the constitution of the intellect and the man are both neither perfect nor absolute. They are limited by space and time, while the revelation discusses the absolute metaphysical realities, sometimes the realities of transcendence and sometimes the nature of the divine determination in the creation of matter, and the intellect has no alternative but to accept these absolute realities without argument, whose comprehension is not at all possible.⁴¹

Role of ‘*Ilm al-Kalām*

It is obvious that Quṭb’s stance on ‘*ilm al-kalām* (theology or scholasticism) is closely linked to the *ṣalafi* methodology in accepting the ‘*aqīdah*.⁴² Due to this stance, some theologians raise their doubts, charge Quṭb and issue their verdict that he has denied or has been antagonistic to theology. But Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Barakāt argues that Quṭb is right in his understanding of theology, he does not deviate from the practices of the *ṣalaf*.⁴³ He adds that it is not clear as to why some scholars accuse Quṭb in spite of the fact that he conforms to the *nuṣūṣ* of the Qur’ān, implements the *ṣalafi* methodology, follows early scholars and relies on the Qur’ānic methodology in presenting the ‘*aqīdah*.⁴⁴

The preliminary study of Quṭb’s views and perspectives on theology precisely shows that he conforms to the Qur’ānic methodology in presenting the ‘*aqīdah*, accepts the texts of the Qur’ān without any preconceived notions, relies on the Qur’ān alone in formulating his understanding of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴² Al-Khālidi, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān fī al-Mīzān*, p. 65.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the 'aqīdah and his thoughts, takes it out with the aim of translating into action, maintains distance from man-made methodologies and cultures for he believes that the texts of the Qur'ān are enough and are explicit in terms of guidance.

Quṭb delineates the causes and historical conditions which led to the development of theology. He strongly argues that the philosophical understanding of the Qur'ān is absolutely alien to the proper methodology of understanding the Qur'ān and 'aqīdah. Thus, he holds 'Islamic philosophy' as ineffective and 'cold knowledge.' In this respect he refers to the history of how the 'so-called Islamic philosophy' came into being. He argues that attempting to understand and interpret the Qur'ān philosophically is a 'deviation from the original Islamic way of thought.'⁴⁵ He says:

1. Jihad movement was stopped and Muslims surrendered to material and intellectual comforts and luxuries.
2. Dangerous political incidents had resulted in serious problems which gave rise to intellectual, political and sectarian differences between Muslims leading to the emergence of various theological sects.
3. Translation of Greek, Indian and other philosophical works and people's infatuation with it and acceptance of these theories and occupying with Greek philosophy and theological research.
4. Muslims' contact with the people of the newly conquered territories such as Persians, Romans, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and others, and their direct contact with them, their impact on their culture and views and their borrowing of their methodology, problems, issues of various kinds, particularly dogmatism.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Rashīd, *Studies on the Political Dimension*, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Sayyid Quṭb (1989), *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa Muqawwimātuh*, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, p. 11.

As stated above, Quṭb argues that both philosophy and theology are inadequate tools for attaining the truth. He propounds a fresh interpretation of Islam from its original sources, i.e., the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and not using the above tools. By rejecting philosophy and theology, he advocates direct and personal understanding of the revelation. His entire Islamic thought is dominated by the optimistic belief in the ability of man to know by simply looking within himself and by the notion that if man is left alone to his own conscience and soul with the help of religion he will be able to acquire adequate understanding of the life.

According to Quṭb the mischief of the Greek philosophy has led Muslim thinkers to indulge into the lifelong debates. Many explanatory notes on Aristotle's philosophy were written and debates on metaphysics took place and the people were under the impression that the Islamic thought cannot be perfect unless it is philosophically interpreted. The people are misled by the deviations of Western thought which is either secular or atheistic. They began to invent and evolve the Islamic philosophy on the basis of the Greek philosophy. According to him the basis of these treatises was the logic of Aristotle.⁴⁷

Quṭb argues that instead of converting their efforts into the permanent style of the Islamic worldview which discusses the entire human structure including its principles, characteristics and elementary rules and does not indulge in a lifeless discussion about merely the human thought as a pastime, they began to mould the Islamic worldview into the style and format of that Western philosophy. Accordingly they borrowed some philosophical thoughts and tried to bring a similarity between them and the Islamic thought but all the technical terms remained as borrowed terms.⁴⁸ Challenging this widely hailed tradition, Quṭb seriously claims that the true Islamic worldview should not be searched with Muslim philosophers. He urges that in fact

⁴⁷ Quṭb, *The Characteristics*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

their thought is but the shadow of Greek philosophy which is strange to the spirit of Islam. Rather Islam's original and complete worldview should be sought from its authentic sources i.e. the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and biography of the Prophet.⁴⁹

Quṭb strongly believes that philosophy has not performed any admirable deed worth mentioning, nor has it inspired humanity to advance for progress. On the contrary, it is *īmān* which liberates man from utter darkness of misguidance and ignorance. Therefore, it is necessary that the 'aqīdah should be presented in the manner of belief only. If people would try to present it in the philosophical mode then they would make it lifeless and would extinguish its light-giving lamp and would be satisfied with only one aspect of the creation of humanity. According to Quṭb whenever belief is presented against its true nature in the complicated, imperfect and strange style of philosophy, it will essentially bring forth complicated, lifeless, purposeless and far-fetched problems leading to total confusion in achieving the real purpose of life.⁵⁰

Quṭb asserts that philosophy and theology are not only un-Islamic but they are Greek in terms of ideological foundation. He believes that Greek pagan thought constitutes the foundation of Western thought.⁵¹ As Quṭb has a different view of the role of philosophy, he disagrees with the endeavours and contributions made by Iqbal who according to him imitated the structure of philosophy for presenting the Islamic thoughts and adopted those styles taken from Hegel and Kant.⁵² Quṭb admits that in the matter of accepting something through revelation, the intellect neither plays a negative role nor can it be ignored. He does not deny that the intellect has the ability of understanding according to its capacity but with that he also believes that there are certain matters where it cannot perceive due to

⁴⁹ Sayyid Quṭb (1978), *Al-'Adālah al-Ijtimā'īyah fī al-Islām*, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Quṭb, *The Characteristics*, p. 12.

⁵¹ Sayyid Quṭb, *Khaṣā'is*, pp. 9-11.

⁵² Quṭb, *The Characteristics*, p. 12.

the limitation of its ability to know the metaphysical realities. The commanding position is given only to those matters that are established by the Qur'ān.

Qutb believes that the phenomenon of 'intellectual luxury' adopted by Muslim intellectuals was further expanded through the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic. They reproduced the deviated directions to the Islamic intellectualisms, which in essence are alien to the original Islamic worldview. From this deviation, all sorts of dogmatic Islamic thought whose hybrid is the sectarian Islam of *al-Khāwarij*, *al-Shi'ah*,⁵³ *al-Sunnī*,⁵⁴ *al-Mu'tazilah*, *al-Murji'ah*,⁵⁵ *al-Qadariyyah*,⁵⁶ and *al-Jabariyyah*⁵⁷ appeared. Eventually this phenomenon led to the corruption of Islamic thought which otherwise should have been based on the Qur'ān alone. As a result the so-called 'Islamic philosophy' appeared on the horizon. Simultaneously emerged were some Muslim figures known as philosophers who were fascinated with the residue of Greek philosophy of that time just as some Muslim thinkers are fascinated with Western civilization in our time.⁵⁸

⁵³ The *Shi'ahs* denied *khilāfah* and accepted *al-imāmah*. There are three main divisions. They are: 1) the *Ithnā 'Ashriyyah*. 2) the *Sab'iyyah/Isma'iliyyah*, and 3) the *Zaydiyyah*.

⁵⁴ The Sunnis comprises the main group of the Muslims. They claim that they base their doctrines entirely on Sunnah. They also include *ijmā'* (consensus) and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) as sources of Islamic law. They believe that a qualified person from the *Quraysh* tribe is eligible to be elected as the *khilāfah* but it is not necessary to be from *Quraysh*.

⁵⁵ Thābit Qutnā in 110 A.H was the first who founded the school of *al-Murji'ah*. It believed that there is hope for all, or one who postpones judgement until it is pronounced by God. It was a moderate Muslim group against *al-Khawārij*. It developed liberalism in Islam.

⁵⁶ This school was founded by Ma'bad ibn Khālid al-Juhinī in 79 A.H. It believed in, 1) the liberty of human will and action, 2) God as not responsible for man's action. 3) man has power over his action and he is responsible for his deeds, and 4) God will reward for his deeds and punish for his evil deeds.

⁵⁷ This school was founded by Jaham ibn Ṣafwān in 127 A.H. It believed in fatalism or predestination or divine compulsion. It denied that action really comes from man. It also believed that man has no freedom of will, no liberty of volition and no choice of action.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

Al-Ashqar refers to the stance of some scholars on *'ilm al-kalām* to show that Quṭb is not the only one who disagreed with it. He quotes al-Shāfi'ī (d.204 A.H) as saying: "My *hukm* (legal ruling) on *ahl al-kalām* (theologians) is that they be beaten by palm branches stripped of their leaves and sandals and be surrounded by tribes and clans or closest relatives and told that this is the reward for leaving the Book and Sunnah and accepting the theology..."⁵⁹ Having deeply engrossed into the issue of *'ilm al-kalām*, al-Rāzī (d.606 A.H) has been reported to have warned others from following the wrong path which he followed in *'ilm al-kalām*. He says, "I thought that theological ways and philosophical methodologies would cure sickness of a person but they did not quench even the burning thirst... I discovered that the nearest way is the Qur'ānic way..."⁶⁰ He further declares, "Whoever attempts like me he will find like my experience..." Having spent his entire life in *'ilm al-kalām*, al-Juwaynī (d.1085 C.E) says, "O friends, do not engage in *'ilm al-kalām*, and if I knew that *al-kalām* would take me to what I have obtained, I would not have engaged in this exercise..."⁶¹ He stated upon his death that "indeed I plunged into the vast ocean, and confused the people of Islam and their knowledge, entered into what they prohibited me from and now if God has not set me right with His mercy; certainly woe is for Ibn al-Juwaynī, here I am, I will die with illiterate *'aqādah*."⁶²

If the above statements quoted by al-Ashqar are authentic then it certainly leads to ponder whether Quṭb was right or wrong in his stance on *'ilm al-kalām*. It is argued that the above views are not authentic and they were not uttered by them but were invented and attributed to them. Nevertheless, Quṭb calls for Qur'ānic approaches to

⁵⁹ 'Umar Sulaymān al-Ashqar (1979), *Al-'Aqīdah fī Allāh*, 1st edition, Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falāh, pp. 37-40. See also other views of the predecessors on the same issue in al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyyah*, pp. 227-229.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

solve problems and not philosophical or theological or rational or Western. By advocating this trend he proves himself antagonistic to the use of philosophy as a tool in understanding the text or the Islamic thought.

Increase and Decrease of *Īmān*

It is alleged that Quṭb believes that *īmān* (faith) neither increases nor decreases. Thus his statements are critically analysed to see whether or not he subscribes to this view. It is probable that Quṭb's views and statements are not understood and thus he is criticized and a conclusion is made, despite his expressions do not imply what they mean. It seems that Quṭb accepts that *īmān* increases and decreases. The expression that gives rise to this notion in *Zilāl* is the statement of Quṭb in interpreting the verse (8: 2) which explicitly refers to the increase and decrease of *īmān*.⁶³ Explaining the meaning of the verse, Quṭb categorically declares that "*īmān* increases and decreases and states that it is one of the pertinent issues of theology... intellectual affluence...and the vacuum of serious practical concern...we will not enter into it."⁶⁴

Quṭb states that the increase of *īmān* or its decrease is the result of an intellectual luxury. To him, it is a theological issue. He argues that it is ideal not to differ with it because the texts of the Qur'ān are precise that *īmān* increases and decreases and the Companions of the Prophet have understood this reality from the texts. He raises a question that if this is the Qur'ānic dictum, then how Muslims can differ from this reality. Even though Muslims are divided into various denominations they still do not advocate it. When different sects look at these verses, they comprehend the meanings on the basis of what the *ṣalaf* did and they have uniform view and that is *īmān* increases practically. This is what Quṭb means from his expressions and that he

⁶³ For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His Signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord. (*Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8: 2).

⁶⁴ Quṭb. *Zilāl*, vol. 3, 1435. (margin)

conforms to the texts which assert the increase of *īmān*. Therefore, there is no basis for theologians to charge Quṭb that he was indifferent.

The Qur'ānic verses (8: 2), (3: 173), (9: 124); (48: 4) explicitly refer to this issue. Quṭb studies these verses and directly inspires from them in matters of the 'aqīdah. He enters the world of Qur'ān without any preconceived ideas and notions and due to the fact that the verses are precise on the issue of increase of *īmān* he believes that *īmān* increases by the believers' obedience. Explaining the verse (8: 2) Quṭb further says:

The heart of the believer finds in the verses of the Qur'ān which increase his *īmān* and he finds in his repeated projection an increase of *īmān* reaching the state of peace and appeasement... and like that the Qur'ānic rhythm on the heart of the believer increases his *īmān*, and indeed the believer's heart is the one which realizes these rhythms which increase his *īmān*.⁶⁵

Both Quṭb and *ahl-Sunnah* (the followers of the patterns of the Prophet) seem to be identical in accepting the phenomenon that *īmān* increases and decreases. Al-Bayhaqī quotes the words of al-Shāfi'ī that *īmān* is word and deed, increases and decreases.⁶⁶ Ibn Ḥajar (d. 853 A.H) refers to the statement of al-Bukhārī as saying that he met more than one thousand scholars in Egyptian cities and did not see even one who differed that *īmān* is words and deeds, increases and decreases.⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥajar further refers to the statement of the *ṣalaf* that they hold the belief that *īmān* increases and decreases but many theologians denied it.⁶⁸ Quṭb concurs with the *ṣalaf* on this issue.

⁶⁵ Quṭb, *Zilāl*, vol. 3, p. 1475.

⁶⁶ Al-Bayhaqī (1981), *Al-I'tiqād wa al-Hidāyah ilā Sabīl al-Rashād*, 1st edition, Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, p. 181.

⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (1300 H), *Fath al-Bārī Bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Egypt: Dār al-Ma'rifah and Dār al-Bāz, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Reliance on *Khabar Āḥād* in 'Aqīdah

The Ḥadīth scholars elaborately discuss the role of *ḥadīth mutawātir* (tradition reported by more than four persons) and *ḥadīth āḥād* (tradition reported by one person only). According to them, *ḥadīth mutawātir* ensures authenticity and nullifies doubts. But *ḥadīth āḥād* does not reach the status of *mutawātir*. There is consensus that *ḥadīth mutawātir* is accepted in matters of the 'aqīdah but there is a difference of opinion on the authentic *ḥadīth āḥād*. The 'ulamā' of *ṣalaf al-ṣāliḥ* (righteous ancestors) believe that everything God revealed or the Prophet (peace be on him) transmitted reached the next generation through authentic channels of transmission and hence it is obligatory to accept it unconditionally. They do not differentiate between *ḥadīth mutawātir* and *ḥadīth āḥād* so long they are authentic and eventually ascertain the 'aqīdah based on them. But there is another group which totally denies the authority of authentic *ḥadīth āḥād* in matters of the 'aqīdah; they do not consider anything as authority except the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth mutawātir*.

Quṭb concurs with the *ijmā'* (consensus) of the 'ulamā' on their reliance of *ḥadīth mutawātir*, however, he does not accept *ḥadīth āḥād* in deriving the 'aqīdah. For example, his view is different on *siḥr* of the Prophet. According to him the report on *siḥr* goes against the fundamental principle that the Prophet is sacrosanct in action and communication. He believes that every word and action of the Prophet is Sunnah and *Sharī'ah*. In this regard, Quṭb states that *ḥadīth āḥād* cannot be considered in matters of the 'aqīdah and it is imperative to refer to the Qur'ān. He argues that *tawātur* is the precondition in accepting the *ahādīth* in the fundamentals of the 'aqīdah. And the report on *siḥr* of the Prophet is not *mutawātir* although the preferred view is that both *sūrat al-Falaq* and *sūrat al-Nās* were revealed in conjunction with it in Makkah.

Thus the above Quṭb's words lead to conclude that he, 1) denies *siḥr* suffered by the Prophet, 2) distances from some of the authentic *ahādīth* by al-Bukhārī and Muslim,

and 3) rejects the authority of *khābar āḥād*⁶⁹ in matters of the 'aqīdah. This is an obvious shift from the main stream of 'aqīdah and hence an analysis is made on the issue of the authority of *ḥadīth āḥād*. It is important to take note that Quṭb believes that the 'aqīdah is not valid unless it is derived based on *ḥadīth mutawātir*. He says that he follows a specific methodology and hence does not discuss the unseen or metaphysical matters in details where there is no text in the Qur'an or *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic tradition) cum *mutawātir*. This is the case even in matters of the 'aqīdah which cannot be perfect without the text of the same kind.

As Quṭb is different in this regard, acceptability of his view on the basis of the *sharī'ah* texts is timely. Some 'ulamā' have academically and methodologically discussed the justification of *khābar āḥād* in matters of the 'aqīdah. 'Umar al-Ashqar, who refers to different groups of 'ulamā' that derives the 'aqīdah on the basis of *khābar āḥād* is the most prominent one. He divides them into four groups. According to him, the fourth group does not accept the authority of *khābar āḥād*. In order to answer and justify, al-Ashqar discusses the instances of *ḥadīth āḥād* used in deriving the 'aqīdah. Then he illustrates four examples for the authority of *khābar āḥād*, responds to those who claim that these *ahādīth* (plural of 'ḥadīth') cannot be considered and finally refutes their approaches. Then he points out the 'aqā'id (plural of 'aqīdah) which are confirmed by *ahādīth āḥād* and asserts that if these *ahādīth* are not considered in matters of the 'aqīdah then it leads to falsification of certain branches of the 'aqīdah. According to him the number of 'aqā'id derived based on *khābar āḥād* is twenty three. He concludes with an observation that whoever rejects the validity of *khābar āḥād* in this regard is at fault.

As the issue is highly crucial, those evidences which appear in al-Ashqar's work about the authority of *khābar āḥād* are analyzed. First, he quotes the verse (9: 122)⁷⁰ and

⁶⁹ *Khābar āḥād* is synonymous of *ḥadīth āḥād*.

⁷⁰ It is not for the believers to go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition goes forth to devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil), *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9: 122).

mentions that the term *tā'ifah* refers to singular or single and this implies that their words are undoubtedly *khavar āḥād*. And the phrase *tafaqquh fi al-dīn* (master or obtain a clear idea of the religion) appears in the same verse represents '*aqā'id* and *aḥkām* (plural of '*ḥukm*' which means legal ruling). He justifies the validity of *khavar āḥād* based on this verse. Second, he quotes God as saying: 'O ye who believe! If a sinner comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth' and then argues that the verse refers to the fact that it is a just thing to take his word or news instantly without confirmation.

Third, he quotes al-Bukhārī on the authority of Mālik ibn al-Ḥuwayrith from the Prophet as saying... "Pray as you seen me praying." This is *ḥadīth āḥād*. Based on this *ḥadīth*, prayers are made compulsory. Fourth, he refers to a *ḥadīth* by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Ānas ibn Mālik from the Prophet as saying that the people of Yemen went to him and said: "Send with us a man who could teach us Sunnah and Islam; the Prophet said: Take with you Abū 'Ubaydah and added that he was trustworthy." This conveys the message that the people of Yemen could rely on him in understanding the Sunnah and Islam and this justifies the validity of *khavar āḥād*.

Al-Ashqar argues that the aforesaid examples unveil the role and importance of *khavar āḥād* in matters of the '*aqidah* without which the '*aqidah* is false. This discourse also shows the position of Quṭb on *khavar āḥād* and his non-acceptance of its authority and conditioning of *tawātur* are strange. It seems that Quṭb's view is contrary to the views of the majority of the '*ulamā*'. Hence it may be concluded that Quṭb deviates from the mainstream of '*aqidah* in this respect. Yet, many believe that it is not proper to accuse him as a deviant on the basis of this error.

Infidelity of Muslims

One of the most serious allegations against Quṭb's '*aqidah* is that he charges Muslims whether rulers or subjects as infidels. But some argue that it is because of the misunderstandings of the statements of Quṭb in *Zilāl* and

Ma'ālim fī al-Tarīq, a book that led to his execution. Historically two groups have deducted dangerous inferences from Quṭb's statements. The first understood that Quṭb believed that all Muslims of his day were infidels except those who were affiliated to the Muslim group popularly known as *Jamā'at al-Takfīr wa al-Hijrah* (the society that charged people of unbelief and call for migration), which claimed to be the brainchild of Quṭb. It took from *Zilāl* and *Ma'ālim* some expressions, moulded them in accordance with their objectives and derived something controversial. *Al-Hukm wa Qaḍīyyat Takfīr al-Muslim* by Sālim al-Bahansāwī and *Naḥnu Du'āt Lā Quḍāt* by Ḥasan al-Ḥuḍaybī refer to this issue.

The second group also accused Quṭb in his '*aqīdah*. Having read his statements, it propagated that Quṭb charged Muslims as infidels. It was represented by Abū 'Izzah who published several articles in the Lebanon based *Majallat al-Shihāb* (*al-Shihāb* magazine) in which he argued that Quṭb believed that people in Muslim countries were infidels even though they performed their religious obligations like prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage with an exception of the members of Islamic organizations.⁷¹ What is the reality then? Is it true that he held this view? In order to know the answers to these questions Quṭb's expressions which seemed to have confused people are analysed. Interpreting the verse (2: 276) Quṭb declares:

Here the verse is very clear and it declares that those who persistently continue usurious transactions, after its plain prohibition, as transgressing infidels, who are the victims of the hatred of God. There is no doubt that those who permit such a thing, which is prohibited by God, are considered to be infidels and wrongdoers even though they chant the word 'there is no god except Allāh Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh' thousand times. Islam is not mere the utterance of the word alone, but it is a system of life and practical methodology. And

⁷¹ *Majallat al-Shihāb*. No. 21, dated 16 Safar 1393, p. 5.

rejecting a part of Islam is like rejecting it in its entirety. There is no doubt about the prohibition of usury. To regard it as lawful and to establish one's life on its basis is nothing but infidelity and transgression.⁷²

The above quote is precise that Quṭb reasserts the law of God on usury. He argues that those who consistently resort to the system of usury and claim that it is permissible and deny that it is prohibited are not in the fold of Islam. He believes that one may claim to be God-conscious and yet if he attempts to legalise what is unlawful he leaves the mainstream of Islamic '*aqīdah*'. For this interpretation some accuse that Quṭb supports *al-Khāwarij* for they also subscribed to the same view that those who perpetrate grave sins are infidels. Overall analysis of the issue shows that Quṭb's view here is not strange but is in line with the views of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. Interpreting the verse (6: 121) Quṭb literally follows the text. The '*ulamā*' among the *Salaf* have understood that obedience to the Evil among men and *jinn* and to remain under their control and following them is *shirk*. In this context Quṭb says:

The text of the Qur'ān is definite that the obedience of a Muslim to a man even partly in the legislation of a law which is not derived from God's *Sharī'ah* and does not accept and recognize God alone as the ruler, certainly obedience of a Muslim to this part expels him from Islam and push him to *shirk*.⁷³

Quṭb quotes Ibn Kathīr to substantiate his viewpoint that whoever obeys a man in the *sharī'ah* on his own opinion even if it is a small part he is a *mushrik* (one who associate a partners to god). If he is truly a Muslim then he did that, then, it expels him from Islam and place him in *shirk* no matter what he is and says, 'I bear witness that there is no god except God by his tongue' whereas he receives (the law) from other than God and obeys (someone) other than God.'⁷⁴

⁷² Quṭb, *Zilāl*, vol. 1, p. 328.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1197.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

It is important to take note that Qutb quotes the text of the Qur'ān and the explanation of the Prophet to substantiate his view point. The early scholars have also understood it in the same way. Hence, it is obvious that he does not charge any Muslim individual as an infidel under normal circumstances, however his statement refers to the one who is a Muslim or who claims that he is still a Muslim and yet he rejects the *shari'ah* and chooses the law of man, certainly he rejects Islam and believes in *kufir* (unbelief). Here Qutb explains to present day Muslims the methods of *da'wah*, the meanings of *shirk*, the reality of Islam, and the paths of Muslims and polytheists but does not earmark any specific way. Then he calls on Muslims to choose what they want. It is up to Muslims to sustain the result of their choices.

The issue of *takfir* (charging a Muslim as an infidel) generally moves around rulers who rule and people who are ruled by other than what has been revealed by God. As for those who are ruled they are not regarded as infidels under the normal circumstances except if they wish to be ruled by other than the law of God and are contented with it. Qutb, while explaining the meaning of the verse (4: 60),⁷⁵ considers if they wish to rule by false god (*tāghūt*) they leave the fold of *īmān*. He asserts:

In these verses we find perfect, conclusive and decisive limitation for the condition of *īmān* and the boundary of Islam. We find the testimony from God for lack of *īmān* for those who wish to rule based on false god and they are charged to be committing *shirk* with Him...⁷⁶

Qutb further argues that if we ponder the signs of the impact of the above verse '*yurīdunā 'an yatahākamū*' it

⁷⁵ Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to thee? Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the Right) (*Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4: 60).

⁷⁶ Qutb, *Zilāl*, vol. 3, p. 693.

implies '*irādathum al-taḥākum*' which he understands that it refers to infidelity with desire because they intentionally, voluntarily, gladly and preferentially choose *ṭāghūt*. And whoever is like this he is an infidel, not only according to Qutb but also *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. He explains in another context the infidelity of rulers is that those who are contented with the rule of other than God and that is deducted while interpreting the verse (5: 43).⁷⁷

Qutb states that both the verses (4: 65);⁷⁸ (5: 43) are related to people and not rulers. And these verses expel people from *īmān* and deny the characteristic of *īmān* of those who are not satisfied by the rule of God and His Messenger and reject it.⁷⁹ This discourse obviously shows that people are not charged with infidelity in the view of Qutb except when they are not ruled by the law of God in their life or they are not satisfied by the rule of God. Qutb's evidence of the argument is based on the above verses which deny the characteristics of *īmān* of those who are not contented with the rule of God and His Messenger. He also believes that those who do that they are infidels even according to *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*.

Al-Bahansāwī states that it is vivid that Qutb does not charge Muslims of the contemporary age as infidels but the rulers who rule them by what has not been revealed by God. Qutb does not presuppose that they are contented with this but explains that *kufṛ* ascertains only with regard to those who are not satisfied with the rule of God and the Messenger or those who reject it preferring the rule of modern *jāhiliyyah*.⁸⁰ This is about the people. As for rulers

⁷⁷ But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have (their own) Law before them? - therein is the (plain) command of Allah; yet even after that, they would turn away, for they are not (really) people of Faith. (*Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5: 43).

⁷⁸ But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee the judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction (*Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4: 65).

⁷⁹ Qutb, *Zilāl*, vol. 2, p. 895.

⁸⁰ Sālim al-Bahansāwī (1977), *Al-Hukm wa Qaḍīyyat Takfīr al-Muṣlim*, 1st edition, Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, p. 139.

who rule people by what has not been revealed by God certainly they, based on this knowledge, are not regarded as Muslims. Here Qutb's statement is transparent that he charges them as infidels.

Qutb argues that the verse (5: 44)⁸¹ reflects the definite ruling and the generalization 'man' carries the condition and the answering clause eliminates the boundaries of environments, the time, the space and it goes as a general ruling for those who do not judge by what has been revealed by God in any generation and in any tribe. The rationality is that those who do not rule by what has been revealed by God are regarded as rejecting *al-ulūhiyyah* of God. Among the characteristics and necessities of *al-ulūhiyyah* is *al-hākimiyyah al-tashrī'iyyah* (legislative sovereignty) and whoever rules by what has not been revealed by God rejects *al-ulūhiyyah* of God and its characteristics.

The above statements refer to rulers and not people. He explains the reasons which made him to regard rulers as infidels. The effects and sources in the above text also earmark the reasons and characteristics which lead to this judgement. In the judgement on rulers and people Qutb delineates that those who do not rule by what has been revealed by God they are infidels, oppressors and sinful and those who do not accept the rule of God among the people they are no more the believers.⁸² It is observed that *kufr* which Qutb refers to is the *kufr* which expels one from the community. *Kufr* according to him, especially in this context, is rejection of what has been prescribed by God, the rule by other than what has been revealed by God and

⁸¹ It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers. (*Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5: 44)

⁸² Qutb, *Zilāl*, vol. 2, pp. 901-902.

resorting to other than the law of God regardless of small or big.⁸³

The views of early and contemporary scholars deserve analysis to see whether anyone is identical with Qutb in holding this view. In this regard, al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn Mas'ūd as saying that both 'Alqamah and Masrūq asked Ibn Mas'ūd about corruption. Ibn Mas'ūd replied that it was forbidden. They asked what the legal ruling was. Ibn Mas'ūd replied that it was *kufr* and substantiated it by reciting the verse (5: 44).⁸⁴ This is the opinion of Ibn Mas'ūd.⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī believes that God generalised the information about the community which once followed the rule of God which He stipulated in His Book as infidels. Then He informed about them that they left the rule (of God) as the infidels left it and thus the ruling is that whoever does not judge by what has been revealed by God, unbelieving in it, by God he is an infidel.⁸⁶

In this regard Ibn Kathīr argues that whoever does like this he is an infidel and it is obligatory to kill him until he returns to the rule of God and His Messenger.⁸⁷ Ibn Ubayy al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī's view is that the rule by other than what has been revealed by God is *kufr*, it dismisses him from the community whether it is a big or small sedition or insubordination. And this *kufr* is either metaphorical or minor based on the above views. If anyone believes that the rule by what has been revealed by God is not obligatory and that it is optional and neglects it in spite of the fact that he

⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1052

⁸⁴ It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers. (*Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5: 44).

⁸⁵ Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (n.d), *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, vol. 10, p. 357.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 358.

⁸⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 2, p. 67.

is certain that it is the ruling of God that is a major *kufr*...means expulsion from the community.⁸⁸

Contemporary Qur'ānic exegete Aḥmad Shākir states that this issue in the positive law is clear like the visible sun. It is a plain *kufr* hidden in it. There is no excuse for anyone who is affiliated to Islam, whoever he may be, to act with it or to surrender to it or to institute it.⁸⁹ Maḥmūd Shākir says that the deeds of the contemporary rulers who rule by other than what has been revealed by God are similar to shunning away from the rule of God. It is detest from His religion and preference for manmade laws over the laws of God. And this is *kufr* and no one doubts about it.⁹⁰

In this regard Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī says that a ruler who conceptually refers to the characteristics of the legitimacy of an action contrary to the command of God is undoubtedly *kufr* of the definite text.⁹¹ 'Abd Allāh 'Azzām says that a ruler who commands the replacement of the religion of God and legalizes the manmade laws in its place steps out of the community by this deed for he prefers the word of man over the word of God and sees that the manmade laws are more suitable than the laws of God.⁹² Here, Quṭb's contemporaries who also charge rulers as infidels due to their rule by other than God's laws show whether or not Quṭb was prejudiced or offensive for his views. It is clear that Quṭb charges them as infidels. And others also hold the same view.

Quṭb's Stance on Mu'tazilites

Another principle rejected by Quṭb in the 'aqīdah is the absolute rationalist approach to it. As he is opposed to it, he

⁸⁸ Al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdat al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, pp. 363-364.

⁸⁹ Aḥmad Shākir (n.d), *Umdat al-Tafsīr fī Ikhtisār ibn Kathīr*, Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, vol. 4, p. 74.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 10, p. 348 (margin).

⁹¹ Ḥasan al-Huḍaybi (1978), *Du'at Lā Quḍāt*, 2nd. edition, Beirut: Dār al-Salām, pp. 207-208.

⁹² 'Abd Allāh 'Azzām (1980), *Al-'Aqīdah wa Atharuhā Fī Binā'i al-Jīl*, 2nd. edition, Ammān: Maktabat al-'Aqsā, p. 178.

does not approve the stand of Mu'tazilites who were rationalists and used reasoning alone to justify the revelation. He comments on Mu'tazilites' view on attributes of God. According to him, the belief of Mu'tazilites that God's attributes are not eternal is tantamount to *shirk*. Quṭb refers to the Qur'ān where God is explained as the 'One' the 'Eternal' the 'Absolute', 'All-Knowing' and 'Omni-potent'. He argues that these descriptions in the Qur'ān provide evidence that God has these qualities. He explicitly asserts that the use of human reason to justify the Mu'tazilites arguments is rebellion against the authority of the Qur'ān.⁹³ He quotes the verses to substantiate his argument in this regard.⁹⁴ He believes that the Qur'ān contains God's words and it is His revelation. In this way he categorically refutes the theory of Mu'tazilites that the Qur'ān is God's creation. He concludes that the Mu'tazilites have used the conceptual logic of Aristotle and the abstraction of Plato, instead of the Qur'ānic methodology in explaining the Qur'ān.⁹⁵ Thus this stand of Quṭb shows that he is not inclined to Mu'tazilite School.

The Death of Īsā

Another issue that Quṭb differs is the death of Prophet Īsā (peace be on him). The general belief is that Prophet Īsā was raised to Heaven alive and he will return to the earth prior to the end of the worldly life as the follower of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). Quṭb interprets that Prophet Īsā died on earth first and then was raised to Heaven. While interpreting the verse (4: 157) he seems to be confused about the ascension of Prophet Īsā whether that took place after his death or he was physically raised to Heaven alive, although he admits that Prophet Īsā had died before his elevation.

⁹³ Sayyid Quṭb (1988), *Muḥawwimāt al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī*, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, pp. 273-274.

⁹⁴ Al-Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*, verses 1-3 and *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, verses 22-24.

⁹⁵ Sayyid Quṭb, *Muḥawwimāt*, pp. 273-274.

He argues while interpreting the verse (3: 55) that the issue of *raf'* (ascension) of Prophet Īsā is one of the *mutashābihāt* (unclear) and thus the true meaning is known to God alone.⁹⁶ The same stand is also reflected in the interpretation of the verse (4: 157). In this context he argues that the Qur'ān does not provide detailed description on Prophet Īsā's ascension whether it took place while he was alive or was raised spiritually after his death? He adds that he does not want to go against the set methodology of his exegesis by resorting to the tales and baseless stories for which he believes that there is no concrete evidence.⁹⁷ At last he speaks up his mind clearly that Īsā had died before he was raised to Heaven. To quote Him:

The clear texts of the Qur'an imply that Prophet Īsā was given death by God before he was elevated. Some other texts state that he is still alive. There is no conflict, as I see, between dying from worldly life and being alive with God... The martyrs also die on earth, and are alive with God. But the nature of their living is not known to us. The same applies to the life of Prophet sā, who appeals to his Lord: I do not have any knowledge of what they have committed after my death...⁹⁸

Qutb's above conclusion apparently contradicts the view of the majority of the scholars as they all agree that Prophet Īsā was raised both physically and spiritually to the Heaven and prior to the end of the worldly life he will descend as one of the followers of the Prophet and he, together with Imām Mahdī, will kill Dajjāl.

⁹⁶ Qutb, *Zilāl*, vol. 1, p. 403.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 802.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 1001. Noor Mohammad Usmani (1999). *Sayyid Qutb's Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān: A Methodological Study*, M.A Thesis (unpublished). Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, p. 217.

Conclusion

The above analysis leads to conclude that Quṭb's discourse on the 'aqidah has positive and negative dimensions. Even though all the allegations are not substantiated, the study discloses some major shift in his understanding of the 'aqidah. The most important issue in which Quṭb seems to be different is the issue of 'ilm al-kalām. Quṭb rejects the absolute philosophical, rational and theological approaches in the understanding of the 'aqidah. He believes that such approaches would lead to deviation in the matters of 'aqidah. While giving due recognition to the role of human reasoning in understanding the 'aqidah, he totally rejects absolute reliance on the reasoning whereby the revelation is substituted by reasoning. It is not proven that he is indifferent on the issue of the increase and decrease of īmān. But he accepts that īmān increases and decreases and he is in line with the Salaf. However, he has drastically diverted from the Salaf on the issue of accepting *khbar āhād* in the matters of the 'aqidah for which he is criticized which would result in serious implications on some of the basic principles. The allegation that he charged Muslims as infidels is not substantiated, however, his interpretations of the concept of *al-ulūhiyyah* and *al-rubūbiyyah* are revolutionary and he is different from others in this regard.