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Conclusion:

In Defense of the Enemy

Qutb wrote, "[Islam] had the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions that restrict man's freedom of choice. It does not attack individuals nor does it force them to accept its beliefs." [269] Qutb's philosophy includes a goal, the utopian umma, and a path, jihad. These two sentences summarize his vision of jihad. Jihad tears down prisons, topples tyrants, and frees the prisoners from their cells of ignorance. Islam does not attack the individuals it tries to free. The terrorists who claim to follow Qutb, however, read selectively and implement the active, the violent, the angry and outward without the passive, loving, and inward. Leaders steal his words to legitimize their means and motivate their followers. Suicide bombers obey his calls to martyrdom, but ignore his objections against killing the innocent. They murder the people they should be trying to save. Usama bin Laden directs Muslims to use their lives to kill the infidels. "We -- with Allah's help -- call on every Muslim who believes in Allah and wishes to be rewarded to comply with Allah's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it." [270] Organizations like al-Qaeda ignore Qutb's message that all modern societies are jahili and Muslims must battle the near enemy and establish the umma before they turn to the far enemy. Instead of working to establish their paradise on earth, members of al-Qaeda direct their battles against America as a symbol of the West even though Qutb described America as just one example of jahiliyya, one example of the depravity of all secular societies. The actions of al-Qaeda reveal that they are not trying to rid the world of jahiliyya, not taking active steps towards a real goal. Instead, they make violent symbolic strikes against the perceived enemy. "It is essential to hit the main enemy who divided the Ummah into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion." [271] Bin Laden speaks only of attacking this symbol of the West, of revenge and hatred. He never once speaks of converting Americans.

In one paragraph of his Declaration of War, bin Laden echoes Qutb's main goal when he speaks of "the unification of the people under the divine law of Allah." [272] But the rest of the declaration is only hatred, threats, and calls to violence: "there is nothing between us that needs to be explained, there is only killing and neck smiting." [273] Al-Qaeda's leaders studied Qutb's philosophy and claim to follow his teaching. But where is Qutb's "correct procedure," "to mix with discretion, give and take with

dignity, speak the truth with love, and show the superiority of the Faith with humility?"[274]

Many modernists and apologists have suggested that terrorists selectively read the Qur'an to pick out the passages that condone violent jihad. Another problem is the selective reading of Qutb. Qutb is not dangerous because he preaches violence. He is dangerous because there is no way to follow his complete philosophy. A selective reading is the only possible reading.

DEFENDING THE ENEMY

Terrorist organizations attack civilians and focus their hatred on America. They believe Westerners are the enemies and they believe they follow Qutb when they commit mass murder. Another reading of Qutb, however, a reading stripped of preconceptions, desperate violence, and desire for revenge, reveals that Qutb never calls for violence. He calls for defense. He asks the believer to defend the souls of those lost in jahiliyya, to teach, to lead by example, to save unbelievers from hollow existence and suffering. Qutb does not tell Muslims to fight the unbelievers, but to fight for them. Westerners, says Qutb, are not the true enemies.

At the same time, discourse in the West paints Qutb as the enemy, the father of terror. The war on terror, promises Bush, is a war of ideas. Could we teach a new understanding of Qutb? Could we defend him from the one-sided attacks of the Western press? Could we promote a new reading of Qutb among militant youths before they become suicide bombers? Could we destroy the false conceptions of his philosophy that the radical leaders use to exploit their followers? If we acknowledge the truth - this beloved martyr did not advocate violence, but urged his readers to strive for utopia - how many lives could we save? Like the radical fundamentalists, the Western press and many Western scholars paint Sayyid Qutb as our enemy, the father of terror, the inspiration of fundamentalism. In reality, he need not be our enemy at all.