

## CHAPTER III

### SAYYID QUTB AND *TAFSÎR FI ZHÎLÂL AL-QUR'AN*

#### A. Intellectual Biography of Sayyid Qutb

##### 1. Biography of Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb is one of the icons of a contemporary interpreter who is presenting an interesting model of interpretation and trying to answer the actual problem at the time. He wrote *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* and the other works of interpretations. Social reality which is often called the modern ignorance (*jahîlîyyah hadîtsah*) requires a reformulation and reconstruction, which leads to the formation of an ideal Islamic society, relying on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Then reading Sayyid Qutb's interpretation can not be separated from historicity and the development of Sayyid Qutb's thought in general.

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Hussayn Shadhili was born on 8 October 1906 in the village of Mushâ in the Asyût province of Upper Egypt. His father was Hajjî Ibrâhîm Qutb, a well-to-do farmer of the region. The family, which traces its ancestry ultimately to Central Asia via India, in addition to father and mother, consisted of two brothers and three sisters, of whom Sayyid Qutb was the eldest. His brother Muhammad and two of his sisters, Amînah and Hamîdah, were also writers active in Islamic causes; all suffered arrest for their views along with their brother in 1965.<sup>1</sup>

In his writings, Sayyid Qutb attributed his strong bent towards religion to the influence of his parents. His mother, Fatîmah Husayn 'Uthmân, had a particular love for the Qur'an which she inculcated in her offspring; she was determined that her children should all become *huffâz*

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<sup>1</sup> Many sources that can be read as informations of Sayyid Qutb life, there are Majdi Fadhlullah, *Ma' Sayyid fî fikrihi as-Siyasi wa Ad-Dini*, Beirut, Mu'assasah Ar-Risalah, 1979; Muhammad Taufiq Barakah, *Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut, Dar-ad-Da'wah, without year; A. A. Musallam, *the Formative Sage of Sayyid Qutb's Intellcetual Career and his Emergence as an Islamic Da'iyân 1906-1852*, PhD thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, U.M.I., 1983. page 30-36

(memorizers of the holy book). It was her custom to invite professional Qur'an reciters to the family home during the nights of the month of fasting (Ramadan), and Sayyid Qutb later recalled listening to the chanting of the sacred verses at his mother's side. He also mentioned the care exercised by his father to impress upon the youth the significance of the coming Day of Judgment.

Sayyid Qutb's earliest education was in the local village school where by the age of ten he had memorized the Qur'an. His mother was the sympathetic ear for his recitations during this time. At age 13 he went to Cairo for further study and there entered the *Dar al-'Ulûm* secondary school (established 1872), which offered an essentially secular education; among its purposes was the preparation of students for employment with government. At this stage of his life he was much influenced by the Westernizing tendencies prevalent in the school and among some Egyptian intellectuals. In Cairo, he completed his high school education and enrolled in the teachers' college, *Darul al-'ulûm*, in 1929. In 1939 he qualified as an Arabic-Language teacher and received a Bachelor of Arts degree then joined the ministry of education. Very soon (about six years), he left his ministry job as a teacher and devoted his time to freelance writing. A factor leading to his resignation from the teaching job was his disagreement with the ministry of education and many colleagues regarding his philosophy of education and his attitude towards the literary arts.<sup>2</sup>

He lost his father while he was in Cairo, so he convinced his mother to move with him to Cairo, where she died in 1940. After the death of his mother, he expressed his loneliness in several articles (*Ummah, My Mother*)

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<sup>2</sup> Further reading There is an article on Sayyid Qutb by Yvonne Y. Haddad in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, edited by John Esposito (1983). Detailed information on the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* and their history up to 1954 may be found in the work by Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Ikhwanul Muslimin* (London, 1969). Many of Sayyid Qutb's beliefs are set forth in the paperback *Islam and Universal Peace* (1977) <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404705757.html>

published in the book, "*Atâtiáf Alarbâ*" (The Four Lights), which his sisters, brother and he wrote.<sup>3</sup>

A turning point came for Sayyid Qutb in 1949 when he was sent to the United States for higher studies in educational administration. Over a two-year period he worked in several different institutions including what was then Wilson Teachers' College in Washington, D.C. and Colorado State College for Education in Greeley, as well as Stanford University. He also traveled extensively visiting the major cities of the United States and spent time in Europe on the return journey to Egypt. His reaction to the Western experience was decidedly negative; he found Western society hopelessly materialistic, corrupt, morally loose, and ridden with injustice. He was especially distressed by the disrespect shown to Arabs in the United States and the overwhelming support of its people for the state of Israel, founded in 1948. His trip to the United State was a defining moment for him, marking these religious commitments. Although he acknowledge the economic and scientific achievement of American society, Qutb was appalled by its racism, sexual permissiveness, and pro-Zionism. One of the most popular of his books, *Social Justice in Islam* (1948), reflects his critical attitude to the West.

Even before the journey to America Sayyid Qutb had begun to manifest interest in the teachings of the Society of *al-Ikhwân al-Muslimûn*, the foremost of Egypt's resurgent Islamic organizations. Founded in 1929 by Hassan Al-Bannâ', the society had numerous followers and sympathizers and wielded much political influence. In 1949, however, it was banned, and many of its members were arrested after the assassination of the Egyptian prime minister, *al-Nuqrashi*, by one of the Brothers. The society gained a new lease on life in 1952 with the *coup d'état of the Free Officers* which overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. Many of the Free Officers had long had clandestine and sympathetic relations with the *al-Ikhwân al-Muslimûn*. The

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.islam101.com/history/people/century20/syedQutb.htm>

society's members were released from prison, a new leader was chosen to replace al-Bannâ' (who had been murdered in the violence of 1949), and Sayyid Qutb, formerly a mere member, emerged as one of the foremost figures. He was employed in the society's Bureau of Guidance and was placed in charge of the office that bore responsibility for the propagation of the society's Islamic views. In this position, he exercised the function of intellectual leader of the Brothers, expressing his opinions in books and numerous articles in a variety of journals.<sup>4</sup>

In July 1954 he was editor of the society's newspaper, *al-Ikhwân al-Muslimûn*, but it was published for only two months when the newspaper was closed by Gamal Abdel Nasser because of its opposition to the Anglo-Egyptian pact of that year. Originally, the relations between the *al-Ikhwân al-Muslimûn* and the Free Officers had been close, but they soured as the Brothers began to oppose government policy. There was a complete rupture in 1954 after an attempt on the life of President Nasser. Six members of the society were executed, thousands of others were arrested, and the society was again declared illegal.<sup>5</sup>

Sayyid Qutb was among those arrested and was sentenced by the People's Court to 15 years' rigorous imprisonment. The experience was extremely difficult for Sayyid Qutb, especially the first three years; he was a sick man who suffered from a number of afflictions. It is alleged also that he was made to undergo torture of various kinds. Nevertheless, during the years in jail—which lasted until mid-1964—he completed his influential commentary on Qur'an (*In the Shadow of the Qur'ân*) in 30 parts (eight volumes).

Sayyid Qutb was released from prison because of an appeal by Iraq's president Abdul Salam Arib to Nasser, but he remained under surveillance.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Tripp, *Sayyid Qutb : Visi politik in Pioners of Islamic revival*, edited by Ali Rahnama translated by Ilyas Hasan ( Bandung : Mizan 1995 ) page 155

<sup>5</sup> William E. Shepard, Islam as a "System" in *The Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb. Islam and Ideology: toward a Typology in the in an Anthology of Contemporary Middle Eastern History*. Edited by Syafiq Mughni Canada page 438

However, he continued to write and to work for the Islamic discourse. After less than a year of freedom he was again arrested on a charge of attempting to overthrow the Egyptian government. The basis of the charge was his last book, *Milestones*, which sanctioned force as a means to bring about an Islamic revolution and to transform society. On August 19, 1966, Sayyid Qutb and two companions were sentenced to death by a military tribunal, and the sentence was carried out on the morning of August 25 following. Sayyid Qutb is, thus, known as *shahid*, or martyr.<sup>6</sup>

In his personal intellectual evolution Sayyid Qutb passed from a westernizing tendency in his youth to a revolutionary Islamic radicalism in the years before his death. He is a hero and one of the principal ideologues of the Islamic resurgence in the last third of the 20th century. His writings have been translated into many languages, and he is read wherever Muslims are found. His teachings concerning *jihâd* and the Islamic revolution were major influences on 'Ali Shari'ati' and the students who, following him, participated in the Iranian revolution.

## 2. The Works of Sayyid Qutb

On his life, Sayyid Qutb has produced more than twenty pieces of work in various fields. His writing of books is also very closely connected with his life journey. During 1930s, Qutb works of fictions, literary critic, and poetry. He was influenced by such modernists as Thâhâ Husayn, 'Abbas al-'Aqqâd, and Ahmad Al-Zayyât. Al-'Aqqâd in particular introduced him to editors of various newspapers, and he wrote scores of articles over the course of his career for the Egyptian press. Thâhâ Husayn, who was a major advisor of the Ministry of Education, also encouraged him, at one time introducing his lectures to the Officers's club after the July 1952 coup that overthrew the monarchy. However, Qutb turned against both al-'Aqqâd,

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<sup>6</sup> Moussalli: 1992 page 36-37

whose writings he deemed overly intellectualized, and Husayn, on account of his Western orientations.<sup>7</sup>

In the era before the 1940s, he wrote many books of literature that would void the religious elements. This is seen in his work entitled "*al-Syi'r Muhimmât fî al-hâyah*" in 1933, and "*al-Mustaqbal Naqd Tsaqâfah fî Misr*" in 1939. In the 1940s, Sayyid Qutb began to apply the religious elements in his work. This is evident in his later works titled "*al-Tashwîr al-Fanni fî al-Qur`an*" (1945) and "*al-qiyâma Masyâhid fî al-Qur`an*".

According to Qutb, Islam has to answers to all social and political problems of that time. Islam also held out the possibility of creating a harmonious and cohesive society.<sup>8</sup>

Qutb, whom regime had already detained for three months in early 1954, and then released, was caught in the net of arrest. Although, he suffered from poor health, Qutb was brutally tortured. In May 1955 he was transferred to the prison hospital. In July, the court sentenced him to fifteen years in prison, most of which he spent in the hospital. He witnessed continued torture against his colleagues in the jail, with perhaps the worst episode occurring in 1957 when more than a score of the Muslim Brotherhood inmates were killed outright and dozens injured. Accordingly, Qutb set in motion ideas for creation of a disciplined secret cadre of devoted followers whose task originally was limited to self-defense. Without declaring it publicly, however, Qutb came to believe in using violence against his organization. Still later, he came to the view that violence was justified even if the regime were merely deemed unjust and refused to alter its behavior.<sup>9</sup>

During this period the conception of Islamic State forefront, various implications of this conception appear in the final work, *Ma'âlîm fî Al-Thâriq*. This book is allowed to publish by Egyptian authorities, and

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<sup>7</sup> Shahrugh Akhavi, Sayyid Qutb in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* volume III ( New York: Oxford University Press 1995) page 401

<sup>8</sup> Charless Tripp. Op cit page 158

<sup>9</sup> Shahrugh Akhavi, op cit page 401

reprinted five times, then banned the following year, and then it used as primary evidence of Sayyid Qutb who accused of conspiring to overthrow the regime.<sup>10</sup>

*Ma'âlîm fî Al-Thâriq* has been called "one of the most influential works in Arabic of the last half century".<sup>11</sup> It is probably Qutb's most famous and influential work and one of the most influential Islamist tracts written. It has also become a manifesto for the ideology of "Qutbism". The commentators have praised *Milestones* as a ground-breaking, inspirational work by a hero and a martyr,<sup>12</sup> and reviled it as a prime example of unreasoning entitlement, self-pity, paranoia, and hatred that has been a major influence on Islamist terrorism. Sayyid Qutb's career and writings represent one of the more dramatic responses to the tension between tradition and modernity and his view of Islam as system is one of the ways, as will be argued below, that the dynamism of modernity is, so to speak, channeled into Islamic form.

The Works of Sayyid Qutb, there are *Mahammat al-Shâ'ir fî'l-Hâyah wa Shi'r al-Jîl al-Hâdir* (The Task of the Poet in Life and the Poetry of the Contemporary Generation), in 1933, *al-Shâti al-Majhûl* (The Unknown Beach) in 1935, *Naqd Kitâb: Mustaqbal al-Thaqâfa fî Misr* (Critique of a Book by Taha Hussein: the Future of Culture in Egypt) in 1939, *Al-Taswîr al-Fanni fî'l-Qur'an* (Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an) in 1945, *Al-Atyaf al-Arba'a* (The Four Apparitions) in 1945, *Tifl min al-Qarya* (A Child from the Village) in 1946, *Al-Madîna al-Mashûra* (The Enchanted City) in 1946, *Kutub wa Shakhsiyyât* (Books and Personalities) in 1946, *Askwak* (Thorns) in 1947, *Mashâhid al-Qiyâma fî'l-Qur'an* (Aspects of Resurrection in the Qur'an) in 1946, *Al-Naqd al-Adâbi: Usuluhu wa Manahijuhu* (Literary Criticism: Its Foundation and Methods') in 1948.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid page 160

<sup>11</sup> *The Age of Sacred Terror* by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, New York : Random House, c2002, p.63

<sup>12</sup> Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 1992, 14-15

In his Theoretical works, there are *Al-Adâla al-Ijtimâ'iyya fi'l-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam)<sup>13</sup> in 1949, *Ma'arâkât al-Islam wa'l-Ra's Maliyya* (The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism) in 1951, *Al-Salam al-'Alami wa'l-Islam*<sup>14</sup> (World Peace and Islam) in 1951, *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an), first installment 1954, *Dirasât Islâmiyya*<sup>15</sup> (Islamic Studies) in 1953, *Hadhâ'l-Din* (This Religion is Islam)<sup>16</sup>, n.d. (after 1954), *Al-Mustaqbal li-hadhâ'l-Din* (The Future of This Religion)<sup>17</sup>, n.d. (after 1954), *Khasais al-Tasawwar al-Islami wa Muqawamatuhu* (The Characteristics and Values of Islamic Conduct)<sup>18</sup> in 1960, *Al-Islam wa Mushkilât al-Hadâra* (Islam and the Problems of Civilization), n.d. (after 1954), *Ma'âim fi'l-Thâriq* (Signposts on the Road, or Milestones) in 1964, Basic Principles of Islamic Worldview, The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics, Islam and universal peace.

### 3. Sayyid Qutb Thought

Two of Qutb's major influences were the medieval Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiya, and contemporary Pakistani/Indian Islamist writer Sayyid Abul 'Ala Al-Mawdudi. Both used the historical term *jahîliyya* to describe contemporary events in the Muslim world.<sup>19</sup> Two other concepts popularized by Qutb in *Milestones* also came from Maududi: *al-'ubûdiyya*, or worship, (which is performed not only by praying and adoring but by obeying); and *al-hakîmiyya*, or sovereignty, (which is God's over all the earth and violated when His law, the Sharî'a, is not obeyed).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Published by Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur in 2000

<sup>14</sup> Published by Pustaka Firdaus 1987

<sup>15</sup> Published by Dar Sy-Syruq Kairo 1993

<sup>16</sup> Beirut and Damascus: Holy Qur'an Publishing House ( I.I.R.S.O.), 1398-1978, English translation : The Religion of Islam , Salamiah, Kuwait: I.I.F.S.O., 1402-1982.

<sup>17</sup> Beirut and Damascus: Holy Qur'an Publishing House ( I.I.R.S.O.), 1398-1978, English Translation : the Religion of the Future,

<sup>18</sup> Eighth printing, Beirut and Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1403 H/ 1938, published by Pustaka Bandung 1990

<sup>19</sup> Sivan, *Radical Islam*, p.65, 128; Kepel, *Muslim*, p.194

<sup>20</sup> Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (2003) p.60

Hassan Hanafi explained that the development of Sayyid Qutb's thought is divided into three periods, First, literary periods, a period in which is the interpretation of Qur'an have to go through the artistic illustration (*taswîr fannî*) and ascetic appreciation (*tadzawwuq Jamâli*). During this interpretation was born two works that have literary style, namely *al-Taswîr al-Fannî fî al-Qur'an* and *al-Qiyâma Masyâhid fî al-Qur'an*. It is the embryonic period *Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*. Second: general Islamic periods, a period in which is the interpretation of Qur'an to be able to contribute to the development of Islamic thought in general, the theory of renewal of Islamic thinking, which relies on the concept of social reform (*al-ijtimâ'i islah*) and social solidarity (*al-takâful al-ijtimâ'i*). From this was born the work of the period, entitled: *al-'Adâlah al-Ijtimâ'iyah fî al-Islâm*. Third, the period of jihad and the movement, which is the period where there was conflict between Islamic thought and modern ignorance, so was born the movement of ideas against Western hegemony. At birth of his masterpiece on this period is *Ma'âlim fî al-Thâriq*.

Charles Tripper looks at Sayyid political conceptions based on two books, in his book *al-'Adâlah al-Ijtimâ'iyah fî al-Islâm*, 'liberal focus' combined with people who worried look at the condition of Muslim society. However, in later writings, Qutb increasingly moves to a position where the circumstances of this position and authority supports its existence must take precedence over other considerations. Under the logic of his own argument when he wrote *Ma'âlim fî al-Thâriq*, Qutb left the idea of individuals who had originally adopted, and the more people move into a position where it logically and ethically precedes all people who form the *ummah*.

Implication of this political vision of Sayyid Qutb is twofold: first, politics is about nothing less than creating a harmony of the Divine in the world, secondly, politics means capturing an intuitive knowledge of this absolute truth, the pattern and alignment, followed by the re-establishment radically human society in accordance with the rhythm. Consequently, there are two main themes in the political writings of Sayyid Qutb. The first

theme related to political goals, the Muslim's character and his relationship with an individual. The second theme is to achieve that goal, so this theme is to study about the strength, power and authority.<sup>21</sup>

*Ma'âlim fi al-Thâriq* consists of 12 chapters and begins with the Prolegomena (*muqaddimah*). Four chapters of which are the essences of the *Fî Zhîlâl al-Quran*, there are; character of *manhaj Al-Quran*, Islamic view and culture, *Jihâd Fî Sabîlillah*, and the growing Muslim community with its characteristics. Meanwhile, eight other chapters are chapters that need to be written by Sayyid Qutb to clarify and strengthen the essence of it in addition to fulfilling the main purpose of this book. It means, as a signpost that will pass the pioneer of the resurrection of humankind. With the existence of this pioneer of *ummah* will rise, with this task existence of Muslim as the Caliph and *Abdullah* (the server of God), and the role of Muslims as *ummatan dâ'iyan* and *ummatan syâhidan* can be implemented. Thus, the fragile western leadership that not having "values" is making it worthy will be taken over by Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

If the pioneer of the *ummah* resurrection wants to success like the success of the first generation (the companions of the Prophet), they must emulate their character. According to Sayyid Qutb, they called *جيل قراني فريد* (Qur'anic Generation of Parties), who also made the title of the chapter after *Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena). There are three main factors of the success of this generation; source of reference is the Qur'an and must be sterile from other influences, they study Qur'an to practice.

The paradigm for the pioneer of group is the generation of the Companions, who called Sayyid Qutb as a unique generation. The generation, who has different characteristics than the other generations, thus the role and achievements they are also unique compared to other generations. The unique characteristic in three things, are taking the pure source from the Qur'an, and using uniqueness method in interacting with

<sup>21</sup> Charles Tripper. Op cit., page 165-168

<sup>22</sup><http://muchlisin.blogspot.com/2009/10/download-review-maalim-fi-ath-thariq.html> read also Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* ( New Delhi: Islamic Book Store 2005)

the source (the Qur'an). Here Qutb mentions the method of their approach to the Qur'an is not to simply get information or enjoyment of any intellectual or aesthetic pleasure but to find the commands of God revealed what they should do, practice in individual and their social life. The third characteristic, when they accepted Islam they decide to rejected ignorance. They perform a rejection of environmental ignorance, traditions and customs, its ideas and concepts. They practice limited self-isolation (*uzlah maknawiyah*) to against ignorance.<sup>23</sup>

In a reflection of the legislation of jihad until reaching a peak in the offensive phase, Qutb said the main lesson (*hikmah*). First is this is a practical method, the realist. *Jâhiliyyah* establishes itself in the form of practical. So also must deal with practical steps. Second, the problems that are faced by communities in this growth process took place gradually. Therefore, the existing problem solving methods (thus also the problem of its formation) is not in a theoretical but gradually in accordance with practical needs. Third, this religion requires new methods that do not break with fundamental principles and objectives. Fourth, Muslims determine the legal basis for interaction between the Muslim communities with others. At its height is offensive jihad process. Self-defense mechanism provided by some figures who stated jihad is basically a defensive process, it is considered by Qutb as a way inferior (lost mental) solely.<sup>24</sup>

## **B. The Methodology of *Tafsîr Fî Zhilâl Al-Qur'an***

### **1. Background of Writing**

The condition of Egypt at that time was shattered when Sayyid Qutb had returned from Western countries. At that time, Egypt is experiencing a political crisis which resulted in a military coup in July 1952. At that moment, Sayyid Qutb began to develop his thinking that emphasizes the social and political criticism. Therefore, no wonder indeed if we look at the

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<sup>23</sup> <http://refleksibudi.wordpress.com/2008/11/28/teori-perubahan-sosial-sayyid-qutb> read also *Social Justice in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust 2000)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

efforts undertaken in the *tafsîr* of Sayyid Qutb is more likely to rise the socio-civic terms. One of his greatest works very well known is the work of *Tafsîr al-Qur`an*, that is named by *Fî Zhîlâl al-Qur`an*. Interpretation is more discussing about the logic of an Islamic state as explained by followers of the *Ikhwân al-Muslimân* and others like Abu al-A'la Al-Mawdudi.

In his introduction, Sayyid Qutb argued his impression live under the auspices of Qur'an. He feels close, hear and speak to God through the Quran. Life in Shade of the Quran, Sayyid Qutb sensed a beautiful harmony between human movements, as the will of God with the natural movements of His creation. He saw the destruction that will corrupt of humanity as result of deviation this natural law. According to the Qutb, the *Shari'a* for people is one part of his legislation comprehensive in the universe. Then, the implementation the *Shari'a* would have a positive impact on human life in the coordinate travel with travel universe. *Shari'a* is nothing other than the fruit of faith; it could not walk alone without a great foundation. It is made to be implemented by Muslim societies.<sup>25</sup>

*Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* was written by Sayyid Qutb more than 15 years, it was since 1950-ah until the 1960s. At first, he began to write commentary on it at the request of his colleague, Said Ramadan, magazine editor, published in Cairo and Damascus. *Tafsîr* was given by the name of the rubric *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*. The first paper is the interpretation of *sûrah Al-Fatihah* loaded, then *Sûrah Al-Baqarah*. However, several months later, Sayyid Qutb decided to arrange his interpretation on one book that also was named by *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*. His works then printed and distributed by the publisher of *al-Bâb al-Halâbi*. First publishing is indirectly totaling 30 chapters, but each one volume. Each Chapter (*juz*) published for two months. Improvement of the interpretation process was completed in prison. The first edition was published in the form of 30 *juz* (chapters) in 1979. Since then, its spread extends to almost all Muslim countries in the world.

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<sup>25</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* ( Bairut : Dar Asy-Syuruq 1992) page 3

This *tafsîr* has been translated into Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Bengali, Indonesian and Melayu.

## 2. The System of Writing

*Tafsîr Fi Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* that authored by Sayyid Qutb was one of *tafsîr* that have a new breakthrough in the interpretation toward al-Qur'an. It is caused the interpretation of his thoughts is not only carrying the group-oriented for the triumph of Islam, but also has its own methodology in interpreting al-Qur'an.

The clarification regarding the methodology of interpretation, Dr. Abdul Hay al-Farmawy a great teacher and Sciences of *Tafsîr* al-Qur'an, al-Azhar University dividing the type of *tafsîr* al-Qur'an into three forms, there are *tahlîly*, *maudhû'i* and *ijmâli muqârin*.<sup>26</sup> Viewed from the style of interpretation in *tafsîr Fi Zhilal al-Qur'an* can be classified into the type of *tafsîr tahlîlî*. That is, an interpreter explains the content of verses from various aspects that exist and explain the verse by verse in every *sûrah* in accordance with the sequence contained in the manuscripts.

According Ahzami, *tafsîr* that is written by Sayyid Qutb is a kind of *tafsîr Harâki* or *tafsîr da'wah*. The interpreter did not use *manhaj* (writing method) like previous scholars, such as *tafsîr tahlîlî* (analytical interpretation) that started the interpretation of the explanations of words in the verse of the Qur'an.<sup>27</sup>

Sayyid Qutb's commentary is written in *tahlîlî* method. He began his interpretation on the group of verses by giving a brief description of the content of the verses will be studied in detail. In the *sûrah* Al-Fatîhah for example, Sayyid Qutb argued that in this *sûrah* summed up the theology of Islamic principles, the conception of Islam and the steering of attentions that identifies *al-hikmah*. Choosing this *sûrah* because as repeated readings in

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<sup>26</sup> Abdul Hay al-Farmawi, *al-Bidayah fi al-Tafsîr al-Mawdhû'i* (Kairo: al-Hadharah al-'Arabiyyah 1997) page 23

<sup>27</sup><http://jakarta45.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/khazanah-sayed-quthb-sang-syahid-yang-kontroversial/>

every prayer and prayer does not legitimate (*shah*) without reading it. After that he refines the interpretation verse by verse, similarly, when he interprets the subsequent *sûrah*.

In interpreting the long *sûrah*, Sayyid Qutb classifies a number of verses as a unity, in accordance with the messages contained in those verses. In interpreting the *sûrah Al Baqârah*, for example, he set the first verse to verse 29 as the first part of the discussion. Following it, he interprets verses 30-39, verses 40-74, verses 75-103, and others. Compared with the grouping by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida in *Tafsîr al Manâr*, Sayid Qutb grouping is relatively higher.

The approach that used by Sayyid Qutb in over Qur`an is *tashwîr* (descriptive) approach that is a force trying to display the message al-Qur`an as a picture message is present, the living and concrete so that it can lead to an understanding of "actual "for readers and provide a strong incentive to act. Therefore, according to Sayyid Qutb, *qashâsh* contained in Qur`an as narrative drama of life which always occurs in the course of human life. The teachings contained in the story will never dry from the relevance of meaning to be taken as a guide for human living. Thus, all the messages contained in the al-Qur`an will always be relevant to be carried in today.

*Naskh wal mansûkh* phenomenon in Al-Qur`an had indeed occurred in opinion among the scholars of Islam itself. On the one hand there are those who receive it and on the other hand there are who rejects it with own arguments. In this case, Sayyid Qutb is included in the group receiving *naskh* in al-Qur`an. It can be seen when he interpreted the content of verse 106 *sûrah* al-Baqarah.<sup>28</sup> He suggested that the verses of Qur`an overall shift in part pointed out of the command along with the development of law or a Muslim society, and specifically these verses describe the transition of *qibla*.

Sayyid Qutb saw *naskh* from multiple perspectives, the perspective of God and human. As if he said, the will of God and *naskh* is for the benefit

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<sup>28</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur`an* volume 1 page 98

of man. In addition, naskh also fits with the character evolution and the teachings of Islam which emphasizes the benefit of the people.

*Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* is an interpretation that is considered on the elements of *naqliyyah* or *ma'stûr* (based on narrations). Sayyid Qutb did not give more attention on linguistics and grammar theory, '*ilmu kalâm, fiqh* and did not discuss *isrâiliyyât* story and sciences.

*Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* presents a new way of interpreting the Qur'an that had never been done by the classical scholars. Sayyid Qutb include elements of politics and ideology with a very harmonious. Virtually, this interpretation is the most unique one because it makes the Qur'an as the main basis for political and social revolution

Example of it is his interpretation on *sûrah al-Kâfirûn*<sup>29</sup>

First: *al-Qur'an bil Qur'an*, (munasabah ayat),

"Say: Disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship nor do you worship what I worship. I shall never worship what you worship You have your own religion and I have mine." (*al-Kâfirûn* 1-3)

Although the Arabs before Islam were not disavowing Allah, they did not know Him by the true identity He accorded Himself as the One and the Eternal. They did not only depreciate Him and ineptly worship Him but they also ascribed to Him, as partners, idols that were supposed to represent their great and pious ancestors or, in some cases, the angels whom they claimed to be the daughters of Allah. Moreover, they alleged a kinship between Him and the jinn. They often ignored all these qualifications, however, and worshipped those idols themselves. But in all cases, as the Qur'an quotes them as saying, they only "worship them (the various gods) so that they may bring us near to Allah." (Al-Qur'an 39:3)

The Qur'an also states:

If you ask them who it is that has created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon (to fixed laws) they will say: Allah (Al-Qur'an 29:61) And again: If you ask them who it is that sends down water

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<sup>29</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* volume 6 page 3990

from the sky, and thereby revives the earth after it has died, they will say: 'Allah. (Al-Qur'an 29:63)

Moreover, Allah superseded their gods in their oaths and supplications.

But in spite of their belief in Allah, the polytheism they entertained fouled their conceptions as well as their traditions and rites to the extent that they assigned to their alleged gods a portion of their earnings and possessions, and even their offspring; in fact, they had often been obliged to sacrifice their children. Concerning this, the Qur'an has the following to say:

They set aside for Allah a share of what He has produced in abundance of crops and cattle, saying: This is for Allah, so they pretend, and this for the partner-gods we associate with Him. But nothing of the share of their partner-gods may ever go to Allah while the share of Allah may go to their partner-gods. How ill they judge! Thus those partner-gods of theirs have induced many polytheists to kill their children so that they may ruin them and confuse them in their faith. Had Allah willed, they would not have done so; so leave them to their false inventions. They say: "Such cattle and crops are forbidden; no one may eat of them save those whom we permit", so they assert. Further, there are cattle which they prohibit men from riding, and others over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah. All these are lies they assert against Allah. He will surely punish them for their invented lies. They also say: "What is in the wombs of these animals is reserved to our males, forbidden to our females." But if it is still born, then they all partake of it. Allah will surely punish them for what they impute to Him. He is surely wise and He knows all." Lost are they who, in their ignorance, wantonly slay their children, and make unlawful what Allah has provided for them, inventing lies against Allah. They have indeed gone astray and heeded no guidance. (Al-Qur'an 6:137-141)

Second: his interpretations according to his understanding

Using all the mentioned means, the *sûrah* goes on to emphasize a negation in one sentence and an affirmation in another. "Say", this denotes a

clear-cut Divine order which conveys the fact that the whole affair of the religion belongs exclusively to Allah, nothing of it belongs to Muhammad himself, and that Allah is the only One to order and decide. Address them, Muhammad, by their actual and true identity: "Say: 'Disbelievers!'" They follow no prescribed religion, nor do they believe in you. No meeting-point exists between you and them anywhere. Thus the beginning of the *sûrah* brings to mind the reality of a difference which cannot be ignored or settled.

"I do nor worship what you worship" is a statement affirmed by shall never worship what you worship". "Nor do you worship what I worship" is also repeated for more emphasis and in order to eliminate all chances of doubt or misinterpretation. Finally, the whole argument is summed up in the last verse, "You have your own religion, and I have mine", meaning that you (disbelievers) and I (Muhammad) are very far apart, without any bridge to connect us - a complete distinction and a precise, intelligible demarcation. Such an attitude was essential then in order to expose the fundamental discrepancies in the essence of the two beliefs and doctrines, in the source of the two concepts and in the nature of the two paths of monotheism and polytheism, faith and disbelief. Faith on the one hand, is the way of life which directs man and the whole world towards Allah alone and determines for him the source of his religious concept, laws, values, criteria, ethics and morals. That source is Allah and nobody else. Thus life proceeds for him accordingly, devoid of any form of polytheism which, on the other hand, represents another way of life entirely dissimilar to that of faith. The two never meet.

On the whole, the distinction we are dealing with here is indispensable both for those who invite people to Islam and the people themselves, because Ignorant concepts are likely to be mixed with those of Islam especially in those societies which previously followed the Islamic method, but have later deviated from it. They are, to be sure, the most rigid and the most hostile to the idea of regaining faith in its healthy, clear and straight forward form, certainly more so than those who have not known

Islam originally. They take it for granted that they are righteous while they grow more and more complicatedly perverse!

The existence of noble and base beliefs and thoughts in those societies may tempt the advocate of the Islamic system to hope for their quick return, thinking he may be able to strengthen the good aspects of their life and rightly correct undesirable features! This temptation is dangerously misleading. For Ignorance is nothing but Ignorance and Islam is altogether different from it. The only way to bridge the gulf between the two is for Ignorance to liquidate itself completely and substitute for all its laws, values, standards and concepts their Islamic counterparts.

The first step that should be taken in this field by the person calling on people to embrace Islam is to segregate himself from Ignorance. He must be separated to the extent that any agreement or intercourse between him and Ignorance is absolutely impossible unless and until the people of Ignorance embrace Islam completely: no intermingling, no half measures or conciliation is permissible, however clever Ignorance may be in usurping the role of Islam or reflecting it. The chief basis of the personality of the person inviting others to Islam is the clear manifestation of this fact within himself and his solemn conviction of being radically different from them. They have their own religion, and he has his. His task is to orientate them so that they may follow his path without any fraud or pretence. Failing this, he must withdraw completely, detach himself from their life and openly declare to them: "You have your own religion, and I have mine."

This is a sine qua non for the contemporary advocates of Islam. They badly need to realize that they are calling for Islam today in entirely ignorant surroundings amongst ex-Muslim peoples whose hearts have grown harder and whose beliefs have now deteriorated considerably. They need to understand that there is no room for short-term or half solutions, compromises, or partial redemption or adjustment, and that their call is for uniquely distinguished Islam, in contrast to what these people conceive of as Islam. They must face these people bravely and explicitly put it to them:

"You have your own religion, and I have mine." Our religion is based on absolute monotheism whose concepts, values, beliefs and laws cover all aspects of human life and are all received from Allah and none else. Without this basic separation confusion, double-dealing, doubt and distortion will certainly persist. And let it be clear in our minds here that the movement advocating Islam can never be constructed on any ambiguous or feeble foundations, but has to be built upon firmness, explicitness, frankness and fortitude as embodied in Allah's instruction to us to declare: "You have your own religion, and I have mine". Such was the way adopted by the Islamic call in its early days.

Third: The interpretation based on *hadîts* or *riwâyah*

Sayyid Qutb explains the situations when the verses was revealed or gives the stories from The companions and directly gives *hadîts*. For example for the verse above, "The Arabs were also convinced that they were the followers of the religion of Abraham and that they were better guided than the People of the Scriptures (i.e. Jews and Christians) inhabiting the Arabian peninsula at the time: the Jews and the Christians preached respectively that Ezra and Jesus were the sons of Allah whereas they, the Arabs, worshipped angels and jinn - the true offspring of Allah according to them. Their belief, they maintained, was more logical and more conceivable than that of the Christians and the Jews. Nonetheless, all was polytheism."

"When Muhammad (peace be on him) declared his religion to be that of Abraham, they argued that there was no reason for them to forsake their beliefs and follow Muhammad's instead, since they too were of the same religion. In the meantime, they sought a sort of compromise with him proposing that he should prostrate himself before their gods in return for their prostration to his God, and that he should cease denouncing their gods and their manner of worship in reciprocation for whatever he demanded of them! This confusion in their concepts, vividly illustrated by their worship of various gods while acknowledging Allah, was perhaps what led them to believe that the gulf between them and Muhammad was not unbridgeable.

They thought an agreement was somehow possible by allowing the two camps to co-exist in the region and by granting him some personal concessions!”

Sayyid Qutb use *hadîts* as explanatory. Most of hadith is mentioned by first and last *râwi* (narrator), without including the full range of its *sanad*. Sometimes, it is only mentioned by last *râwi* (narrator). For example, the *hadîts* about the necessity to read *sûrah* Al Fatihah is narrated by Bukhari and Muslim.<sup>30</sup>

Then equip its interpretation by the *shahâbah* (companions) word, for example, Umar saying about the requirement of Iraq’s people to get asylum application, the related of *sûrah* Al-Baqârah: 100.<sup>31</sup> He also gets previous opinions scholars, such as *Tafsîr* Ibn Kathir quotes about events *Bai'ah Aqâbah*, then from *Al Bidâyah Wan Nihâyah* about the duration of the Prophet lived in Mecca for 10 years.

Sayyid Qutb emphasizes the absurd analysis, balance and harmony in the *sûrah*. For example, a description of the Prophet Musa was followed by a description of *Bani Isrâel*, rapprochement between the opening of the cover of *Sûrah* with parenting in *sûrah* Al *Baqârah*, who expresses the traits and characteristics of the faithful believers.

### 3. The Movement Methodology (*tafsîr harâky*) in *Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*

According to Shalah Abdul Fattah al-Khalidi, there are some matters that is caused the success in *tafsîr harâki* at *Tafsîr Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*: Sayyid Qutb interact directly with the situation and condition, and the same problem with the actual decline in condition of Al-Qur'an revelation, before interpreting the Qur'an, Sayyid has lived in the shade of Al-Quran to understand the texts of Qur'an directly and felt comforted by the verses of Al-Qur'an in his isolation, Qutb's understanding on the Qur'an is without his provision thought, Sayyid applicants Al-Qur'an meaning in a dynamic

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<sup>30</sup> Sayyid Qutb *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* volume 1 page 21

<sup>31</sup> Ibid page 98

charity and jihad against *jâhilyyah*. Sayyid is able to understand the characteristics of the Qur'an, is the actual movement. Sayyid said, "*We are very concerned over this characteristic in the Qur'an. This characteristic, in our view, is a key interaction of the Qur'an in understanding and knowing the goals of Al-Qur'an.*"<sup>32</sup>

According to Sayyid Qutb, the aim of Qur'an base is the dynamic movement. The core of the Qur'anic teaching is the unity of God in *Ulûhiyyah* (God's only the right to be worshiped and obeyed and loved), *Rubûbiyyah* (regulators and educators) and *hâkimiyyah* (ruler and executors of the law).<sup>33</sup> The measure of congregational development in Islam is a belief in the conception and the actual behavior of the movement against *Jâhiliyyah*. For Sayyid Qutb, *Shahâbah*, the Qur'anic generation that is unique and special. Because the Companions received the Qur'an according to the methodology: 'to accept and to implement'. The next generation is fragile and backward, because they accept the Qur'an with a different methodology when Al-Qur'an which is accepted by limited study and satisfied knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

The basic concept of Sayyid Qutb in his *Tafsîr Fi Zhîlâl al-Qur'an*, there are: (1) arming with plenty of life experience and then looking at the Qur'an for answers directly, with no preceding it, (2) referring to the situation when Al-Qur'an was sent down, in Mecca and Medina, to determine the influence of Al-Qur'an within such period and to understand the history of this era, (3) paying attention to the objective principal of the Qur'an which is very dynamic and the methodology movement that is actual for Muslim's life, individually, in groups and communities, (4) active in the

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<sup>32</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Tafsîr Fi Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* volume IV page 2121

<sup>33</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *op cit.*, volume II page 825

<sup>34</sup> See Milestones in the part the unique Qur'anic generation ( United Kingdom: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers 2006) page 29-36

*jihâd* and *da'wah* experience that have similar atmosphere of the Prophet's Companions experience, especially in the period of Mecca.<sup>35</sup>

Sayyid said: "Living in Shade of Al-Qur'an is not meant that reading and studying the Qur'an scientifically. Surely, this is not the atmosphere of the Qur'an which we mean. We live in the situation and condition, movement, awareness, and fight like the atmosphere when the Qur'an was revealed. Human life is not only always in the fight against ignorance which has penetrated the earth today, and but also ignorance in own hearts."<sup>36</sup> The fundamentals of movement rules in Sayyid Qutb' methodology is a perspective view of the universal destination of goods, the essence of charity movement, away from the lengthy description, the unity theme of the Qur'an, reject contradictions, and explanation of wisdom in the *Sharî'ah*.

Universal view of the Qur'an, is the function and purpose of the Qur'an in charitable movements and the actualization of Al-Qur'an. All the verses of the Qur'an are no contradiction between one another invitation. All this shows the sense of mutual regard in explaining the meaning, essence and foundation of concepts and values of life, but these are only mentioned with short sentences and phrases. Sayyed said: "Because in the words of the man looks up and down, right and wrong, strong and weak, weightless and light, bright and outages and other character which is typical of human speech, where the characteristics of the stretcher is synonymous with "change and persistent differences from one another conditions." And these phenomena are the opposite of the character of the Qur'an which is always "steady" in all of al-Qur'an texts".

The universal view of the Qur'an is a privilege of Sayyid Qutb in Qur'anic exegesis, where this is not obtained by the previous *mufasssîr*, their interpretation purposes are simply providing "intelligence" to the readers and striving to make the Qur'an as an encyclopedia of knowledge, *mufasssîr*

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<sup>35</sup> Shalah Abdul Fattah al-Khalidi, *Tafsir Metodologi Pergerakan, Di Bawah Naungan Al-Qur'an*, translated by Asmuni Sholihan Zamakhsyari ( Jakarta: Yayasan Bunga karang 1995) page 31

<sup>36</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an II*, page 1016-1017

who only limiting the interpretation of Al-Qur'an in certain themes, such as interpretation in the study of language, fiqh, a story or history, or *mufasssîr* who making the Qur'an as a staging ground for asserting his opinion on the matter *khilâfiyyah* among opinion leaders in kalam theology sect, where Allah SWT says: "Do They not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, They would surely have found therein much discrepancy."<sup>37</sup>

The objective principal of the Qur'an which is emphasized by Sayyid in his commentary is the formation of the Muslims with the guidance of the Qur'an. Muslims must be firm in the face of a group of sinned people and the materialistic and then educating Muslims and prepare them to become Rabbâni generation. The Qur'an did not come to anticipate a period of history, but, "Verily, *manhaj* of Al-Qur'an is an absolute with no boundaries of space and time, *manhaj* for Muslims, wherever and whenever they are, in similar circumstances of Al-Qur 'an revelation."<sup>38</sup>

Sayyid always tries to not drown in the lengthy explanation and details of problems encountered *khilâfiyyah* issues, in creed, *fiqh*, *lughah*, stories or others.

Sayyid said: "I have entered into the institutions of science, and then I read Qur'anic exegesis of several books and heard from the lecturers, but from what I have read and heard, I do not get enamored of the Qur'an that I have learned in my childhood. How sadly, all signs of beauty Al-Qur'an it becomes faded! Has Al-Qur'an turned into two? The Qur'an at the time of my childhood was so beautiful and the Qur'an at the time of my youth so was difficult, complicated, and torn. Is this because of error methodology in the interpretation of the Qur'an? Then I repeat again to read the Qur'an directly from the manuscripts, not from the books of commentary, then I finally get the Qur'an is so beautiful and gratify ".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> QS. Nissa': 82

<sup>38</sup> Ibid : II/1059 and III/1248

<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Tashawwur Al-Fanni Fî Al-Qur'an*, page 7

Sayyid explained the best methodology in understanding the Qur'an and established an Islamic outlook. Sayyed said: "a *mufasssir* must be clean up all conceptions in the hearts and feelings when faced with the Qur'an, so he does not understand the Qur'an with the intellect and feelings on him."<sup>40</sup> According to Sayyid, Al-Quran texts are understood and accepted in accordance with its original, no *ta'wil* (interpretation by reason) and *tahrif* (change word and meaning).

It can be seen in the interpretation of Sayyid Qutb in the verse *Al-Hadid* 1: "whatever is In the heavens and on earth,- let it declare the praises and glory of Allah. For He is the Exalted In Might, the wise." This verse explains that the nature declare all praises to Allah SWT. So the verse should not be interpreted, because we do not know the character of nature. The Qur'an and *hadîst shâhih* also have explained about the way of '*tasbîh*' by nature. According to him, there is no interpretation toward something clear in the Qur'an with the human beings proposition.<sup>41</sup>

In combining the counterproductive verses, Sayyid has several ways. For example; Sayyid describes the condition of the Christians by using the following ways: (1) following all the verses that describe the event, (2) understanding verses and a series of all-decree provisions regarding the condition of the Christians, (3) following the decrees of the Qur'an about the condition of the Christians, (4) understanding a historical conditions of Christians who justified by Qur'an.<sup>42</sup>

Explaining about the phase of the jihad, Sayyid described al-Anfâl by way of: (1) Reviewing the events in prophet history, (2) Seeing the chronology of the revelation that explains the law (3) Understanding the phases of jihad as mentioned by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim in his book "*Zâdul Ma'ad*".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* VI, page 3730

<sup>41</sup> *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* VI, page 3477-3478

<sup>42</sup> *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an* II, page 967

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, III, page 1541

The unity theme of the Qur'an as stated in *Fî Zhîlâl Al-Qur'an*, it can be summed up as follows: (1) compatibility between one verses with another verse, (2) message concurrence in one *sûrah* (3) compatibility between the sub-themes as part of improvements to be given a proper ceremony the main themes, (4) cohesiveness between the verses in the sub-theme as a whole to improve the others in explaining the character of the verse, (5) compatibility between verse in one *sûrah* each other as complete elements from all the texts of Al-Quran. For example, Sayyid Qutb explains *sûrah* Al-Imrân by explaining three major lines throughout the *sûrah*, there are: (1) Explanation of the *ad-dîn al-Islâm* (2) Preview the condition of Muslims towards their Lord and their obedience to Him. (3) Prohibition of loyalty to someone other than the people who believe and explain the chronic conditions for those who disbelieve. The universality of meaning and guidance is one rule in Sayyid's methodology on the interpretation of Al-Qur'an, Sayyid always emancipated the verses from bonding of time, place and individuals.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Shalah Abdul Fattah , op cit., page 168