

Shuruh

COMMENTARIES AND EXPLANATIONS
OF
SAYYID QUTUB'S
MILESTONES

FOREWORD

SH. MUSTAFA KAMEL MUHAMMAD

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Foreword

"Introducing the Shuruh – the Commentaries and Explanations of Sayyid Qutub's Milestones"

One of the most significant and disastrous events in the history of Islam was the fall of the Islamic Caliphate. The collapse was not sudden, as the devious plot that undermined the Islamic world took around two centuries. In his book, "How much the world lost because of the disintegration of the Muslim nation," Abu Al-Hassan Al-Nadawi discussed this tragic fall:

"Although we can find many examples of nations and communities that have disappeared or have been conquered, the disintegration of the Muslims, their isolation and their failure to remain as the leaders of the world, was not the kind of loss that has ever happened in the history of the nations and empires that existed before.

... Due to the gradual nature of the disintegration, the world did not truly understand what it had lost and people could not imagine the difficulties that they would have to suffer ever since."

This painful event has shaken and awakened some Muslim individuals who saw the grave dangers of this catastrophe, motivating them to start movements to restore the Islamic Caliphate. As a result, organized movements have surfaced that have called the people to return to the Quran as their source of guidance.

However, the Islamic Movements that came after the fall of the Islamic Caliphate inadequately analyzed the reality of their day due to shortcomings in understanding Islamic ideology as well as methodology. Therefore, the methods they utilized were flawed.

In contrast, Sayyid Qutub, who had been one of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in the 1950's, studied Islam directly from the Quran and compared what he learned with the reality of the people's lives. In fact, this was a great blessing from Allah, as Allah guided Qutub to make the Quran his only source of guidance for the re-establishment of Islam. This unique approach, where the Quran was the sole source of information and thought, made Qutub stand out among Muslim scholars who were unable to correctly assess the true state of the Islamic World and therefore were misguided from the correct methodology for the revival of Islam. It was expected that these scholars would be the first to welcome Qutub's viewpoint since he correctly understood the appropriate methodology for the re-establishment of Islam.

Correctly assessing the reality of the situation, Qutub asserted that people's deviation from the right path was not a problem that could be solved through partial or superficial solutions. Instead the problem had deep roots which was directly linked to the fact that people, including those who called themselves "Muslims," had actually reverted to jahilliya once again. (Although the root meaning of jahilliya is ignorance, as a term it has much broader scope and denotes any time or place when Islam is not the pure living reality in human society. Even our technologically and scientifically advanced era, which is supposedly very knowledgeable, is jahilliya because Islam is not the pure living reality in society.)

In his famous commentary to the Quran, "In the Shade of the Quran," Qutub wrote:

"We are today in a situation similar to that which prevailed when the religion of Islam first declared to mankind that 'there is no deity except Allah.' Human beings have reverted to the worship of other creatures and accepted the oppression of different forms of religion and abandoned the principle of Allah's Oneness (His absolute Authority, Supremacy and Sovereignty) in its true sense. It is true that some groups of people still make the declaration on minarets that 'there is no deity except Allah,' but they hardly know its true sense, and as such, they do not mean it. Nor do they reject the claims of others to sovereignty, which is synonymous with the absolute Divinity of Allah. It does not matter whether individuals, legislative councils or nations claim the authority over people. For none of these is a deity to exercise that authority. It is only the relapse of humanity into jahilliya that assigns to such creatures the attributes of Divinity. As such, humanity no longer manifests a firm belief in Allah's absolute Authority, Supremacy and Sovereignty or total devotion to Him alone.

This applies to all mankind, including those everywhere in the world, who repeat the declaration of Allah's Divinity from minarets without giving it its true meaning or putting it into practice. These incur a bigger sin, one which is more severely punishable on the Day of Judgment, because they have sunk back into the worship of creatures after they have received proper guidance and embraced the true faith." (Commentary to Surah Al-Anam, p.72)

Qutub's approach led him to believe that the starting point for the Muslim group that wants to practically re-establish the Islamic Religion as a complete way of life is to understand and be certain of the fact that societies today are indeed living in jahilliya and that an Islamic society is nonexistent:

"This group needs to educate the public about these facts and this should be the starting point. No matter how sincere or enthusiastic a Muslim group is, they will lose their way if they do not choose this starting point." (The Milestones)

Therefore Qutub strongly believed that the starting point for the re-establishment of Islam is calling humanity once again to the all-encompassing banner and system of life represented by "there is no deity except Allah:"

"It must be clear to the advocates of Islam that when they call for Islamic revival, they are actually calling on people to adopt the Islamic faith, even though they may claim to be Muslims and have birth certificates to support this claim. People should be made to understand that Islam means, in the first place, to believe fully and completely that 'there is no deity except Allah.' The practical import of this belief is to acknowledge that Sovereignty and Authority over all human affairs belongs to Allah alone, and a rejection of those who claim such authority for themselves. In this way the belief in Allah's Oneness (His absolute Authority, Supremacy and Sovereignty) is firmly established in their hearts and manifested in their worship and daily practices.

To re-emphasize, when trying to re-establish the Islamic religion, it should be the understanding of those who are striving to deliver Allah's message that they must call people to embrace Islam from the very beginning, even though the people may call themselves Muslims. They must first let them know that Islam is acknowledging and fully understanding that 'there is no deity but Allah' and all that it entails among themselves and in their reality." (Commentary to Surah Al-Anam p.11)

Qutub was also certain that the only way leading to an Islamic society is by forming an Islamic group anew. In his book "Islam and the Problems of Civilization," Qutub emphasized this:

"The only way that will lead to the re-establishment of Islam is to form an Islamic group which has members. This group should then start the long and difficult journey that was taken by their predecessors, led by the last Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him."

Just as the Messenger of Allah reached his goal, so will this group at the end of the long and difficult journey.

In the same book, Qutub says: "Today, people do not seriously respond to what they read or hear. Instead, what makes them react or change is to see a group of people who have accepted Islam as Divine guidance and comprehensively apply this to their daily activities."

Qutub not only discussed his ideas with the Muslim Brotherhood but he also published them for all people to see around the world. Among his notable publications included: "In the Shade of the Quran," and "The Milestones." While in prison, Qutub met members of the Muslim Brotherhood and explained his ideas about how the world has reverted to jahilliya and what is now required of them to re-establish an Islamic society. Indeed Allah is with those who strive to re-establish Islam, as is stated in the Quran:

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا﴾ [النور: ٥٥].

"Allah has promised such of you who believe and do good works to make them masters in the land as He had made their ancestors before them masters in the land; and that He will surely establish for them their religion such He has chosen for them and will give them security instead of their fear. They will serve Me and will associate nothing with Me..."
(Surah An-Noor 24:55)

As we know, there is a difference between reading a letter from your teacher on one hand, and personally learning and interacting with him by asking questions and following his teaching style. We have seen the effect of Qutub's writings around the world. Then, how would one expect his students to be, who were meeting with him day in and day out?

One of those who was blessed to meet and directly learn from Sayyid Qutub is Sheikh Mustafa Kamel Muhammad, the current leader of the organization Al-Saadi'uun bil Haq (The Proclaimers of the Truth). Sheikh Mustafa has extensively talked about his past Muslim Brotherhood membership and how he had met Qutub in his biography. Sheikh Mustafa fully understood Qutub's perspective and was convinced that the only way humanity can prosper is to re-connect with Allah. He became certain that Islamic movements should adopt Qutub's ideas and that it is impossible for a Muslim who understood this remarkable Truth to fail his duty of calling people to Islam anew.

As a result, Sheikh Mustafa decided to explain and comment on Qutub's great work, "The Milestones," which the enemies of Islam have called "the manifesto of the Muslim movements." The book lays the foundation for the movement that will resurrect Islam. Without exaggeration, Sheikh Mustafa's commentary and explanations of "The Milestones" is not like any other Islamic book. It is unique in its content and presentation. Some of the reasons for its uniqueness are presented below.

First: As the student of Qutub, Sheikh Mustafa had the opportunity to spend time and directly learn from the author of The Milestones. He had the opportunity to ask when issues were not clear, and consulted with Qutub on the ways to overcome the inevitable obstacles that would be

encountered during the long journey that the Muslims will have to take. As a result, Sheikh Mustafa became the most suitable person to finely express Qutub's aims and mission on how to re-establish true Islam in the hearts of the people.

Second: To put into practice what he learned from his mentor, Sheikh Mustafa founded a group, that later assumed the name As-Saadi'uun bil Haq (The Proclaimers of the Truth), that aims to bring back the Islamic Caliphate. This opened horizons for him that would not have been opened if he had not applied what he had learned from his mentor. Thus, this commentary came after the long fruitful experiences of a practical Islamic movement that he established and nourished with his heart, mind, and soul.

Third: He started to fully educate the group ideologically and socially. The opportunity of being a leader of a real live movement has given Sheikh Mustafa the practical experience that helped him explain and expand on The Milestones for people so that they may deeply understand the wide-ranging meanings and applicability of the topics covered.

Fourth: Educating and training this group took more than four decades. This extended period of mentoring also gave Sheikh Mustafa the opportunity to work closely with the members of this group, where he learned more closely about their personalities and dealt with issues that arose in their daily activities. Throughout this period, he put emphasis on the need for being good role models, both outwardly and inwardly, in every aspect of their lives, as this is one of the most important factors for Muslims calling to Islam. Sheikh Mustafa was keen to concentrate on every detail in upbringing the members of his group, even details concerning their appearance, style and clothing, so that they may attract those called to Islam.

Fifth: Sheikh Mustafa gave great attention to educate members of his group about the characteristics of the battle between Islam, the only acceptable Religion to Allah, and all the other wrong ideologies and distorted religions. The reader of this commentary on The Milestones will see how much effort he spent in educating members of this group about what is happening around them. Among the many topics that he has covered include the cynical and destructive plans of the enemies of Allah and the tricks they have employed to appease ordinary people by making them concentrate on selected superficialities such as building masajid, praying five times a day, and talking about the outward appearance of the Muslim more than his substance.

Sheikh Mustafa has also exposed how the enemies of Islam have been working tirelessly to tame some Islamic movements by having them accept compromises, while treating harshly any organization they sense is striving to bring back the real Islamic society and the Islamic state. As a result, people have started to fear for their lives and scholars have become silent, appeasing themselves with the justification that silence with Belief in the heart can still be considered Faith, albeit the weakest of Faith of the Believers. Other scholars have thought that they are being strategic, and have decided to work with the enemies of Islam with the false excuse that the benefits out-weigh the risks.

It is important to mention that among the techniques used by Sheikh Mustafa to educate and raise awareness has been his commentary on The Milestones. These commentaries and explanations were originally lectures by Sheikh Mustafa given to some members of the group which were subsequently organized into a book. We can establish that this book, The Shuruh, Commentaries and Explanations to Sayyid Qutub's Milestones, was formed over many years, through the process of educating the group and overcoming many challenges. This commentary is a culmination of many experiences, beginning with the mentorship of Qutub, sharing emotions

and ideas accumulated after long study of the Quran, and the great Truth of the Divinity of Allah, as well as the challenges of choosing individuals and calling them to Islam while considering their different personalities. Finally, these experiences and accumulated wisdom was converted into the commentaries that we have before us, allowing for further study.

Before we end, we will provide some examples showcasing the style of this commentary and how it deals with the topics discussed by Qutub in his book, *The Milestones*. Ever since Shaikh Mustafa enjoyed the mentorship of his great teacher, Sayyid Qutub, and lived with *The Milestones* while it was still in hand-written form, he was in the best position to deeply understand the significance of the thoughts of Qutub and the plan that he laid forth for the true revival and re-establishment of Islam. With this deep understanding, Shaikh Mustafa tried on his own to form and educate an Islamic group that would become pioneers and leaders of the Islamic revival whom the book, *The Milestones*, was actually written for, so that they may be aware of the characteristics of their role and the real job that is waiting for them.

Qutub wrote in the introduction to *The Milestones*:

“It is imperative for the group, who decides to re-establish Islam afresh, to have milestones. These milestones will teach them the characteristics of their role, the real job that is waiting for them and the goals they are striving to achieve in the long run. These milestones will help them understand where to start their long journey, the nature of their stance toward jahilliya that has spread all over the earth and what type of relationships they will have within the society they live – when to co-operate with others and when to separate from them. These milestones will also help Islamic advocates understand what are their characteristics and what are the characteristics of the jahilliya surrounding them; how they will address jahilliya with the language of Islam, and what issues they will present. In addition, they will clearly know their source for determining all of these milestones and the manner of approaching this source of guidance.

It is very important that these milestones are firmly established on the Quran as this is the ultimate source of the Islamic creed. It is also important to understand how the Quran guided the first generation that Allah chose for this Religion and how they transformed the history of the world we live in.”

Let us look at how Allah has blessed the author of this commentary, the student of Sayyid Qutub, to clarify in detail what Qutub had written, phrase by phrase:

- 1- “The first important milestone is to recognize **‘the characteristics of their role,’** or the nature of the duty which is **leadership**: that is leading mankind to Allah and to His Guidance. They must realize that they have inherited an enormous and critical task, so they never lessen nor diminish from the nature of their role nor themselves. They must be full of confidence and comprehend the immensity of their job...
- 2- The second milestone is understanding **‘the real job that is waiting for them,’** which is **to communicate Allah’s Message and to guide mankind to this Truth**. This is their duty, and this is the most glorious duty a person can fulfill; it had been the duty of all the Messengers of Allah...
- 3- The third milestone is be aware of **‘the goal,’** which is **to be a devoted servant of Allah...**
- 4- The fourth is to be aware of **‘where to start their long journey,’** the starting point of delivering the Message, which is to begin with **the core fundamental Beliefs of Islam, summarized by the great Truth and testimony ‘there is no deity except Allah.’**

5- The fifth is **'the nature of their stance toward jahilliya that has spread all over the earth,'** which is **to clearly identify their position toward jahilliya, being isolated and distinguished from jahilliya.**

6- The sixth is to recognize **'what type of relationships they will have within the society they live – where will they meet and where do they separate from others,'** which is practically understanding where to cross paths with the people and where to separate, hence the issue of **loyalty and enmity.** The vanguard must be aware of how to deal and cooperate with people and when to depart, and the basis by which this is determined.

7- The seventh is to be aware of the **'their characteristics and the characteristics of the jahilliya surrounding them.'** This can also be described as **recognizing the current reality.** It is imperative for the vanguard to know the current reality very well: to know their own characteristics, then to know the characteristics of jahilliya surrounding them in order to determine the distance between themselves and jahilliya and also determine the starting point in dealing with jahilliya.

8- The eighth is to recognize **'how they will address jahilliya with the language of Islam, and what issues they will present.'** This is essentially the **methodology of the Islamic Movement.** We have to be keenly mindful of methodology when addressing jahilliya. Not every speech and communication is proper, and not every starting point and engagement is correct. Similarly, we cannot condone any and all methods to address jahilliya. Application of the appropriate methodology is what distinguishes between all Islamic movements.

9- The ninth is that **'they will clearly know their source for determining all of these milestones,'** and **'that these milestones are firmly established on the Quran as this is the ultimate source of the Islamic creed'** - this is the highly important issue of being aware of where and how we receive guidance. **Determining the source that will establish the Truth and guide us to the proper methodology** is a very important matter.

10- Lastly, the tenth is **'the manner of approaching this source of guidance'** and **'how the Quran guided the first generation that Allah chose for this Religion and how they transformed the history of the world'** - This is to be aware of how and with what spirit Islam was initially established by the first shining group - the chosen group – the Companions of the Messenger of Allah. Allah indeed used them to establish Islam as He willed. The Companions are the perfect example that we should be following when applying the fundamentals of Islam. We have to see how they developed themselves, and how they established Islam as a living reality. We see how Omar (may Allah be pleased with him) transformed from Omar the rigid, violent and arrogant to the guided, scholar, leader, and merciful servant of Allah. How did this transformation take place? How did Khalid bin Al-Waleed (may Allah be pleased with him) transform from being an enemy of Islam to Allah's drawn sword, struggling for the sake of Islam?..."

This example clearly shows the character of this commentary and the author's style in deeply explaining the topics briefly outlined by Qutub.

Another example that shows how the commentator details the topics discussed by his teacher:

Qutub says speaking about the progressive approach in the fourth chapter "Jihad for the Sake of Allah:"

"[The Islamic movement] is a practical movement which progresses stage by stage, and at every stage it provides resources according to the practical needs of the situation and prepares

the ground for the next one. It does not face practical problems with abstract theories, nor does it confront various stages with unchangeable means."

So Shaikh Mustafa explains the deep meaning and lessons behind these concentrated words that addressed one of the most important issues that current Islamic movements must properly address as they establish their movement plan to achieve their goals. This is the issue of gradualism, or progressive implementation of stages as an integral aspect of the proper Islamic methodology. Contemplate on these excerpts from the commentary that explain this issue:

"This is what is meant when the Islamic method is described as a method of several stages. It is a method that starts from the base and progresses to the peak, passing through several stages, each with its requirements and with its decisions that respond to its needs. Therefore, the Islamic group must have this dynamic jurisprudence that responds to the stage's nature, goals, needs, and the obstacles it faces. Such a dynamic jurisprudence helps Muslims extract the appropriate Islamic rulings that fit the stage that the Islamic movement is living. This is what is meant by the principle of 'gradualism' that we will discuss in greater detail..."

"In fact, the Messenger Muhammad (sas) has given us the most complete and detailed experience of how to establish Islam and the method of invitation to Islam, since he was the last of the Messengers of Allah. Allah, the Almighty, has given us through Messenger Muhammad's entire life experience the most wonderful living example of the concepts, methods, movement, means, and morals of Islam. Thus Muslims should always follow the steps of their Messenger, (sas), following his example at whatever stage they find themselves. The last Messenger of Allah started off from point zero until Islam was established on a piece of the earth, and all Muslims since then and at similar starting conditions should initiate likewise. Muslims are in great need to understand the principle of gradualism in their methodology since they have to pass through all the stages that Messenger Muhammad had once gone through. They need to understand how the Messenger of Allah (sas) applied the concept of gradualism, starting from the secret call in Makkah, until Makkah was liberated, and furthermore, they have to apply this concept until Islam has spread all over, to the ends of the inhabited earth.

Thus, the concept of gradualism involves knowing the Islamic stages of inviting people to Islam, the stages of the Islamic movement as the Messenger of Allah had applied them."

We conclude these examples from the commentary with this superb and moving analysis provided by the writer to clarify the conveyed meaning behind the title of the first chapter, "The Unique Quranic Generation:"

When we speak about the first chapter of the Milestones, "The Unique Quranic Generation," we receive the inspiration from the words and expressions, as we are accustomed to move with this book. We try to live with this inspiration and derive the milestones that will clarify the facts and guide us in our journey to establish Islam once again.

No doubt that the title, "The Unique Quranic Generation" has a special rhythm, and it stimulates a unique feeling, motivating the people who want to once again recommence that unique and admirable experience lead by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, the Seal, and most noble of the Messengers (sas).

This unique Quranic generation was raised by Allah as this luminous group was privileged to directly experience Allah's Revelation and the Messenger of Allah (sas). They were the most fortunate of generations as they lived in a momentous period in which the earth encountered the

sky and there was continuous contact between men and their Creator. They lived a period in which Divine feelings guarded and surrounded them, and this was not to be repeated in the history of humanity ever again.

When we contemplate the title; “The Unique Quranic Generation,” we certainly find that it is a very admirable, effective and inspiring expression, with which the author begins his milestones. We will discover that this chapter is the most important chapter of the book, although the facts mentioned in other chapters may appear more urgent for an Islamic movement. This chapter should be considered the basis by which all the principles in this book emanate, and which explain and clarify all of the other facts the author presented.

Indeed, when he spoke about the “Quranic generation,” he spoke about the Quran represented in a generation of people. This is a serious issue, and that is why it is considered the most important chapter in the book since each group of Believers who wants to please Allah and follow His Messenger has always aimed to form a Quranic generation.

After these glimpses from The Commentary and Explanation to Sayyid Qutub’s, The Milestones, we invite you to continue reading this luminous book.