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Sayyid Qutb's Life, Writings, and Ideas The life and thought of Sayyid Qutb, a Muslim scholar, are dimensions that verify the quoted ideas of Walter Lippmann, Martin Luther King Jr., and my teacher. An Egyptian Islamic thinker, Qutb's thought and conscience had dramatically changed when he visited the United States in the 1940s. Residing in a country that is not his own, Qutb encountered the evils of modern civilization prominent in America: sex, racism, individualism, and so on. After seeing America, he asked a fundamental question to himself: "should I be special?" (Wright 9). This he meant a spiritual and perhaps political leader who guides and instructs his Muslim brothers to fulfill the tasks given by Allah. In essence, it was a question of his morality. The life he had in the United States -- full of racial slur, anti-Islamic sentiment, etc. -- drove him to ponder the most important riddle that involves his humanity, religion, and conscience. Lippman was correct to say that man's conscience grows with his social condition (101). Opposed to static, hard, or vessel-like morality, Qutb's conscience was radically changed when he witnessed the decline of faith and virtue in the highly urbanized society. With that experience, he was transformed in spirit and mind. Qutb was also a writer. He wrote doctrines that created a significant ripple in the Muslim world. Qutb's writing basically reflects his ideas and reflections about life, faith, and spirituality. Further, his personal journal substantially shows the ever changing content and degree of passion of his mindset and belief. The writings of Qutb, especially his diary entries, were meant for himself: the evaluation of the self. Confusion and chaos were not alien to the Islamic scholar. Immersed in a somewhat "sinful" world, Qutb's mind was not a solid vessel but a fluid matter -- requiring himself to form and reform his ideals and perspective. At certain

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extent, Qutb's writing purified his soul. It allowed him to see himself at a distant, thereby objectifying or framing correctly his character, identity, and belief system. As my teacher says, " Good writing disturbs the comfortable." Indeed, Qutb was living a comfortable life in America. Like all non-Anglo-Americans visiting in the 1940s U. S., Qutb's life was easy: eating, sleeping, and so on. But his writing exhibits the disruption, mentally and spiritually, of a person in his comfort zone. However, the ideas or ideology of Qutb marked in his writings was extremely radical and disturbing for the generation of today and even the next. Lawrence Wright remarks that it was in America where the " story of al-Qaeda had really begun" (7). True, it was Qutb who created or inspired the creation of the Islamic organization: al-Qaeda. His beliefs are imprinted in the principles characterized in al-Qaeda. The notion of Jihad, in the contemporary sense of the word, was explored in Qutb's Islamic writings. He firmly held the idea that the world must have no authority (e. g., U. S. and U. N.) besides Allah. And that Jihad was the only way to cleanse the evils of modernity and globalization. Luther King's pronouncement is very visible in the post-9/11 era. Qutb's radical ideas generated an unborn generations of a " long and desolate night of bitterness." Works Cited Lippman, Walter. A Preface to Politics. Rockville, MD: Manor, 2008. Print. Wright, Lawrence. The Looming Tower. New York: Vintage, 2006. Print.