Study Guide for Healing the Open Wounds of Islam

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Chapter 5

PSYCHOLOGICAL WOUNDS: Who Robbed the Sword of its Power?

This chapter explores a crucial question: Where should God-lovers find their sense of peace, authority, and identity? Does peace come from the destruction of one's enemies? Does one's identity come from victory?

Jesus demonstrated that peace and victory came through Sacrifice. It was not a victory over another person or race but over a supernatural evil that destroys us from within.

Section I:

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hassan al-Banna, sought to revitalize Islamic rule by advocating that governments must return to Quranic principles. Influenced by Sayyid Qutb, some of the Brotherhood began to develop a militant theology that resisted Western and secular influences.

The Brotherhood's emblem—the Qur'an, two swords, and the phrase "Make Ready" (Quran 8:60)—signifies preparedness for conflict, aligning with classical notions of militant jihad. While some Islamist scholars interpret jihad as a personal and spiritual struggle, groups like the Brotherhood frame it as a physical defense of Islam.

- The Brotherhood's mission statement and theological justification for jihad.
- The transition from ideological revival to militant resistance.
- The psychological conditioning that transforms individuals into ideological soldiers.
- The role of Western intervention in radicalizing Islamist movements.

Section II:

In Islamic history, military victories have been seen as divine validation of a Muslim's faith. The expansion of the Islamic Caliphates under the Ottomans reinforced the belief that Islam was ordained for global dominance. Therefore, a series of defeats, namely the loss of Jerusalem at the hands of the Crusaders in 1099, the fall of Al-Andalus in 1492, and the collapse of the 1924 Caliphate, have inflicted deep psychological wounds.

These defeats raised existential questions among believers:

- Had God abandoned faithful Muslims?
- Was the decline of Islamic governance due to internal corruption or Western interference?
- How can Islam reclaim its former strength?
- The theological dilemma: Does military failure signify divine abandonment?

Section III:

The Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 was a secret treaty between Britain and France. It divided the Ottoman Empire's territories into spheres of influence. Its purpose was to prevent the emergence of a unified Muslim state by creating separate European-style national entities.

● Western-style nation-states disrupted Islamic unity.
● Islamist movements seeking unity rejected national borders.
● The clash between the Islamic principle of the Caliphate and the biblical idea of sovereign states.
● The Ottoman Empire, once a vast Islamic power, was dismantled after World War I. Western powers, particularly Britain and France, divided the Islamic empire.
● The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) secretly determined how Ottoman territories would be split between European influences.

Section IV:

The Protestant Reformation that took place between 1517 and 1648 was a spiritual transformation that challenged the religious and political authority of the European Catholic Church. Reformers such as Martin Luther, Calvin, and John Knox sought to restore the church to its roots in clearly defined biblical principles that had been lost. This decentralized religious power and allowed individuals access to scripture.

Islamic revivalists like the Muslim Brotherhood also wanted their people to return to their scripture. However, they did not give power to individuals. They took power away from people in order to create a radical Muslim government that would use its authority to force individuals to follow the Quran under sharia law.

● Protestant Reformers emphasized returning to the Bible as the sole authority. It empowered individual conscience and weakened hierarchical religious institutions.
● In contrast, Islamic revivalists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, argued for a return to Quranic law at the expense of individual liberty.

Section V:

After World War II, the United States played a significant role in shaping the Bible's concept of nation. America's influence dismantled European colonialism. Later, post-Christian America began to behave as an imperial force. Its military interventions supported corrupt authoritarian regimes and vested economic interests of the oil industry.

Islamic movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadist movements, interpreted U.S. foreign policy as neo-imperialism, which maintained Islamic divisions. The presence of the American military bases, their economic leverage, and diplomatic strategies fueled resentment from Muslim groups.

● After World War II, the U.S. was initially perceived as a liberator, pressuring Britain and France to dismantle colonial rule in the Middle East.

● Over time, American military interventions, economic policies, and alliances with authoritarian rulers led many Muslims to see the U.S. as a neoimperial force rather than a protector

● The Carter Doctrine (1980) stated that any external attempt to control Persian Gulf resources would trigger U.S. military intervention. This policy led to the expansion of U.S. military bases across the Middle East, reinforcing America's direct role in shaping regional security.

● Many Islamist movements interpret these bases as tools of oppression, aimed at securing economic and strategic interests rather than regional sovereignty.

● Islamist movements argue that American military presence sustains corrupt regimes, preventing Islamic unity and governance under Sharia law. The Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, and other jihadist groups frame their opposition to U.S. foreign policy as a battle against secular oppression and Western interference.

● Sayyid Qutb's writings emphasized the need for an Islamic revolution against Western-imposed governance, arguing that secularism had corrupted Muslim societies and that only a return to Quranic law could restore Islamic sovereignty.

● America has historically supported secular authoritarian rulers in the Middle East to maintain stability and protect economic interests, partially in relation to oil security and military alliances.

1. What are some of the differences between Classical Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas around jurisprudence and jihad?

2. Write about how the Western military in Muslim lands has played into the idea of the need for jihadists to rise up.

3. How did Sayyid Qutb's teachings shift the Brotherhood from political activism to militant jihad?

4. How have the losses of Al-Andalus (1492), Jerusalem (1099), and the Ottoman Caliphate (1924) shaped contemporary Islamist narratives?

5. What theological explanations do Islamist thinkers provide for military failures and political fragmentation?

6. Why do many Islamist thinkers consider the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) a form of deliberate Western fragmentation of the Muslim world?

7. How did Protestant Reformers emphasize biblical authority, and how does this compare to Islamist calls for a return to Quranic law?

8. Why did Protestantism promote decentralized religious interpretation, while Islamic revivalists advocate for centralized theocratic rule?

9. Is it possible to have both democratic and theocratic rule? Why or why not?

10. What do you think is religion's role in political structures?

11. Do you think faith-based movements should prioritize political power, or should they remain purely ideological?