

The sects of Islam

Too many sects in Islam; the major ones are the Sunni 80% and the Shiites 10%. The most information is taken from three sources: Prof. Samir Massouh course (The world Religions), Dr. Christopher Wasserman lecture on the sects of Islam and other lecture in Arabic unknown sources.

The Sunni faction purposed that the successor to Muhammad should be elected from among the people and they are united by the law and Hadith (oral traditions; saying of Muhammad not found in the Qur'an). They believe that there is no separation between religious and secular state and Muhammad deeds and behaviors as model for the Muslims.

There are four major schools of law among the Sunni:

1. The first one is Abu Hanifah of Kufah (the hanafites) 70-767 A.D. He was the most "liberal" of the other schools. He is accepted by the Ottoman Turks, Indian and central Asia Azerbeidjan, Turkmenistan, Usbekistan, Kirgistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

2. The second one is Malik Ibn Ana (the Malikites) 715-795 A.D. He lived mainly in Arabia (Medina). He was traditionalist. He accepted only precepts based on authenticated traditions. Countries in which Malikite law is practiced: Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, Upper Egypt, Lybia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and nearly all of western Africa and Spain.

3. The third one is Abu Abd Allah Muhammad B. Idris al- Shafii (The Shafiites) 767-820 A.D. Born in Gaza but was brought up in Arabia. He is the inventor of science of Usul al-Fiqh. The foundations of Muslim Jurisprudence. He elevated Hadith to level of Qur'an since they are both words of Allah to Muhammad to the Islamic community. Countries in which Shafiite law is

practiced; Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Irak, Kurds in Iran, nearly all of East Africa and in Indonesia.

4. The Four one is Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hanbal (The Hanbalites) 780-855. He was born and died in Baghdad. He fought relentlessly against the mild rationalism of the Muatazilites in Iraq. He was the most fundamentalist and fanatical of the four. He rejected everything except Qur'an and Hadith. He was rejected by the Turks but accepted by the Sunni fundamentalism like Wahhabi movement and the Islamic brotherhood. Hanbalites want religious Islamic governments, not secular Arabic states. Countries in which Hanbalite law is practiced: Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Pakistan

The Shiites (Party of Ali) believed a direct descendancy from Muhammad should followed, a blood line of succession. They are united by Ali's family. They rejected the three Caliphs "Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. They accept only the election of Ali Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. They feel that have been betrayed by the Sunnis most of their leader were killed by the Sunnis. They believes since the imams are infallible, they are ultimate authority in matters dealings with theology and law. There are 12 imams, beginning with Ali, Hassan, Husayn etc...Imam #12 is Muhammad al-Muntazar who disappear 872 A.D. The famous remembrance in Shiites is death of Husayn. The death of Husayn to the Shiites, is like the death of Jesus to the Christians. Countries in which Shiites law is practiced Iran and mostly in Lebanon, Syrian, and Palestine

Kharijites (Seceders) they were the first fundamentalist group of Islam who assassinated Ali. Qur'an must be taken literally and should not be subject to interpretation.

Murjiites (Postponers): They stood in contrast to the Kharijites. Among Muslims, only Polytheist will go to Hell.

Hashimites and the Abbasids. They were descendants of “al-Abbas” uncle of both Muhammed and Ali. They defeated the Umayyads the Abbasids kept the throne to themselves and did not give it to the Shiites. They claimed that Abu Hashim gave the throne to Muhammad, So the Ali’s family , again the Shiites felt that was cheated of the kingdom. Mostly in Jordan.

The Meccans and al-Mansour: They believe that at the end of history, the religious leader of Islam will have the exact name as the prophet “Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah”

The Zaydis: They are the closest group to the Sunni Muslims. They do not believe in the return of the hidden imam. The Imam must be chosen from Ali’s line based on ability and learning. Mostly in Yemen. They oppose the sufis the mystics of Islam.

The Assassins of Alamut: They smoke Hashish before going on suicide missions. They attacked and tried to assassinate Sunni Caliphs and followers. The English word assassin comes from them.

The Druze: The secret Muslims, Caliph al-Hakim. Sent as a misionary to Lebanon. He made many converts there in Mt. Lebanon and Mt. Hermon and North of Israel. He held that al-Hakim is the last incarnation of God. The Druze are a secretive, esoteric and highly ethical society. In 1860's there was a terrible civil war between Christian and Druze, another civil war in Lebanon, between the two in 1975-1990.

The Nusayris: They are seveners,they are called Alawites. They live in Syria, around 500,000 persons. They are manages to control the Syrian army and behind the President Hafez al-Asad and his son Bashar. They are Muslims who celebrate Christian holy days.

Three groups of Philosophy schools in Islam: The Mu’tazila: Not a sect, per say, but a school of thought that uphold philosophy and reason. Its struggled with free Will and predestination. The Qur’an is very strong on predestination. Yet with few free Will saying. The second

Predestination: The Qur'an teaches predestination strongly (If Allah wills...). The third is the Sufis,. They are the Mystical of Islam. They focus on loving and experiencing God directly.

Many organizations are states that there are four types of Muslims

1- Fanatic Muslims. They are highly involved in the religious rituals, but many do not have formal education. Show love and understanding to them rather than argumentative spirit, though they might tend to argue.

2- Religious and educated Muslims. They are usually well-educated, with high school and college degrees. They are well-informed about their religion, but are able to discuss with an open mind.

3- Nominal Muslims. This type constitutes of the Muslim world today. They are from all levels of society and have traditional information about the religion, but they do not perform all the rituals of Islam. They are open to hearing the gospel and considering the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

4- Mixed marriage Muslims. These Muslims are found in countries with mixed religious populations. They are open to Christianity, especially whose mothers are of Christian background. These Muslims respect Christ and might have developed an interest in the Bible. They are capable of understanding and discussing as we share Christ with them.”