

Islam: Causes Of Division

Intro: We need to be prepared to meet the challenge of false religious systems including Islam. We are to be prepared to contend for the faith; Jude 3 “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” We cannot do this if we do not know the enemy.

I. ISLAM CALLS MUSLIMS TO BE UNITED.

A. The Quran (Koran) calls for unity.

1. “And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Quran), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah’s Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islamic Faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) clear to you, that you may be guided” (3:103).
2. “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad SAW), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (SAW), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination” (4:59).
3. “And He has united their (i.e. believers’) hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah has united them. Certainly He is All-Mighty, All-Wise” (8:63).
4. “The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)” (42:13).

B. The Quran also condemns division.

1. “And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment” (3:105).
2. “As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou has no part in them in the least; their affair is with Allah: he will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did” (6:159).

C. Today Islam is not united.

1. One web site states: “According to the Traditions, Muhammad predicted that his followers would become divided into seventy-three sects, every one of whom would go to hell, except one sect, the religion professed by himself and his companions. However the number of Islamic sects, now over 150, has far exceeded Muhammad’s prediction.”

2. We cannot deal with all of them in this lesson but will notice some of them.

II. TWO MAIN DIVISIONS.

A. Mohammed.

1. He was the last in a series of prophets of God (Allah) to the world (others would include: Moses and Jesus).
2. While he was alive there was no difficulty within the Muslim community with unity.
3. He was the spiritual leader and everyone followed him.
4. Mohammed died.
 - a. Islam serves a dead prophet.
 - b. Christianity serves a risen, living Lord.
5. Upon his death: who was to take the leadership role within Islam (the Ummah)?
 - a. He did not name a successor or caliph (Khalifa).
 - b. Possibly he would have done so but he died suddenly and unexpectedly in 632.
 - c. Neither did he leave any instructions to who was to govern the territorial empire he had consolidated.
6. This laid the foundation for the first major division.

B. Sunnis

1. They believe:
 - a. Mohammed's successor should be elected.
 - b. That Mohammed "specified certain people as being qualified for the job, namely Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, in that order."
 - c. "It is further held that the Prophet (saaws) suggested Abu Bakr as the khalifa by appointing him (Abu Bakr) to lead prayer when he (the Prophet) was too ill to get out of bed. They firmly maintain, however, that the khalifa was not appointed by Allah or by the Prophet but rather chosen by the people."
 - d. That the authority of the leader extends only to secular matters and had no spiritual authority since that needed direct revelation from God.
2. They "underwent many divisions of which four are the most predominant and are called (Al-Mazahebul Arba'h). They are: Hanafi, Shafi'y Maliki and Hanbali, Although the basic concepts are the same in all these four sects, yet they differ greatly from one another in their interpretation of the Glorious Kora'n (Holy book) and the Hadith Sharif (Holy Tradition)."

C. Shiites (the party of Ali).

1. They believe:
 - a. Mohammed's successor should come from the bloodline of Mohammed.

- b. That the office of the Caliphate (actually they believe in the Imams or Imamate, not the Caliphate) was an office given by Allah and not of human appointment and that he should be followed in both spiritual and secular matters.
- c. That the authority of Mohammed was passed to members of his house.
 - (1) This is an article of faith to them and those who do not accept it are not true believers.
 - (2) This is a philosophical difference between the two main sects.
- 2. Historically:
 - a. They believe that Mohammed did name his successor.
 - b. Since the Caliphate should be of the house of Mohammed they believe it should go to Ali who was the husband to Fatimah (daughter of Mohammed).
 - c. They believe that during a long speech (at the pond of khum), that he held up the hand of Ali and said, "Whoever I am his leader (Mawla), Ali is his leader (Mawla). O' God, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him."
 - d. They reject that Abu Bakr was elected by the people saying that many of the companions were not there when allegiance was first given to him.

D. The Tragedy of Karbala.

- 1. Husayn, who is the second son of Fatimah and Ali, was violently martyred by the troops of the corrupt Islamic government.
- 2. That government was lead at this time by Yazid the son of Mu'awiyah.
- 3. Millions of Muslims mourn the death of Husayn each year.

E. Theological Differences.

- 1. John Alden Williams in his discussion of the Twelvers (which is the largest sect of the Shiites) explains some of the theological differences. "Theologically, they are Mu'tazili rationalist, believing that the Qur'an is created, and that since God is *essentially* good, He *cannot* do evil. He has created man with free will.... It follows that He would not leave man without guidance; thus the books of the prophets have been sent down. Even so, as the sects of Islam attest, confusion arises, so it follows that God has given man in addition to the Prophet an infallible guide in religious matters. This guide is the *Imam*. It is also clear then that the selection of the *Imams* is a matter which could not be left to human error; they were Divinely appointed from birth. The true *Imams* are the direct line of Ali through al-Husayn.... they believe in the doctrines of occultation (*ghayba*) and return (*raj'a*)."
- 2. Also, "Shi'ite theology includes a doctrine known as the five supports. These are Divine Unity (tawhid), prophecy (nubuwwah), resurrection of the soul and body at the judgment (ma'ad), the Imamate (imamah), and justice ('adl). The first three are found in Sunni Islam, albeit with some differences of emphasis. The Imamate, however, is the essence of

Shi'ism, and the last, justice, is an inheritance from the Mu'tazilites, or rationalists, whose system is in many ways perpetuated in shi'ite theology."

III. OTHER DIVISIONS

A. Kharijis (Khawarij)

1. Their origin arises from the office of the Caliphate "added to their political doctrine that this office was open to any believer whom the faithful might consider fitted for it...certain theological doctrines on the subject of sin, *e.g.*, they regarded any one who had committed one of the greater sins as no longer a believer, and they rejected the doctrine of justification by faith without works."
2. History
 - a. The second Caliph was struck down in the Mosque by a Persian slave bent on avenging the conquest of his people.
 - b. The six companions of the prophet got together and the choice came down between Ali and Uthman (who had married a daughter of the Prophet).
 - c. Uthman was chosen as the Caliph.
 - d. Ali's friends denounced the conspiracy to withhold allegiance to the Prophet's own family.
 - e. Uthman
 - (1) He was personally pious but his family was not and they had too much influence with him.
 - (2) He also antagonized many of the Companions.
 - f. In his 11th year a rebel group demanded his abdication.
 - g. He refused and was hacked to death by some assassins.
3. This murder placed Muslim's in a moral dilemma.
 - a. If one approved of Uthman's acts he was wrong.
 - b. If he approved of the murder he was wrong.
 - c. Moral neutrality was also wrong.
4. Ali
 - a. Some, led by Talha, Zubayr, and A'isha the Prophet's widow, accused Ali of an illegal election and complicity in the murder.
 - b. They raised an army to fight Ali.
 - c. Ali's army routed and killed Talha and Zubayr.
 - d. Mu'awiyah, Uthman's cousin, claimed the right of vengeance.
 - (1) He maneuvered Ali into a position where he had to take arbitration.
 - (2) With Ali's accepting arbitration many who approved Uthman's death deserted Ali accusing him of repudiating the Quram.
 - (3) They believed that all who continued to follow Ali were infidels.
5. Thus began this sect of the Seceders or Kharijis.
 - a. They believe that other Muslims are apostates.

b. Ali was finally assassinated by one of the Kharijis.

B. Wahhabis

1. They are followers of Ibn 'Abd ul-Wahhab (born in 1691) of the Banu Tamim tribe.
 - a. He led a reform of Islam in the eighteenth century.
 - b. Many claim that they are the Kharijis.
 - c. They will not call themselves Wahhabis instead opting to call themselves ahl al-tawhid (People of Unity or *Muwahhidun*).
 - d. They are not the only ones who profess the Unity of God, they simply appropriated this title for themselves.
2. 'Abd ul-Wahhab
 - a. "Aroused by his studies and his observation of the luxury in dress and habits, the superstitious pilgrimages to shrines, the use of omens and the worship given to Mahomet and Mahomedan saints rather than to God, he began a mission to proclaim the simplicity of the early religion founded on the Koran and Sunna (i.e. the manner of life of Mahomet)."
 - b. He believed that they should extend his teachings by force.
 - (1) All unbelievers (which would include Muslims who did not accept his teaching along with those who believe in Christ) were to be put to death.
 - (2) His soldiers who fell in battle were given written orders for the gate-keeper of heaven to admit him immediately without being examined by the angels Munkar and Nakir.
 - (3) They are a radical wing of the Sunnis to which Osama bin Laden and his followers belong and which drives them to act in the way in which they do.
3. They accept the Koran but only in a very literal sense.
4. Wahhabis "places a great emphasis on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He attacks the blind acceptance of authority in religious matters in general, thus comes to oppose the earlier '*uluma*' who lack independent thinking. He finds it essential to go beyond the medieval authorities to the Sunnah of early generations. Rejecting *qiyas*, he recognizes only two major authorities: the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) along with the precedents and the *ijma*' of the Companions."
5. 'Abd ul-Wahhab "protested strongly against all the innovations of later times, and denounced as idolatry the visiting of the sacred shrines and the invocation of the saints or of Mahomet himself. He was also a bitter opponent of the Sufis of his day. The Wahhabites also believe in the literal sense of the Koran and the necessity of deducing one's duty from it apart from the decisions of the four schools. They also pointed to the abuses current in their times as a reason for rejecting the doctrines and practices founded on Ijma, i.e. the universal consent of the believer or their teachers. They forbid the pilgrimage to tombs and the invocation of saints."

6. They condemn astrology, trusting in omens, lucky or unlucky days, and forbid the use of a rosary but then they “attach great merit to counting the ninety-nine names of God on their fingers.”

C. Suffis

1. They developed out of a reaction to the growing Islamic materialism.
 - a. “Theirs was a life of luxury, with concubines and slaves, such as was unknown to their ancestors. This new affluent life-style was supported by taxation of the conquered lands and booty from on-going military campaigns. There were people in the community who disliked the increasing worldliness that was affecting the people in general....They began to protest against the secularization of Islam. To highlight their concern they took to clothing themselves in coarse cloth in the manner of Syrian Christian monks, cloth made of coarse wool called ‘suf.’ On that account they came to be called ‘Sufis’ in course of time.”
 - b. They are recognized officially to have developed around the tenth century (although they claim that their roots are traced back to the beginning of Islam in the early seventh century).
2. They are a mystical tradition where they seek inner mystical knowledge of God, a direct personal experience of God and His love.
 - a. “The central concept in sufism is ‘love’. Sufists believe that, love is a projection of the essence of god to the universe.”
 - b. They are pantheistic in believing that God is in all things and all things are in God and not really distinct from Him.
 - c. They believe that they become or merge into being God.
 - (1) This is called *fanna* (annihilation) where the human personality is absorbed into God which is their ultimate goal .
 - (2) To achieve *fanna* they have to go through several stages of spiritual development which is to be under the guidance of a *pir* which is a person who has arrived at the final stage of *fanna*.
 - (3) The student of the *pir* is called a *murid* (follower).
 - (4) Their dependence on a *pir* causes them to basically ignore legalistic obedience to the Qur’an.
 - d. What is important to the Sufist is a personal relationship with God.
 - e. Thus, Suffis “teaching directly contradicts some of the most fundamental doctrines of orthodox Islam” because they seek a spiritual interpretation.
3. “The Suffis are divided into innumerable sects which find expression in the numerous order of Faqirs, or Darweshes. Faqirs are divided into two great classes, those who govern their conduct according to the principles of Islam and those who do not, although they all call themselves Muslims.”

D. Twelvers

1. A Shiite sect.
2. They “are numerically the largest of the Shi’i sects, and exhibit most of the doctrines which became classical with the Shi’a.”
3. They believe:
 - a. God is essentially good and cannot do evil
 - b. He created man with free-will and desires man’s welfare.
 - c. He gave man the book of the prophets for guidance.
 - d. In spite of the book of the prophets confusion arose so God also gave man the Imam.
4. The Imam.
 - a. The selection would not be left to human error.
 - b. They have been appointed by God from their birth.
 - c. They are direct descendants of Ali through al-Husayn.
5. They hold that the twelfth Imam (Muhammad) who disappeared about 874 is still living.
 - a. They believe “he will return in the last days to establish the Shiah faith in the world.”
 - b. “He was taken by God from human sight, and is in occultation. He will return to earth as the *Mahdi*, the awaited messianic figure who (according to certain *hadiths* questioned by many Sunni scholars) will bring the triumph of religion and herald the last judgment.”
6. “In law, the Twelvers do not accept *hadiths*, transmitted by enemies of the *Imams* such as ‘A’isha, and make use also of the sayings of the *Imams*. In addition to the Shi’i regulations for the prayer call and ablutions, they admit the doctrine of *taqiya* or *katman*, the prophecy or even necessity of hiding one’s true beliefs among non-Shi’is...and they retain the peculiar institution of legal temporary marriage between a free man and woman for *mut’a* (pleasure).”

E. Seveners (Ismailis)

1. A Shiite sect.
2. “Although they have been divided by many schisms, and given rise to at least one separate religion, they all trace their spiritual parentage of Ismail, eldest son of the sixth *Imam* of the Twelvers, Ja’far al-Sadiq. Ismail is said by some Twelvers to have died before his father, by others to have been disowned for a fault ranging from drinking wine to participating in religious activist and revolutionary activities. The Twelvers make his younger brother their seventh *Imam*; the Seveners followed the descendants of Ismail and are often called Ismailis.”
3. “To the Ismailis belong the Carmathians (*q.v.*), the Fatimites (*q.v.*), the Assassins (*q.v.*) and the Druses (*q.v.*)” among others.
4. Their beliefs:
 - a. Much of their teaching is self-contradictory and confusing because while they believe truth is absolute, it is apprehended in a relative way by each person.

- b. What might be one man's spiritual truth, might be another man's scandal.
- c. What really matters is that one be devoted to the sinless *Imam* and serve him.
- d. "The Ismaili doctrine comes from the world of late Hellenistic thought—the metaphysics of Neoplatonism and the physics of Ptolemaeus. God is seen as pure Unity, the One, without attributes, incomprehensible to human thought. He is only to be approached by His emanations. He manifests Himself through prime or spiritual matters; here the Universal Intellect, or *Nous*, is emanated. To it is imparted the Divine knowledge. It then passes this knowledge on to the Universal Soul, or *Pneuma*. At the bottom of the scale of emanations is the physical, material world, but even it bears the stamp of the Divine. The emanations of the Universal Intellect in the world of nature is the *Natiqs*, or greatest prophets, in cycles of seven. The current cycle runs from Adam to Mohammad, the sixth. The emanation of the Universal Spirit is the *Wasi*, who accompanies each *Natiq*. He is the *Imam*, and may be incarnated in many bodies."
- e. Ismaili had an intellectual appeal and is considered a "scientific religion."
- f. "The mystical number seven and the science of the celestial spheres also figure in Ismaili literature."
- g. Zaydis (Fivers)
 - (1) A Shiite religion resulting from a dispute of the Caliph.
 - (a) After the death of the fourth Imam, Imam Ali Zayn al-Abidin, most Shiites accept Muhammed Al-Baqir to be the next Imam.
 - (b) The Zaydis reject Muhammed Al-Baqir and accept his brother Zayd (a grandson of Husayn) as Imam.
 - (c) This is why they are referred to as "Fivers" relating to the fifth Imam.
 - (2) They are the most moderate of the Shiite sects and are closest to and sometimes bridge the gap between the Shiite and Sunnis.
 - (3) Their beliefs:
 - (a) "The Zaydis are principally distinguished from other Shi'ite groups in their conception of the nature of the Imamate. Unlike the Imamis and Isma'ilis, who believe that the Imamate is handed down through a particular line of descendants, the Zaydis believe that anyone in the house of Ali is eligible for the Imamate. The Zaydis reject the doctrine of the Hidden Imam and the return of the Mahdi. The Imam is regarded as neither infallible nor capable of performing miracles. Personal merit, rather than

investiture, governs who should be made Imam. The Zaydis reject any form of 'sufi' tradition. Theologically they are closest to the Mu'tazila school."

- (b) They believe that God has no eternal and uncreated attributes and that the Qur'an is created.
- (c) They reject predestination.
- (d) They hold to a strict observance of the law.
- (e) "They prohibit mixed marriages; they will not eat meat slaughtered by a non-Muslim and will not pray behind any man not of known piety."

F. Bahaiism

1. Began by Mirza Hussayn Ali.
 - a. He was born in 1817 in Tehran, Persia.
 - b. He declared that he was the glory of Allah, "Bahau Allah," in 1847.
2. "His acquaintance with a religious movement led by a man called the Bab (Gate) convinced him that he himself was the prophet that the Bab had predicted would appear."
 - a. The Bab was purported to be a direct descendant of Muhammad and claimed he was the fulfillment of the scriptures of all the world's religions.
 - b. He taught that another manifestation would follow him (he would be similar to John the Baptist and the one following him would be greater than he).
3. The Bab was executed by the Persian government in 1850 and Mirza took over leadership.
4. In 1863 Bahau Allah declared he was the expected prophet.
5. "In addition to claiming most favored prophet status, Baha'u'llah also claimed to be the second coming of Christ and the spirit of truth recorded in John 14:16. He viewed himself as the fulfillment of the coming of Maitreya the Buddha from the Buddhist scripture, the Krishna for the Hindus, and a fulfillment of 'the Day of God' from the Muslim Quran. In fact the Baha'is believe all of the worlds religions have pointed to the coming of Baha'u'llah and that during his era a promised reign of peace will be established."
6. Bahau Allah died in 1892.
7. "Bahais believe in good works, nondiscrimination, and a federated world government."

IV. SUMMARY

- A. **A good summary of the divisions comes from a web site urging unity within Islam.**
- B. **They write:** "Muslims have traditionally used two main sources to arrive at truth: The Qur'an and the example (sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings. All major groups agree on this point and further

believe that the Qur'an is the word of Allah and has not been altered or manipulated since its revelation over 1400 years ago. The earliest divisions within the Ummah, however, are primarily the disputes over the methods of narrating Prophetic traditions. Over the years, these divisions became religious "sects" that became permanent fixtures in the Ummah. Other divisions arose from factors outside of the two sources mentioned earlier. Among those divisions are: (1) Political Factions - Those who support various leaders for political vs. religious reasons. (2) Racial, Ethnic, and National divisions - Racial and National identity placed higher than Islamic identity. (3) Social groups and class systems - The rich feel superior to the poor and neglect spending in charity. (4) Theological differences - The learned scholars have often differed on more than just jurisprudence. (5) Interpretation and Jurisprudence - Scholars are followed according to their way of interpreting texts."

Conclusion: If a prophet says comes to pass, then he is from God; if however what the prophet says does not come to pass, then all know that he is a false prophet and not from God. Deu. 18:21-22 "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Mohammed prophesied that there would be seventy-three sects, yet there have been over twice that amount. While Mohammed prophesied that all but one of those seventy-three would be lost, he was as wrong about that as he was about the number. The only hope for anyone is Jesus Christ; John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." It is our prayer that all Muslims will realize that Mohammed was a false prophet, come to Christ, and obey Him so they might be saved.