

A DIVERSE TRADITION (Week #3)—Handout 1 of 3

Prepared by Pastor Daren Erisman for Bethlehem Lutheran Church, October 19, 2008

Major Groups Within Islam and Better Known Sects

TWO MAIN GROUPS WITHIN ORTHODOX ISLAM:

Sunni Muslims: The majority of Muslims (85%).

- Essentially "mainstream" Islam
- Tend to highly regard tradition and community consensus when making decisions.

Shi'a Muslims: The next largest group of Muslims.

- Referred to as the Shi'ites.
- Found largely in Iran and Iraq
- Tend to rely more on inspired teachers who are related to Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali.
- "**Twelvers**" refers to the majority of Shi'a Muslims who regard the twelve principle Imams. Iran is 90% "twelver" Shi'ites.

A THIRD SIGNIFICANT GROUP THAT IS IDENTIFIED WITHIN ISLAM:

Sufi Muslims

- Focused on mysticism, this group is comprised of both Sunni & Shi'a Muslims.

SOME MORE FAMILIAR SECTS OF ISLAM:

Isma'ilis or "Seveners"

- They are "Seveners" because they acknowledge the seven principle Imams following the death of Muhammad.
- A sub-group of Ismai'ilis follow their revered leader called the Agha Khan.
- They are found all over the world, but particularly in the Indian sub-continent, and East Africa, as well as the UK and the United States.

Druze

- One of the founders, and its namesake, Isma'il al Darazi (d. 1020) believed that the sixth Fatamid Caliph (and Ismai'ili Imam) al-Hakim, was Divine.
- With al-Hakim's mysterious disappearance in 1021, the Druzes teach that he is not dead.
- This is a sub-group of the Isma'ilis and is very secretive.
- Found today mainly in Lebanon, Israel and Syria.

Sikhs

- Founded by Guru Nanak (b.1469) near Lahore Pakistan and popular among the Punjabi people.
- Blending of personal devotion of popular Hinduism (bhakti), the contemplative experience of mystical Islam (Sufism) and the controlled ritual practices of Tibetan Buddhism (Tantrism).

Baha'is

- Founded by Mizra Ali Muhammed (the Bab) and Mizra Husayun Ali (Baha'u'lla) in 1844 in Iran.
- An offshoot of the Babi sect of Persia who were "twelver" Shi'a Muslims.
- They are headquartered in Haifa, Israel and have become quite popular in Europe and America due to their focus on world unity and peace.
- God is seen as being manifested through nine religious leaders including Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah.

ISLAMIC LAW (SHARI'A) AND ITS MAJOR SCHOOLS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHARI'A

- Islamic religious law, shari'a, is based upon the principles and regulations of the Qur'an and the Hadith (The written-down words and practices of Muhammad).
- Islamic scholars interpreted these sources and created legal handbooks based on these sources.
- These legal handbooks were embedded with long lines of legal opinion and dictated all aspects of Muslim behavior.
- After roughly three centuries following Muhammad's death, the shari'a had become codified under four Sunni legal schools and one Shi'a school. It then began to take on a sacred quality of its own.
- Today Muslims struggle to apply the shari'a faithfully to their context and struggle with modernism and secularism.

HANIFITE SCHOOL (Sunni)

- Founder: Abu Hanifa of Iraq (d. 767).
- Emphasized Qur'an and use of **qualified, private opinion** in interpreting its meaning as well as **analogy**. If a literal application of a law seemed unjust, adaptation to the **context** should be applied.
- Roughly half of the world's Sunni Muslims follow this legal tradition.

MALIKITE SCHOOL (Sunni)

- Founded by Malik ibn Anas of Medina (d. 795).
- Skeptical of private opinion in legal matters, he stressed a **communal consensus** of the law as dictated by the community's understanding (Medina) of the practices of Muhammad.
- His followers are mostly in North and West Africa.

SHAFI'ITE SCHOOL (Sunni)

- Founded by Muhammad al-Shaifi'i of Egypt (d. 820).
- He sought the **middle ground** between an over dependence on the authority of reason or community. His focus was on the Qur'an and the Hadith with analogy and communal consensus as secondary.
- One could say that he used the sources of Hanifi but interpreted like Malik.
- His followers are found in southern Arabia & India, as well in parts of the Middle East and Far East.

HANBALITE SCHOOL (Sunni)

- Founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal of Baghdad (d. 855).
- A **literalist**, he vigorously opposed rational and private interpretation as well as the use of analogy and communal consensus. Muslims are to follow the statements of the Qur'an and Hadith as literally as possible.
- His thought has profoundly influenced fundamentalism within contemporary Islam.

JA'FARI SCHOOL (Shi'a)

- Founded by Ja'far-I-Sadiq (d. 765) the sixth imam of Shi'a Islam.
- Out of the Shi'a emphasis for its religious leaders, this school emphasizes the **personal interpretation (ijithad) of pious and learned scholars**.
- It is found wherever there are Shi'ites: Iran, Pakistan, North India, and East Africa.

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BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF ISLAM FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO WWI

PRE-ISLAM

4th-6th cent. A.D. Arabian Peninsula in tension between Byzantines & Persians

{*WORLD EVENTS: Constantine allows Christianity in Roman Empire (313); "Fall" of Rome to Goths, Germanic peoples originally from Scandinavia (476)*}

TIME OF MUHAMMAD (570-632)

c.a. 570 Birth of Muhammad

~610 First revelation given to Muhammad

~613 Beginning of Muhammad's public ministry in Mecca

~620 Muhammad's "Night Journey" to Jerusalem (17:1)

622 Hijra, Muhammad's emigration to Medina (and beginning of Muslim calendar, 0 A.H. "After Hijra")

630 Conquest of Mecca

632 Death of Muhammad

{*WORLD EVENTS: St. Augustine lands in England (597); Vikings begin invading Ireland (620)*}

RAPID EXPANSION WITH FOUR "RIGHTLY GUIDED" CALIPHS (632-661)

632-634 Caliph Abu Bakr (Muhammad's father-in-law elected by majority of Muslim community called the Sunnis (followers of the Sunna). Supporters of Ali form what will become the Shi'ites. Under Bakr the Arabian tribes are unified there is conquest of Southern Mesopotamia and Syria.)

634-644 Caliph Umar (Conquest of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia)

636 Defeat of Persians & Byzantines

644-656 Caliph Uthman (Umayyad clan)

~653 Final edition of Qur'an

656-661 Caliph Ali (Son-in-law of Muhammad who some felt should have been the first caliph)

DIVISIONS, CONQUESTS & BEGINNING OF CALIPHATE DYNASTIES (661-750)

661-750 Caliphate of Umayyad dynasty (Damascus becomes capital)

674 Muslim armies reach Indus River

680 Martyrdom of Husayn (Son of Ali) at Kerbala (decisive event for Shi'ites)

691 Dome of the Rock built on temple mount in Jerusalem

711 Muslim armies enter Spain

715 Muslim's conquer Turkestan

732 Battle of Tours victory stops Muslim advance into France

CULTURAL GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM (749-1200)

749-1258 Caliphate of Abbasid dynasty (Baghdad becomes capital)

751 Muslims defeat Chinese army in Central Asia & learn how to make paper from prisoners of war.

765 Isma'ilis group form from Shi'ites following the 7th imam

866 Death of Al-Kindi (first Arab Muslim philosopher)

873 Disappearance of the twelfth imam of the Shi'ites (And for the Shi'ites is awaited as the Mahdi at the end of time.,.)

901-1174 Fatimid rule in North Africa (Shi'a Isma'ilis)

935-939 Conquest of Genoa

- 950 Death of Al-Farabi (Muslim philosopher influenced by Greek thought)
- 972 Al-Azhar University founded in Cairo
- 1037 Death of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (Encyclopedic breadth of knowledge who turned towards mystical thought)
- 1055 Recently converted Seljuk Turks take over Baghdad
- 1099 First Crusade (Christians conquered Jerusalem)
- 1111 Death of Al-Ghazzali (Bridged philosophy with mystical Sufism)
- 1166 Death of al-Jilani (founder of first Sufi brotherhood)
- 1187 Saladin (Salah ad-Din) regains Jerusalem
- 1196 Sultanate of Delhi (India) established
- 1198 Death of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (Physician/Philosopher and interpreter of Aristotle to the West)

{*WORLD EVENTS: Western Europe's "Middle Ages" (476-1453); Vikings discover Iceland (861); Sung Dynasty in China (960); Revival of Holy Roman Empire in West (962); Great Schism of Holy Roman Empire (1054)*}

MONGOL INVASION AND DECLINE (~1200-1300)

- 1204 Conquest of the Mongols into Russia, Silesia, Anatolia, Persia, and India
- 1236 Fall of Cordoba through Ferdinand III
- 1250-1517 Mamluk regime in Egypt & Syria
- 1258 Fall of Baghdad
- 1273 Death of Rumi (Persian mystic and poet. Sufi Mawlawiyya order "Whirling Dervishes" founded on his doctrine.)

{*WORLD EVENTS: Magna Carta limiting power of English monarchy (1215)*}

RISE OF OTTOMANS (TURKS) (1301-1683)

- ~1300 Marco Polo travels along "Silk Road" into China
- 1370-1405 Mongol leader Timur conquers parts of Central Asia, Persia and northern India.
- 1517 Ottomans unify Near East: Egypt, Syria, Arabia
- 1520-66 Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent at height of Ottoman power
- 1526 Ottomans conquer Hungary
- 1529 First siege of Vienna fails
- 1556 Moghul Kingdom in India
- ~1600 First Muslim state in the Indonesian Islands

{*WORLD EVENTS: Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland (1306); End of 100 Years War (1453); Christopher Columbus discovers "New World" (1492)*}

DECLINE OF OTTOMANS & ADVENT OF EUROPEAN COLONIZATION (1683-1923)

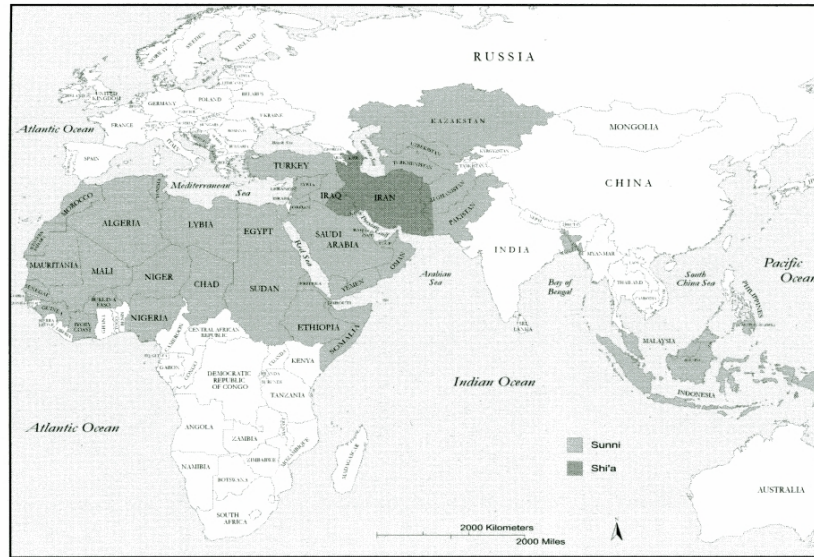
- 1683 Second siege of Vienna fails
- 1773 The British East India Company becomes an official government board of British rule in India
- 1798-1801 Napoleon's campaign in Egypt
- 1803 Last region in India under Moghul rule comes under British control
- 1803-1818 First rule of the Wahhabites in Arabia
- 1858 India becomes British Colony
- 1914 Ottoman Empire joins the side of the central powers in WWI
- 1917 Balfour Declaration: British declare support of Jewish state in Palestine
- 1920 League of Nations gives Lebanon & Syria to France
- 1922 British-controlled "independent" Egypt
- 1922-32 Italy's final conquest of Libya
- 1923 Proclamation of Turkish Republic

{WORLD EVENTS: America's Declaration of Independence (1776)}

(Information drawn largely from *Islam: An Introduction for Christians* ed. by Paul Martinson, *An Introduction to Islam* by Gerhard Endress, and *History's Timeline: A 40,000 Year Chronology of Civilization* by Jean Cooke, Ann Kramer and Theodore Rowland-Entwistle)

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CALIPHATE (The dream of unity and the reality of multiplicity)

- Caliph = “successor”
- Inherent problem of succession to Muhammad (571-632 A.D.)
- Four “Rightly Guided” Caliphs (632-661): Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali
- Sunni Muslims (85%) and Shi’a Muslims (15%)
- No singular Islamic empire after initial Islamic expansion in 700’s. Modern Islam witnessed three Muslim empires: Turkish (Ottoman), Indian (Mughal), and Persian (Savafid).
- Difficult to hold both secular and religious authority
- Distant central caliphate meant real power at a local level (village)
- **MUSLIM VIEW:** “The good old days.” Some Muslims desire to return to Caliphate, or better, an idyllic state emulating the perceived harmonious community of the Prophet.
- **NEWS:** No individual or group speaks for the whole of Islam—Diverse and contextual.

CRUSADES (Defining relationships between East & West and between Islam and Christianity)

- The Crusades (roughly eight between 1095-1270), named after the Latin word for cross, “cruz,” were fought ostensibly to retake Jerusalem and the Holy Land. They were initiated by Rome’s Pope Urban II’s response to the plea of Emperor Alexius I, of the faltering Byzantine Empire. Alexius I was afraid that the Muslims would finally take Constantinople.
- Ultimately, in “aiding” the Christian Eastern Empire, they hastened its demise and hardened the schism between East & West. The crusades also added to the anti-Semitism of Europe as large Jewish communities were decimated along the way.
- Irony: Jews fared better under Muslim control than Christian control.
- Christians and Muslims were both promised that in fighting for God, their past record of sins would be wiped clean and they would be promised heaven/paradise.

- The crusades are a watershed point in history in which the West continues to increase in power and the East gradually declines—in essence, they begin to switch places.
- **WESTERN VIEW:** The crusades bolstered the Western papacy and diverted the energies of a feudal Europe. Europeans also became acquainted with the sophisticated Muslim culture and readily absorbed the preserved and translated classic Greek texts, particularly Aristotle.
- **MUSLIM VIEW:** Seen as but the beginning of Western Christian aggression towards Muslims.
- **NEWS:** The crusades are more meaningful to the people of the Middle East and to Muslims everywhere than to people of the West.

COLONIALISM (From colonizer to colonized: Fragmentation and loss of identity)

- Up until the 1700's, the Muslim community had largely been ruled by Muslims. Even the Mongol conquerors later converted to Islam. However, with the rise of European colonialism, this dramatically changed.
- Colonizers essentially used the tactic of dividing and conquering its colonies.
 - First by trading with a region and creating dependencies and then bringing in military to "protect" its interests (British control of India is a prime example).
 - Created artificial boundaries that cut through natural ethnic and tribal cohesion.
 - Created states dependent upon their colonizers by reorienting local, self-sufficient economies into producers of goods for the colonizers (ie: coffee, tobacco, and rubber).
- By the end of WWI, Britain controlled Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, the Arabian Gulf, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. France controlled North, West and Equatorial Africa, Lebanon and Syria. The Dutch controlled Indonesia.
- The Muslim world that had been ruled by three Islamic empires (the Ottoman of the Mediterranean, the Safavid of Persia, and the Mughal of India) would finally be parceled into today's fifty some nation-states.
- Christian missionaries accompanied colonialism with vigor. They, in keeping with their times, connected the triumphs of European nations with Christianity while blaming the misfortunes of the Muslim world on Islam. Christianity was inherently viewed as a religion of progress and Islam as a religion of stagnation.
- A Western attitude of superiority manifested itself in a stereo-typical "servant-master" relationship with Muslims. European governments and missionaries sought to "civilize" the Muslims with Western style education, Christian virtues and "enlightened" social policies.
- **WESTERN VIEW:** Manifest destiny. Colonialism helped create the great Western nation states.
- **MUSLIM VIEW:** Muslims have mixed feelings towards colonizers (anger at oppression, jealousy of wealth and power) and negative feelings towards the associated "Christianity" of the colonizers. In addition, the combination of Western military dominance and Christian mission have caused many modern Muslims to perceive Colonialism as another version of the Crusades.
- **NEWS:** The average Muslim will lift up any figure who challenges the dominance of the West (David and Goliath). Additionally, groups formed by tribal association or ethnicity often overlap the seemingly arbitrary boundaries of nations forming unexpected alliances and tensions.

CRUDE OIL (Dependent independence and the fuel for Islamic extremism)

- Made region invaluable to world economic stability
- Colonialism became "Corporate Interest" (The real power in the region)
 - Control of oil creates an innate tension between nationalizing countries and international corporations.
 - Essentially, it has been impossible for Middle Eastern countries to emerge with governments or monarchies that are not intimately bound to international corporate interests.
- Creates rapid wealth for a small group of people and their families. This causes an extreme separation of the classes. It allows a few to govern the many and typically creates unstable (and undemocratic) governing structures whose purpose is to keep power at all costs. With such extremities in wealth, one can buy almost anything...(Ex: Osama Bin Laden's huge inheritance)
- **WESTERN VIEW:** A vital component of the world's economy lies underneath one of the most volatile areas of the world.
- **MUSLIM VIEW:** Blessing and curse. A blessing in that oil is a tremendous resource, and a curse in that such a commodity brings much foreign intervention.
- **NEWS:** Gasoline prices! A major component in the world's economy, and accordingly, a vulnerable target for terrorist groups to attack.