



Sunni-Shi'a Conflict

هَنِيئًا لِصَانِعِي السَّلَامِ، لِأَنَّهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ يُدْعَوْنَ.

(عيسى المسيح)

*Blessed are the peacemakers
for they shall be called sons of God.*



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Matthew 5:9

In the year 632AD Mohamed took seriously ill. His religious following, *Islam* had quickly become a powerful and rich nation. Patterned, for the most part, on the west Arabian Jewish heritage, it had become an actual nation. The vast political, economic and legislative structures with a full-fledged religious ritual system required strong leadership.

Mohamed's relatives and his earliest followers were already enjoying the privileges. As always, prestige, money and power brought strong competition and disagreements.

Successor

An astute thinker, Mohamed saw the frictions in his inner circle. It is said that he predicted that his followers would divide into 700 sects after his death.

As his health rapidly weakened, his observations gave way to sustained worries. Mohamed had no sons. After he succumbed to death, the simmering power struggle surfaced between two factions: his blood relatives and his early supporters. Fearing defections, they kept the news secret for three full days wrangling over a successor - *Caliph*.

Family members cited tribal norms requiring his closest male blood relative to assume leadership. They pointed to Mohamed's cousin, Ali, married to his daughter, Fatima.

A powerful majority disagreed, insisting the Caliph be the most qualified of Mohamed's associates. Abu Bakr, a respected older man, was his closest friend and earliest follower. As his daughter, A'isha was a favored wife, he was somewhat of a relative. Thus, he was an acceptable compromise for the first Islamic Caliph.

Faction

Abu Bakr lived to lead the growing nation for only two years. He was the only one of the first four Caliphs to die a natural death. The second Caliph Omar was stabbed to death ten years later inside the central mosque by a visiting Persian. The third Caliph, Othman, son-in law of Mohamed, was clearly assassinated by followers of Ali in order to make him the fourth Caliph.

Viewed as heretics, Ali's followers were labeled "Faction" (*Shi'a*). The majority adhered to

« لَا يَحْتَاجُ الْأَصْحَاءُ إِلَى طَبِيبٍ بَلِ الْمَرْضَى.
 انْتَبِهُوا وَأَفْهَمُوا: إِنِّي أُرِيدُ رَحْمَةً لَا تَدِينَا،
 لِأَنِّي لَمْ آتِ لِمَنْ يَدْعُونَ التَّقْوَى بِتَدِينِهِمْ،
 بَلِ لِمَنْ يَقْرُونَ بِحَاجَتِهِمْ لِلتَّوْبَةِ. »
 (عيسى المسيح)



*“Those who are well
 have no need of
 a physician, but those
 who are sick ...
 For I came not to call
 the righteous,
 but sinners.”
 (Matthew 9:12-13)*

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the Sunna, the Koran plus Mohamed's sayings (Hadith), so they are called Sunni. They violently opposed Ali in a bloody war that continued even after he was assassinated. Thus, an ever-present Sunni-Shi'a blood feud began within Islam, now with many subgroups and different schools of thought.

Sunnis represent the majority of Muslims worldwide. This includes the most violent Jihadists -- Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Nusra, ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Shabbab as well as militant groups like the powerful Muslim Brotherhood movements in Turkey, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco and Sudan. All were inspired and initially sup-

ported by the dominant Saudi, and other Arabian, Wahabi branch of Sunni Islam.



To millions of Sunnis, Osama Bin Laden remains a hero.

Evil To Good

The eight-year Iraq-Iran war was essentially Sunni versus Shi'ia, killing over

two million and maiming many more. Since then, Sunni groups have tried to establish strict Islamic governance in Syria, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia and other places. They oppose as heretical non-Muslims, all Shiite branches and even Sunnis not strictly applying Islamic law. Some Shiites resort to revenge killings.

This Islamic blood feud is a major contributing factor to the growing tide of disenchantment with Islam, especially among urban and educated Muslims. It provides very strong gospel opportunities. Praise God for those turning to the Prince of Peace and pray for many more:

S.S, an Algerian retired

teacher says: "...The more our people are informed of the true gospel of peace in the life, teaching and divine plan of salvation through Jesus Christ (Issa Al-Masih), the better for us and the world in the face of religious hatred and violence... there are thousands of us here in the northern mountains who belong to Jesus (Issa), the Way, Truth and Life..."

H.A. of Sana, Yemen, says: "...I have lost two brothers and one of my sisters and her whole family (husband and two children) to this mad Muslim war...It was my martyred brother-in-law who opened my eyes to the true God (Allah) in Jesus Christ (Issa Al-Masih)..."

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Sundays 10:30 am & 6:00 pm – John Calvin Centre 57 Stylianou Lena St., Larnaca, Cyprus



Shiites annually hold an emotional memorial in Karbala, Iraq of the Sunni massacre of their founders.