

Christianity, Cult's and Religions – A comparative Look at the World we live in.

During this study, we'll look at 8 distinctive areas that separate and define each of 20 different religions or cults that exist in the world today. This is not to be considered an exhaustive study nor is it to be considered inclusive of all the world's religions or cults. But it is only an overview of some of the major influences in the world today. There are many more sub-cultures and "sects" of each of these that we will not have the time to discuss. Therefore let me encourage each of you to determine to investigate and learn for yourselves what those influences are and how they may affect your personal Christian belief system and Christian walk with God.

"I don't know what I don't know, and I do know what I do know!" – Doug Doran
I only know and believe what is in the Bible, and if it isn't in the Bible, I don't know it to be fact, and I'm not going to make up something just to satisfy human curiosity.

Sunni vs. Shi'a:

Followers: *Sunni* – over 1 billion world wide

Shi'a – estimated 170 million primarily in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain

Succession: *Sunni:* Muhammad's successors (called *caliphs*) should be chosen by consensus or election. The first was Abu Bakr (AD 573-634), and over the centuries many others followed. No new *caliphs* since 1924.

Shi'a: Muhammad's successors (called *inams*) should be his family and descendants (Ahl al-Bayt). The first of these was his cousin and son-in-law. Ali (@AD 600-661) and thereafter *inams* were bloodline descendants from Fatimah (Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife). No new *inamas* since AD 869.

Authoritative Writings:

Sunni: The Qur'an, plus emphasis on Hadith and other sayings attributed to companions of Muhammad such as Abu Bakr, Umar, and Aisha.

Shi'a: The Qur'an, plus emphasis on Hadith and other sayings attributed to companions of Muhammad's family and their supporters.

Main Teachings and Practices:

Sunni: Five Pillars (or duties).

1. Profession of Faith (*shahadah*)
2. Prayers (*salat*)
3. Almsgiving (*zakat*)
4. Fasting during Ramadan (*sawn*)

5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (haji)

Six beliefs:

1. In Allah
2. In Prophets and Messengers
3. In Angels
4. In Holy Books
5. In the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection
6. In the Decree (destiny or fate)

Shi'a: Ten central Practices:

1. Profession of Faith
2. Prayers (salat)
3. One-fifth Tax (khums)
4. Fasting during Ramadan (sawn)
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (haji)
6. Religious War (jihad)
7. Working to Do Good (amr-bilma'ruf)
8. Exhortation to Abstain from Evil (nahi-anil-munkar)
9. Loving the Ahl-al-Bayt and their followers (tawalla)
10. Disassociation from the enemies of the Ahl-al-Bayt (tabarra)

Five Principles:

1. Oneness (tawhid)
2. Justice (adl)
3. Prophethood (nubuwwah)
4. Leadership (imamah)
5. Day of Resurrection (yawm al qiyamah)

Major Divisions:

Sunni: Four "schools of law"

- a. Hanafi
- b. Maliki
- c. Hanbali
- d. Shafi'i

Shi'a: Three branches

- a. majority "Twelvers" who believe in a succession of twelve infallible, divinely ordained imams
- b. "Seveners"
- c. "Fivers"

Eschatology: (end times)

Sunni: Majority believe that a figure known as the *Mahdi* (guided one), from Muhammad's family will appear with Jesus before the final judgment.

Shi'a: Majority believe in a series of twelve inams serving as Muhammad's spiritual and political successors. The final one, Muhammad al-Mahdi (AD 869), is alive but hidden (in "occultation") since AD 874; at the proper time he will appear with Jesus

Note: Many of the fact presented here are taken from ROSE Publishing © 2014 and the official web site of the religions presented, and other sourced.