

Colt Emswiler

5-3-1 Kelin and Stilles Article

QUESTIONS

1. What motivation have scholars often overlooked when discussing the origin of Islam?
2. How long did it take after Muhammad's death for Islam to develop?
3. How did Christians and Jews view the early Muslims?
4. Does Fred Donner believe Muhammad didn't exist?
5. Why is there a hesitation to speak out critically regarding the Koran and to publish critiques on the text?

ANSWERS

1. While scholars often focus on the political and social factors, they rarely look at the religious motivations for Islam. Islam was initially more of a commitment to monotheism more than it was to Muhammad.
2. It took a considerable time. It was nearly 100 years after the death of Muhammad before Islam had a distinct definition as a monotheistic religion.
3. Some Christians saw the Muslims as an outgrowth of their own religion. Likewise, some of the Jews didn't see a conflict with the Torah when believing that Muhammad was a prophet. Clearly Islam started as something different.
4. No, he believes Muhammad was real given the seventh century artifacts that have been recovered. However, there are some theologians who challenge that Muhammad existed at all.
5. There are threats of violence and a history of actual attacks on journalists and other who dare to question the integrity of the Koran. Fear and political correctness kept many people silent on these issues.

TERMS

Muslim (as interpreted by the Quran) – “one who submits” which relates more to a monotheist than one who follows Muhammad

Hagarenes – The term used in early documents to describe Muslims. This meant descendants of Hagar, who was the servant girl, the mother of Ishmael.

Revisionist scholarship – Scholarship that is revisiting important historical viewpoints. This is happening right now in regards to Islam and the Koran which is a positive development to expose historical truths.

SUMMARY

In the article by Kelin, he reviews how historian Fred Donner is taking a more critical look at the origins of Islam from a religious perspective. Donner is challenging the view that Islam was codified from the beginning and points to the over 100-year delay in the formal development of the religion as evidence. Stilles article discusses the violence and threats which have tried to restrict new critical scholarship of the Koran. This scholarship reveals that it's unlikely that Muhammad lived in Arabia, far from the monotheistic world he writes about.