

Guide to Responding to Islam and the Emergence of the Muslim States

Instructions: Please review the following sample answers. Compare these to your answers to make sure you are able to identify and include the key phrases in your responses.

1. What are the most noticeable differences between the rise of Islam and Christianity?

Muslims and Christians (together with Jews) share very similar monotheistic beliefs. However, there are differences in the rise of these religions. The most significant differences are the speed with which Islam emerged and spread. Islam emerged as a major political and military power within the first century. Christianity had to wait three hundred years to enjoy political power. Christianity had to endure hardship under a Roman rule. However, Islam created its state immediately after its rise.

Key Phrases: speed of the spread of Islamic faith, emergence of Islam as political power

2. What were the main methods for the spread of Islam?

Islam spread through several methods; the first is conquest. As the Muslim armies captured territories, they converted the local population. However, many conversions took place without the threat of violence. For example, many Christians of North Africa converted to avoid the extra tax. Trading privileges were the other reason for conversion. Many people in Africa converted to enjoy the trading opportunities and tax breaks created for the Muslims. Missionary activities were the main mode in Asia. Sufis carried the teachings as far Indonesia.

Key Phrases: Islamic conquests, trading privileges, missionary activities

3. What is the significance of the era known as “the rightly guided caliphs?”

This is the period in which Islamic leadership came to power through election. These four caliphs were elected by their peers. Also, their close relations with the prophet of Islam were significant. They all witnessed the Islamic administration headed by Muhammad. Therefore, they received their guidance from the right place, hence rightly guided.

Key Phrases: elections in Islam, leadership after Muhammad

4. What is the reason for the Shi'a and the Sunni split?

The split between Shi'a and Sunni goes back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad; after his death, a question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslims arose. Sunni Muslims believed that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of ruling by following his tradition. They called themselves "Sunni, which means "the one who follows the traditions of the Prophet." The Shi'a, on the other hand, wanted the eldest male from Muhammad's household to take over the state. They claimed that this was also Muhammad's wish.

Key Phrase: the succession rivalry in early Islam

5. What was the most significant impact of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula when it emerged?

Islam provided a sense of identity and unity for many warring Bedouin tribes. Centuries long intertribal enmities came to an abrupt halt. With the rise of Islam as a state in Medina, people enjoyed a sense of security and structure. Arbitrary governing practices were abandoned. In other words, the umma or the community of believers was created. This was as much of a political and military community as it was a religious one. Its governing practices and sharia were revolutionary of its time standard.

Key phrases: creation of the umma, emergence of the Islamic state