

Religion Of Peace?

War On Terror: In the wake of the cartoon jihad and mosque-on-mosque violence in Iraq, most Americans now think Islam has more violent believers than any other faith. Yet many still view it as a “peaceful religion.”

Psychologists might call this cognitive dissonance - a state of mind where rational people essentially lie to themselves. But in this case, it's understandable. In our politically correct culture, criticizing any religion, even one that plots our destruction, is still taboo. And no one wants to suggest the terrorists are driven by their holy text.

Which explains a Washington Post-ABC News poll showing that . Americans are becoming more aware of the broader threat (58% associate terrorists with Islam), but are still convinced terrorists radicalizing Islam and not the other way around (54% don't think Islam itself encourages violence).

The new poll, however, still doesn't sit well with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a group dedicated to improving public perceptions of Islam. It has denounced increasingly negative views as “Islamophobic” and vowed to redouble its “education” efforts.

Good. What better time for CAIR and other Muslim leaders to step up, cut through the politically correct fog and provide factual answers to the questions that give so many non-Muslims pause?

Generally speaking, those questions focus on whether the Quran does indeed promote violence against non-Muslims, and how many of the terrorists' ideas -- about the violent jihad, the self-immolation, the kidnappings, even the beheadings -- come right out of the text? But even more specifically:

Is Islam the only religion with a doctrine, theology and legal system that mandates warfare against unbelievers?

Is it true that 26 chapters of the Quran deal with jihad, a fight able-bodied believers are obligated to join (Surah 2:216), and that the text orders Muslims to “instill terror into the hearts of the unbeliever” and to “smite above their necks” (8:12)?

Is the “test” of loyalty to Allah not good acts or faith in general, but martyrdom that results from fighting unbelievers (47:4) -- the only assurance of salvation in Islam (4:74; 9:111)?

Are the sins of any Muslim who becomes a martyr forgiven, by the very act of being slain while slaying the unbelievers (4:96)?

And is it really true that martyrs are rewarded with virgins, among other carnal delights, in Paradise (38:51, 55:56; 55:76; 56:2'2)?

Are those unable to do jihad - such as women or the elderly -- required to give “asylum and aid” to those who do fight unbelievers in the cause of Allah (8:74)?

Does Islam advocate-expansion by force? And is the final Command of jihad, as revealed to Muhammad in the Quran, to conquer the world in the name of Islam (9:29)?

Is Islam the only religion that does not teach the Golden Rule (48:29)? Does the Quran instead teach violence and hatred against non-Muslims, specifically Jews and Christians (5:50)?

There are other questions, but these should do for a start. If the answers are “yes,” then at least Americans will know there's no such thing as moderate Islam, even as they trust that there are moderate Muslims who do not act out on its violent commands.