

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Ali declares, “I believe that a reform of Islam is necessary and possible. And only Muslims can make that reform a reality.” What type of reform do you think she is referring to? Why do you think she believes such a reform necessary? Why do you think that only Muslims can make such a reform actually happen?
- Ms. Ali warns that, “If the jihadists win and the hope for a reformed Islam dies, the rest of the world will pay a terrible price... For this reason, I believe that it is foolish to insist, as Western leaders habitually do, that the violent acts committed in the name of Islam can somehow be divorced from the religion itself.” Why do you think that Western leaders, and others, tend to ignorantly and steadfastly insist that those who commit terrorist acts in the name of the religion are somehow not representative of such ideology? Given that, “...the call to violence and the justification for it are explicitly stated in the sacred texts of Islam,” why do you think that Western leaders, and others, tend to ignorantly and steadfastly insist that Islam is a religion of peace?
- Later in the video Ms. Ali states, “...I watch with amazement as those who call themselves liberals and progressives- people who claim to believe so fervently in individual liberty and minority rights- make common cause with the forces in the world that manifestly pose the greatest threats to that very freedom and those very minorities.” Why do you think that so many progressives refuse to connect Islamic extremists with civil rights abuses, the absence of tolerance, and hate for others, especially in the face of such overwhelming evidence?
- Ms. Ali aptly charges that, “By labeling critical examination of Islam as inherently “racist,” we make the chances of reformation far less likely.” Why do you think that some people automatically label any criticism, even respectful criticism, of Islam as racist? How do you think that the obstacle of a racism charge hinders the ability of Islam to be reformed?
- Ms. Ali points out that, “If we do in fact support political, social and religious freedom, then we cannot in good conscience give Islam a free pass on the grounds of multicultural sensitivity,” and that, “There are no limits on criticism of Christianity at American universities or anywhere else, for that matter; why should there be of Islam?” How would you answer Ms. Ali’s question? Isn’t criticizing Christianity but not criticizing Islam a form of discrimination? Why or why not?
- Towards the end of the video, Ms. Ali explains that, “Instead of contorting Western intellectual traditions so as not to offend our Muslim fellow citizens, we need to defend both those traditions and the Muslim dissidents who take great risks to promote them... there are many dissidents who challenge Islam, but the West either ignores them or dismisses them as ‘not representative.’ This is a grave mistake. Reformers... must be supported and protected.” Why do you think that Western leaders and other important figures don’t take critics of Islam seriously? Why do you think that progressives are so afraid of possibly offending anyone who is Muslim? In addition to supporting those attempting to reform Islam from the inside, what else do you think can be done to help the Islamic faith transcend to a more civilized and honored condition that is more suited to the modern world?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Dr. Tawfiq Hamid

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Islam – Violent Religion or Peaceful Religion?” then answer the questions that follow.

- What are ideas dependent upon, in terms of interpretation? What are the characteristics of Type A Islam and Type B Islam? How many mass international Muslim demonstrations against killing apostates, stoning women, killing gays, and ISIS atrocities have there been?
- Do you think that a correlation exists between the notion of cult versus religion and the notion of Type A Islam and Type B Islam? If no, why not? If yes, what might that correlation be? What is Dr. Hamid’s main point in the article?
- Do you think that some people would consider Dr. Hamid to be a racist? If they did, why would they be wrong? How exactly can Dr. Hamid’s work contribute towards reform in Islam? How would you suggest that Dr. Hamid’s work be more broadly supported?



QUIZ

IS ISLAM A RELIGION OF PEACE?

1. Islam is _____.
 - a. a religion centered on brotherly love.
 - b. a religion that's dwindling.
 - c. a religion of peace.
 - d. not a religion a peace.

2. Islamic belief makes all Muslims violent
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. What happened after Ms. Ali was invited to accept an honorary degree from Brandeis University?
 - a. An unprecedented amount of students attended her presentation.
 - b. Ali's invitation was withdrawn after professors and students protested her criticism of Islam.
 - c. Ali's invitation was withdrawn after professors and students protested her criticism of Christianity.
 - d. Multiple colleges began offering her honorary degrees.

4. Labeling critical examination of Islam as inherently "racist" will _____.
 - a. make the chances of reformation far less likely
 - b. make the chances of reformation far more likely
 - c. inspire Christian conversion.
 - d. instill a spirit of fear in the American people.

5. How does the West treat the many dissidents who challenge Islam?
 - a. With support and protection.
 - b. With as much celebration as Cold War dissidents.
 - c. Dismisses them as "not representative."
 - d. Ensures their challenges are heard by all people.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.newsmax.com/TawfikHamid/islam-muhammad-shariah/2016/02/24/id/715880/>

Islam — Violent Religion or Peaceful Religion?



By [Tawfik Hamid](#)

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Since 9/11 there have been countless discussions and arguments about the true nature of Islam. The questions remain: Is it a religion of peace or a religion of violence?

The answer has proved to be as elusive as it is widely discussed.

As with physical reality, ideas are subject to interpretation based on frame of reference. They are, in a sense, dependent on the position of the observer. If Islam is viewed from the traditional (and currently mainstream) perspective, which includes a combination of teachings from the Koran, Sunna, Jurisprudence, Sira (Biography of Muhammad), and approved commentaries on these sources, then Muslims have an unambiguous religious obligation to declare war on non-Muslims to subjugate them to Islam and to take female prisoners from these wars as sex slaves.

Likewise from this traditional (and currently mainstream) point of view, Islam promotes killing apostates, stoning of women to death for adultery and killing gays. Furthermore, from this same vantage point, Islamic theology teaches that the peaceful (earlier) verses of the Koran have been abrogated by the violent (later) ones. And according to the Hadith books of al-Buchary, the Prophet Muhammad took his wife Aisha when he was over age 50 and she was 7. The same book states that he began having sex with her when she was 9.

To an outside observer, this form of Islam, let's call it Type A Islam, is a barbaric belief system that promotes violence, rape, and wars. Critics of Islam describe the prophet's described behavior as "perverted" and "pedophilic." And as long as these teachings remain unopposed by the leading, mainstream Islamic institutions and Muslim leaders, such criticism is understandable.

Now, let's view Islam from a different frame of reference and call it Type B Islam. This strain depends primarily on the Koran alone. It rejects the other authoritative sources of the religion mentioned above, all of which were written at least 200 years after the revelation of the Koran.

Type B Islam focuses on the book's peaceful verses while contextualizing the violent ones. It does not promote killing apostates, stoning women, or killing gays. In fact, it prohibits these barbaric behaviors. Type B Islam also rejects the story that Muhammad married Aisha when she was 7 years old because it is not mentioned in the Koran. Therefore, outside observers might

reasonably conclude that Islam is peaceful.

Allow me to illustrate. From the Type A Islam frame of reference, the following verse justifies declaring war on all non-Muslims: "Slaughter the infidels wherever you may find them" (Koran 9:5). and abrogates such peaceful verses as "Do not commit aggression — for, verily, God does not love aggressors" (Koran 2:190). Type B Islam, in contrast, contextualizes the first verse in time and place by concentrating on the defining article "the" before the word "infidels." Doing so allows the verse to refer to a particular tribe of enemies. (Consider the difference between "a" white house and "the" White House.)

All well and good. But when the first verse is viewed in the light of the general concepts and principles of the Koran as laid out in the second verse, the inherent peacefulness or violence of Islam can (and will) be argued forever without hope of consensus, because observers are limited to their own frames of reference.

Believing and promoting Type A Islam while expecting the world to judge you as Type B Islam is dishonest, hypocritical, and really quite absurd.

What we need are concrete facts that cannot easily be ignored and that might help to frame a more fruitful debate:

1. All leading Islamic institutions believe in Type A Islam and regard those who believe in Type B Islam as apostates.
2. The teachings of Type A Islam are not opposed by any leading Islamic scholars or any Islamic books approved by the recognized Islamic authorities (al-Azhar University in Cairo and the leading imams in Saudi Arabia).
3. Most terrorist attacks in the world today, and nearly all suicide bombings, are perpetrated by devout Muslims and by Islamic groups such as ISIS.
4. Sheik al-Azhar (the grand imam of the top educational institution in Sunni Islam) has refused to consider ISIS (strict practitioners of Type A Islam) as non-Muslims.
5. Killing apostates, stoning women to death for adultery, and brutal killing of gays is practiced in all Islamic countries that apply Shariah.
6. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims demonstrated worldwide against banning the hijab in France and against the cartoon issue of prophet Mohamed; but there have been exactly zero mass international Muslim demonstrations against killing apostates, stoning women, killing gays, or against any of the ISIS atrocities.

These are undisputed facts. They are neither subjective nor subject to relativism. They can be liked or disliked, wanted or unwanted, but they are not in question. They represent painful realities that can be measured in absolute terms and defined in numbers.

Until Type B Islam dominates Islamic theology and teaching, and until the Muslim world shows clear and unequivocal opposition to atrocities perpetrated in the name of Islam, attempting to view the religion relativistically is dangerous and improper. In other words, no rational set of values can be ascribed until there is only one set of adherents, and those adherents understand the religion should not embrace brutality.

Objective reality is the true measure, and only the Muslim world can change it.

Dr. Tawfik Hamid is the author of "Inside Jihad: Understanding and Confronting Radical Islam."