

In Search of Moderate Muslims. By Peter Smith, a frequent *Quadrant Online* contributor, 13 October 2014.

Are imams advocating that the faithful focus on the nice Meccan part of the Koran, rather than the advocacy of violence in the nasty Medinan part? It would be nice to have that questioned answered, but the only responses we hear are sophistries and dissembling

Seek them here

Seek them there

Are there moderates anywhere?

Mark Durie in *Islam, Human rights and Public Policy* (2009) refers to a poll taken in 2006 which found that 58% of Indonesians believed adulterers should be stoned to death; up from 39% in 2001. Apparently the polled respondents in this “moderate” Muslim nation were not asked whether adulterers should simply get a damn good thrashing. I assume there would have been even greater support for that. In 2010, the *Pew Research Centre* found that 84% of Egyptians, 86% of Jordanians and 76% of Pakistanis favoured death for apostasy.

In early 2011, the governor of the Punjab province in Pakistan, Salmaan Taseer, was assassinated. He was killed for opposing blasphemy laws which had resulted in a Christian woman facing execution. Pope Benedict publicly opposed the laws. A number of Pakistan’s political leaders, including then-Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, made it clear that the Pope had no business interfering in Pakistan’s internal affairs and that the blasphemy laws would remain in place. Thousands were reported to have showered the alleged assassin with rose petals.

Clearly, Enlightenment thinking is a little way off in Pakistan and in other Islamic states. But then, if that is the case, where are those moderate Muslims that I keep hearing about? Where are they hiding out? Andrew Bolts seems to be in the know. He attests, presumably as a result of some kind of revelatory insight, that “the vast majority of Muslims reject [terrorism]”; in other words, a *jihad* interpretation of Islamic scripture (*Herald Sun*, 6 October). Hmm, I wonder, wherever they are, what is going on? Have their imams told them to concentrate on the nice Meccan part of the Koran and ignore the later words of Allah in the nasty Medinan part? Are there large numbers of foolhardy imams preaching this heresy?

Perhaps it is a question of definition. What is a moderate Muslim? Can he or she be identified? One problem in coming from a Christian background is the absence of a contemporary reference point in the Christian world for moderates.

As I pointed out in “[Moderate Muslims are the Problem, Not the Solution](#)” (*Quadrant*, May 2013): “Christians don’t go around bombing people in the name of Christianity or envisioning a restored Christian empire, akin to a caliphate, in the Western world.” Without an immoderate and warlike comparison, the term “moderate” has no meaning. Christians don’t go around axiomatically describing themselves as moderate. It would be silly. Not so with Muslims.

A poll of British Muslims taken by NOP Research in 2006 found that 78% thought the publishers of those Danish cartoons of Muhammad should be prosecuted. Some 68% thought those who insulted Islam should be prosecuted while 45% thought the 9/11 attacks were an

Israeli-American conspiracy. Are these people moderate? What do moderate Muslims believe, as distinct from their immoderate cousins?

I am genuinely asking the question because I simply do not know what the definition of a moderate Muslim is. With something above 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and Islamic violence rampant, it is a question worth asking. What we surely do know is that the vast majority of Muslims are not moderate in the Christian or secularist sense of the term. Quite simply, the radicalism and violence that we are seeing around the world would not be sustainable without a considerable groundswell of support.

There are no radical Anglican bishops so far as I know. However, suppose Americans or Britons or Canadians or Australians followed the example of Indonesians and believed 58% of adulterers should be stoned to death in accordance with *Deuteronomy 22:22-24*. In these circumstances, I am fairly confident that a bishop or two could be found to excite their passions and, on the face of it, lead them to excess.

Take Australia, where Muslims form a much smaller part of the population than in most western European countries. In May, 2011, the *Australian Federation of Islamic Councils* made a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into multiculturalism arguing that Muslims should enjoy “legal pluralism”. The organisation’s president, Ikebal Patel, said that a moderate interpretation of sharia could co-exist within the Australian legal system. Would Patel have made this extraordinary and outrageous claim without the support of a sizeable section of the Muslim community? I think not.

There is much too much pussyfooting around the issue for fear of upsetting the extremely sensitive Muslim lobby, not to mention their left-wing (read: “useful idiot”) supporters in the media. We need to know how a Muslim who follows the teaching of Muhammad, which presumably they would all claim to do, can be moderate in the way we understand the term. What do they believe? How do they contort the words of the Messenger to their own worldview?

It is completely unsatisfactory for Muslim spokespersons to say glibly that Islam is a religion of peace without explaining how this is consistent with their scriptures. Where, exactly, is the robust public debate on the religious chasm between the fundamentalists and the moderates? Maybe, just maybe, there is no chasm.

True, 120 Islamic scholars (all Sunni and, of course, and all men) from around the world issued an open letter in September in which they refuted the ideology of ISIS. But [Robert Spencer’s analysis](#) of the letter at *Jihad Watch* bears reading for its exposure of a sleight of hand. Let me give three examples from the executive summary of the open letter and Spencer’s responses.

It is forbidden in Islam to harm or mistreat in any way Christians or any People of the Scripture.

Spencer responds: The Koran says to fight against and subjugate them (9:29). Once they submit, they should not be harmed or mistreated. But if they are considered to be in rebellion or war against Muslims, they must be fought.

It is forbidden to deny women their rights.

Spencer responds: Indeed. But what are those rights?

It is forbidden in Islam to enact legal punishments (hudud) without following the correct procedure.

Spencer responds: This one is noteworthy, for by it...all these scholars affirm that *hudud* punishments — stoning for adultery, amputation for theft, death for leaving Islam, etc. — can be enacted as long as one is following the correct procedure.

Infidels, beware! We are being sold a bill of goods of existential proportions. We need to start asking this question (and soon): Can you please precisely define “moderate Muslims” by identifying exactly how their interpretation of the *Koran* and other authoritative Islamic scripture differs significantly from that of fundamentalists?

Let’s bring it into the open. Of course, I suspect there will be nothing much to bring.

More to the point, soft-soaping seems to be working, with no end to the “eager to be fooled” people onside (to borrow a phrase from Spencer). Why change tack in the face of supine opposition? Though it is almost impossible to believe, some Australian women — Women in Solidarity with Hijabs (WISH) — are apparently anxious to embrace the subservient role that Islam accords women. What next: Gays and Lesbians for Sharia (GALS)? Why don’t we all welcome the Islamic offer that can’t be refused — conversion, dhimmitude or death — and be done with it?

Or, alternatively, just a thought, let’s fight back by standing resolutely, and unbendingly, for our values.