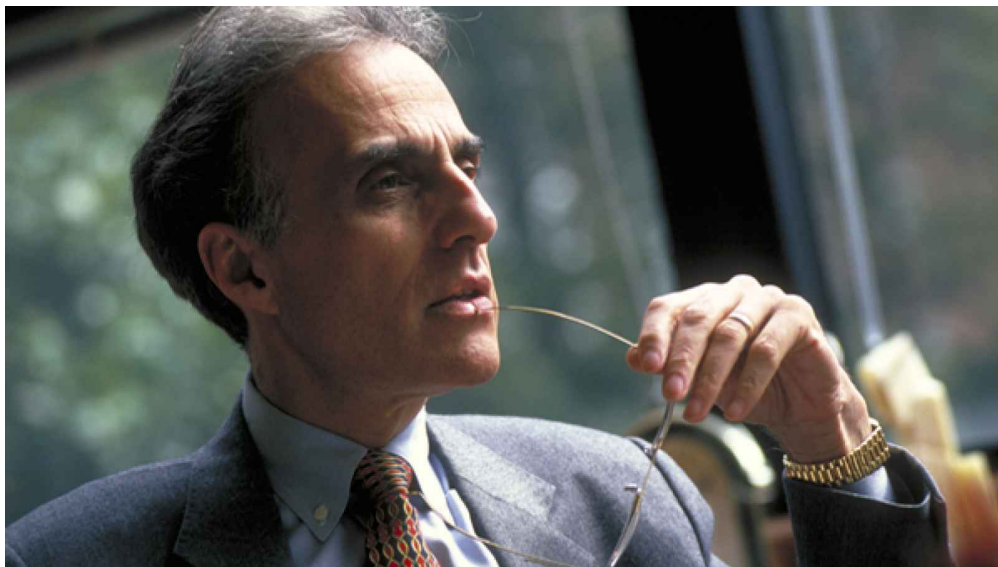


FANTASY ISLAM (KAFIR EDITION)

John Esposito's fairy tale version of Islam.

December 22, 2016 Dr. Stephen M. Kirby



Fantasy Islam (Kafir Edition): A game in which an audience of non-Muslims wish with all their hearts that Islam was a "Religion of Peace," and a Kafir (non-Muslim) strives to fulfill that wish by presenting a version of Islam that has little foundation in Islamic Doctrine.

John Esposito is Professor of Religion and International Affairs and Professor of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University. He is also the Founding Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. He is the author of *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, a book in its second edition and presented as "the best single source...for answers to basic questions about Islam..."

The reality is that with his well-known book, Esposito played the Kafir Edition of Fantasy Islam. Here are some examples:

70 Virgins waiting in Paradise? – On pp. 143-144 Esposito wrote that there was nothing in the Koran that supported the idea of martyrs being rewarded with 70 virgins in Paradise. He noted that:

The reward of seventy virgins to martyrs is based on a "weak" Prophetic tradition used in medieval times to encourage Muslims to military activities...

Esposito is half right. There is no mention in the Koran of 70 virgins as a reward. However, he is wrong with his numbers and when he ascribes it simply to a "weak" tradition. In reality, Muhammad himself promised martyrs the reward of 72 virgins in paradise, and the following is

from one of the six authoritative collections of Muhammad's teachings (*hadiths*) compiled in the ninth century:

Al-Miqdam bin Ma'diykarib narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: "There are six things with Allah for the martyr...he is married to seventy-two wives among Al-Huril-'Ayn [virgins] of Paradise..."

Jami' At-Tirmidhi, Vol. 3, No. 1663, p. 410

At-Tirmidhi himself stated this *hadith* was "*Hasan Sahih*" (lit. Good Sound/Authoritative). Was a "Professor of Islamic Studies" not aware of *Jami' At-Tirmidhi*?

Greater Jihad vs. Lesser Jihad – On pp. 133-134, and again in the Glossary, Esposito made a distinction between the *Greater Jihad*, supposedly the struggle with oneself, and the *Lesser Jihad*, supposedly fighting in defense of Islam. He claimed this distinction was based on a "well-known Prophetic tradition."

The reality is the opposite. Such a distinction between *Jihads* is based largely on two things: 1) Weak or fabricated *hadiths*; and 2) The 19th Century commentary inserted into *Reliance of the Traveller*, a 14th Century Shafi'i manual of Sharia Law; this commentary has been erroneously considered to be part of the original manual. I covered this fabricated distinction in more detail on pp. 115-123 of my book *Islam According to Muhammad, Not Your Neighbor*.

Jihad and Holy War – On p. 134 Esposito wrote that *Jihad* "is not associated with the words *holy war* anywhere in the Quran." This is mildly interesting, but, on the other hand, Esposito did not mention numerous examples of other works where such an association is made, e.g.:

1. *Jihad: Striving, holy war – Dictionary of Islamic Words & Expressions.*
2. *...the earliest (and therefore fundamental) Qur'anic reference to the question of jihad, or holy war... – The Message of the Qur'an*, n. 167, p. 51. This is the translation of the Koran endorsed and distributed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).
3. *...he was taken prisoner in a jihad - that is, a holy war... – The Message of the Qur'an*, n. 72, p. 284.
4. *...a woman taken captive in a "holy war" (jihad)... – The Message of the Qur'an*, n. 58, p. 727.
5. *And He (Allah) said: Jihad (Islamic holy war) is ordained for you (Muslims)... - Sheikh 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Humaid, The Call to Jihad (Fighting For Allah's Cause) in the Qur'an.*
6. *The holy war (jihad) is a collective duty... – "The Book of the Holy War (Kitab al-Jihad)," The Mainstay Concerning Jurisprudence (Al-'Umda fi 'l-Fiqh)*, p. 313.

Birth Control in Islam – On p. 174 Esposito wrote:

The Quran does not address family planning measures, but a few hadith (traditions) mention coitus interruptus.

Here is a well-known *hadith* about *coitus interruptus* that includes, to a certain degree, family planning. It addressed the problem of whether or not the ransom the Muslims were expecting for particular female captives would be affected if the captives were returned pregnant. In response to the question about whether the Muslim warriors should therefore engage in *coitus interruptus* with their rape victims, Muhammad, instead of prohibiting the rapes, merely said that *coitus interruptus* would not matter because every soul that was destined to be born would be born:

O Abu Sa'id, did you hear Allah's Messenger (SAW) mentioning al-'azl [coitus interruptus]? He said: Yes, and added: We went out with Allah's Messenger (SAW) on the expedition to the Bi'l-Mustaliq. We took captive some excellent Arab women. We desired them, for we were suffering from the absence of our wives, (but at the same time) we also desired ransom for them. So we decided to have sexual intercourse with them but by observing 'azl...But we said: We are doing an act whereas Allah's Messenger is amongst us; why not ask him? So we asked Allah's Messenger (SAW), and he said: It does not matter if you do not do it, for every soul that is to be born up to the Day of Resurrection will be born.

Sahih Muslim, Vol. 4, No. 1438, p. 373

Jesus returns to Earth – In the spirit of ecumenical harmony, Esposito wrote that Islam teaches that Jesus would return to earth to “establish justice, and reign over the world for forty years as an upright and just ruler” (p. 29). But that is not how Muhammad had described Jesus’ return. Here is what Muhammad said:

He [Jesus] will descend...He will break the cross, kill the pig, and banish the Jizyah and will call the people to Islam. During his time, Allah will destroy all religions except Islam...'Isa [Jesus] will remain for forty years and then will die...

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, p. 32

So during those forty years after he returned, Jesus would be destroying Christianity and calling the people to Islam.

And, according to Muhammad, Jesus would also be judging mankind by the laws of the Koran:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said, "How will you be when the son of Maryam (Mary) [Isa (Jesus)] descends amongst you, and he will judge people by the law of the Qur'an and not by the law of the Gospel."

Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 4, No. 3449, p. 412

Islam teaches that Jesus will return to earth to destroy Christianity, call the people to Islam, and judge by the Koran; according to Esposito this is an example of Jesus establishing

“justice” and ruling as an “upright and just ruler.”

The Apostasy Law was Man-Made – On p. 74 Esposito wrote that

Prominent Muslim scholars maintain that the Islamic law on apostasy, which prescribes the death penalty, was not based on the Quran but was a man-made effort in early Islam to prevent and punish the equivalent of desertion or treason...

On the contrary, in 4:89 of the Koran Allah commands Muslims to take hold of those apostates who have left Islam and “kill them wherever you find them.” So the death penalty for apostasy from Islam is in the Koran.

In addition, Muhammad said that death was the penalty for a Muslim who left Islam (e.g. *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 9, No. 6878, p. 20). And Muhammad even specified the nature of that death:

If someone changes his religion - then strike off his head!

Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas, 36.18.15, in a section titled “Judgement on Abandonment of Islam.”

Are these “prominent Muslim scholars” really saying that the Koran and the words of Muhammad were “man-made”?

Muslim Women in the Afterlife – On p. 31 Esposito wrote about the rewards the Koran says are waiting for women in paradise, pointing out that the Koran “makes no gender distinction as to the reward or punishment of the afterlife.” But Esposito left out the fact that Muhammad made such a gender distinction:

Imran b. Husain reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: Amongst the inmates of Paradise the women would form a minority.

Sahih Muslim, Vol. 8, No. 2738, p. 253

And where was the final destination for most women?

Narrated 'Imran bin Husain: The Prophet said, "I looked at Paradise and found poor people forming the majority of its inhabitants; and I looked at Hell and saw that the majority of its inhabitants were women."

Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 4, No. 3241, p. 290

It is interesting to note that on p. 13 Esposito had pointed out that *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih Al-Bukhari* were two collections of Muhammad's teachings that “enjoy special authoritative status” in most of the Muslim world. These two collections did not enjoy that same status in this section of Esposito's book.

Homosexuality – On p. 173 Esposito wrote that while homosexuality is forbidden in Islam, “Muslims are divided over how to respond to gay Muslims.” This is strange because Esposito wrote in a number of places about Muhammad embodying the Koran and providing the example for Muslims to follow (pp. 11-12, 128, and 159), and Muhammad was explicit about what to do with homosexuals:

Ibn 'Abbas said that the Messenger of Allah said, "Whoever you catch committing the act of the people of Lut (homosexuality), then kill both parties to the act."

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 2, p. 402

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said concerning those who do the action of the people of Lut: "Stone the upper and the lower, stone them both."

Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 3, No. 2562, p. 469

Conclusion

Esposito wrote about the “common future” of the West and the Muslim world, and he stressed the importance of the “knowledge of what Islam teaches” (xv-xvi). Unfortunately, Esposito chose instead to play Fantasy Islam.

But there is more to Esposito’s game playing. Part 2 will look at Esposito’s version of the Koran.

🔖 **Tags:** Islam, John Esposito

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