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## The Clarion Project's Advisory Board Plays Fantasy Islam - Part 3: Elham Manea Rejects The Koran

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Elham Manea pontificating at a "solidarity" event

Dr. Stephen M. Kirby

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

Dr. Elham Manea is the third Muslim on the Clarion Project's Advisory Board. According to the Clarion Project:

Dr. Elham Manea is an associate professor specialized on the Middle East [sic], a writer, and a human rights activist. She is a Fulbright scholar who holds a PhD degree in political science from the University of Zurich, a Masters degree in comparative politics from the American University in Washington D.C, and a Bachelor degree in political science from Kuwait University.

Manea also plays Fantasy Islam with her advocacy of Humanistic Islam.

In her paper titled "[For a Humanistic Islam](#)" Manea noted that the base of her argument for a Humanistic Islam was the assumption that all religions have been touched and transformed by human beings, all are subject to change, and all are or had been in need of reform.

Turning the focus to Humanistic Islam, Manea explained on p. 2:

A humanistic Islam argues that any religion is shaped and molded by the humans who propagated and embraced its teachings, and as such, it reflects these humans' beliefs, traditions, Weltbild, and most importantly, it reflects the historical and social settings of the societies it sprang from.

She wrote that "much of what we consider integral to the teaching of Islam are historically shaped." Her first example of this was the punishment of cutting off the hand of a thief. She said punishments like this were "neither holy nor divine, but tools of punishment used 14 centuries ago"; consequently she believed they could be declared "cruel" and replaced with modern approaches to punishment, such as prison and rehabilitation.

For Manea to claim that the amputation of a hand for theft is "neither holy nor divine" means that she ignores 5:38 of the Koran, which is a command from Allah for just such a punishment. It also requires her to ignore the teachings and example of Muhammad, who ordered the amputation of the hands of many thieves and said it was "one of the legal punishments prescribed by Allah":

A lady committed theft during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger... Her folk went to Usama bin Zaid to intercede for her (with the Prophet). When Usama interceded for her with Allah's Messenger, the colour of the face of Allah's Messenger changed and he said, "Do you intercede with me in a matter involving one of the legal punishments prescribed by Allah?"

Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 5, No. 4304, p. 361

Manea also mentioned stoning as a punishment "that reflects the historical moment where society stands." She pointed out that although this was another outdated form of punishment, Saudi Arabia and Iran had adopted it despite the fact that stoning "was never mentioned in the Quran" (pp. 2-3).

The statement that stoning was not mentioned in the Koran, and therefore implying that it is not a part of Islamic Doctrine, is a "red herring." Muhammad ordered the stoning to death of many adulterers, and he even said he was "the first to revive the order of God and His book and to practice it [stoning]" (The Life of Muhammad (Sirat Rasul Allah), p. 267).

Manea wrote on p. 4:

The fact of the matter is there are core issues in the Islamic religion that should be reviewed and reformed.

This review and reformation was to be done using Humanistic Islam. Manea explained:

A humanistic Islam is an approach - an approach to religion and life. It does not claim to be the true manifestation of anything [!]. It is just a framework. Its aim is to provide an alternative to the Islamists' argument that their "Islam" is the only "Islam". Its message is composed of four components. Identity, freedom of choice and rationality, crossing the Forbidden Areas of Thinking' (the nature of the Quran), and the gender issue [sic].

On p. 8 Manea wrote that:

A serious reformation of Islam should start with this principle – Freedom of choice – and set it as its ideological core.

Unfortunately, Manea's belief about freedom of choice goes against Islamic Doctrine established during the time of Muhammad. As I pointed out in my latest book, *Islam's Militant Prophet, Muhammad and Forced Conversions to Islam*, the idea of forcing non-Muslims to convert to Islam was a doctrine that started developing during the early years of Islam. The "no compulsion" verse (2:256) was "revealed" in August 625. Its doctrinal validity lasted only until it was abrogated by the actions of Muhammad in December 627. From December 627 until Muhammad's death in 632, forced conversions to Islam were commanded by Muhammad and by later verses of the Koran, and became the doctrinal norm for subsequent Muslim rulers. Advocating freedom of choice in religion would require Muslims to ignore the commands of Allah and the teachings and example of Muhammad.

On p. 8 Manea wrote that the most important component of Humanistic Islam for the reformation of Islam was the necessity of disregarding the Koran if it

stood against universal Human Rights as we understand them today, citizenship rights, or gender equality.

How can one so blithely dismiss the commands of Allah in the Koran simply because they conflict with modern, man-made concepts of human rights and gender equality? Manea does so by claiming that the Koran was also man-made and a product of, and applicable mainly to an earlier time. Manea explained on p. 10:

I think that the nature of Quran is a human one. I think that the Prophet

Mohammad is the one who composed much of the verses of the Quran, and that these verses were gathered afterwards by humans and it was these humans who wrote down these verses. As a result the social and historical context of the seventh century, when Mohammad the prophet lived, has been accurately mirrored in many Quranic verses [sic]. The Quran as such cannot be separated from its historical context.

By saying that, I am challenging the orthodox assumption reiterated repeatedly in Islamic and Arabic school and university curriculums, in the media, and in any public discourse, that the verses of Quran were said by God, literally.

Manea referred to this God as "he/she" and said that Humanistic Islam "does not ignore the human nature of Quran [sic]" (pp. 11 and 12).

Manea even wrote on p. 13 about the irrelevance of this man-made Koran for Muslims:

...it is possible to remain a Muslim while treating Quran as a text, written and gathered by different people. The text I respect, and treat with reverence. It is my tradition. But I see its human nature, and I see therefore its limits. I see its limits when it comes to regulating society in the twenty first century. But my faith, my faith, is not revolved around Quran [sic], and therefore is not shaken by my conclusion regarding its nature. My faith is based on my belief in God himself/herself.

According to Manea, the Koran "should therefore cease to be relevant when regulating the social reality of family and state in the 21st century" (p. 14). She wrote on p. 15 that one should

stop using Quran [sic] as a reference in regulating family relations and replace it with the stipulations of the [United Nations] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which truly provide just parameters that ensure equality between sexes in family and society.

So according to Manea, the Koran is largely man-made, with Muhammad having "composed much of the verses"; it is a work reflecting mainly 7th Century values and should be replaced in many respects by modern man-made laws. Consequently, she feels free to challenge "the orthodox assumption" of most Muslims, dismiss Koran verses and teachings of Muhammad, and to create her own version of Fantasy Islam.

## Conclusion

According to the Clarion Project's website, its Muslim Advisory Board has two purposes:

1. Advise management how to best achieve the organization's goals of educating the public about Islamic extremism; and 2. Provide a platform for Muslim human rights activists.

In terms of the first purpose, the "education" about "Islamic extremism" will come from three Muslims who acknowledge that they disagree with, and even challenge mainstream religious teachings in the Muslim world. All three believe that individual Muslims can reject canonical texts and interpret their faith however they want. Both Jasser and Raza recognize that other Muslims could consider them heretics, and Manea boldly implies the same.

If one understands the phrase "Islamic extremism" as an interpretation of Islam that selectively ignores some teachings while distorting the understanding of others to support a particular approach, then we have seen that in reality Jasser, Raza and Manea are Islamic "extremists." So in terms of the first purpose, the Advisory Board will be successful. Unfortunately, this Board will not be educating the public about the Islam that was commanded by Allah, taught by Muhammad, and acknowledged as mainstream for most of the 1,400 years of Islamic history. Instead, each will be propagating their own Fantasy Islam.

For the second purpose there will also be success for the Advisory Board. All three acknowledge that they deviate from mainstream teachings about Islamic Doctrine and that their approach to Islam is rejected by many, if not most, Muslims. A good indication of this is that these three do not talk about the number of mosques or the wide variety of Muslim organizations in which they have been allowed to speak about their own versions of Islam. So instead of being members of mosque advisory boards or large Muslim organizations, Jasser, Raza and Manea have found their "platform" on the board of a non-Muslim organization.

What are their prospects for changing Islam? As I have written before about "[Americanized Muslim Reformers](#)," and as Jasser, Raza, and Manea realize, their beliefs are heretical. Because they are heretics, they have little, if any support for their reforms from the greater Muslim community in the United States. Consequently, the reformers have to appeal to non-Muslims to help them reform Islam. This would be as if Martin Luther had relied on Muslims for his main support during the Reformation.

So what are the chances of success for Americanized Muslim heretics and their non-Muslim followers to change Islam from that which was taught by Muhammad to versions advocated by the heretics? Zero. And what are the chances for an Americanized Muslim heretic to convince non-Muslims that Islam can be modernized and "reformed"? Great. Because many non-Muslims know little about Islamic Doctrine and prefer to play Fantasy Islam.

Thus, these aspiring Muslim "reformers" will retain their non-Muslim platform as a beacon of false hope and encouragement for those wishing that Islam truly was a "Religion of Peace."

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