



Presbyterian Mission
World Mission

The More Silent Path

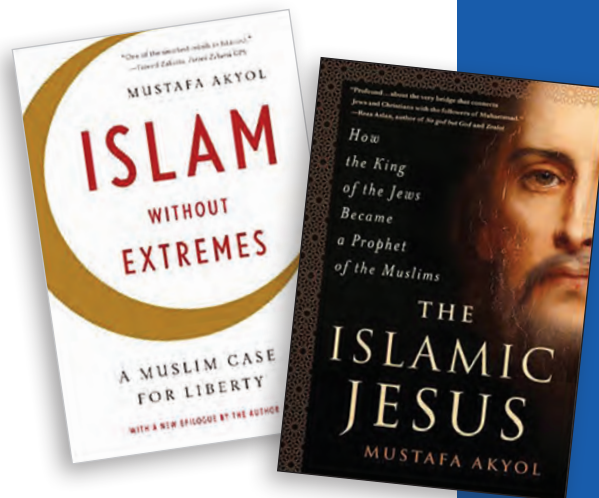


A Reflection by Dan McNerney, *Frontier Fellowship*

If you want to know what a moderate Muslim voice sounds like, I highly recommend you read Mustafa Akyol's second book, "Islam Without Extremes." But his third and latest book, "The Islamic Jesus — How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims," is perhaps his most significant work; it is turning heads and hearts in both the Muslim and Christian worlds.

Mustafa and his family recently visited a Chicago area church to speak about his latest book. Many friends, both Christian and Muslim, came to the interfaith gathering. My jaw dropped when I heard Mustafa so eloquently explain the enormous common ground Christians and Muslims have in Jesus. Muslims and Christians believe Jesus was born of a virgin, was sinless, was the Messiah, performed miracles, was the Word and Spirit of God, and came to Earth. He quoted Muhammad, who said Muslims should expect to find the deepest and longest-lasting friendships and love with Christians, compared with people from any other religion. Of course, there are significant differences between Christians and Muslims. Christians believe in the divinity of Jesus and the fact that he died on the cross to save us from our sins, whereas Muslims believe he was a great prophet but not God himself.

The end of Mustafa's talk astounded me the most. He said that writing the last chapter of his latest book was one of the richest and most rewarding experiences of his life. In the last chapter, he says that Islam is currently going through a terrible, embarrassing dark age; it is in desperate need of a reformation and a redefining. He said he believes the life and teachings of Jesus are what will save Islam from further destruction. He believes listening more to what Jesus taught will help Muslims return to the core and essential messages of the Quran. He believes there are too many rigid Muslim leaders today who lean too heavily on the traditions of Islam and not enough on the moral lessons from the Quran itself. Such tendency, he said, is leading many Muslims to violence, self-righteousness and anger. Mustafa has spent the last 15 years studying the Bible, particularly the New Testament and Gospels of Jesus. He called Jesus the greatest teacher who has ever lived. He deeply admires the way Jesus confronted the Pharisees and Sadducees during the first century. He wants Muslims to ask Jesus to do the same today: confront the similarly rigid



Mission Toolkit:
Christian-Muslim
Relations

The More Silent Path



and self-righteous leaders of their own faith. He wants Muslims today to become followers of Jesus. The last line of his book says it explicitly: “Surely, we do not worship Jesus, like Christians do. Yet still, we can follow him. In fact, given our grim malaise and his shining wisdom, we need to follow him” (p. 215).

Today we need to give space for the wheels of history to turn on their own. We do not need to comment on everything all the time. We need to listen far less to our own voice and to the competing voices of many others. Rather, the Lord asks us to take the time to listen most often to the small, often quiet voice of God. It is God who is in control of the universe, not ourselves, nor any government or news outlet. The Bible reminds us, “You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry” (James 1:19b). Being quick to listen is one of the highest of Christian virtues. Moderate Muslim leaders such as Mustafa want to listen to the teachings of Jesus. May the same be true for practicing Christians everywhere. Millions of people in the Western world have strayed far from the teachings of Jesus. They have walked away from the joy of listening to Jesus in order to engage in the constant and incessant practice of listening to their own voices and the voices of others. They have left precious little time for God.

“Surely, we do not worship Jesus, like Christians do. Yet still, we can follow him. In fact, given our grim malaise and his shining wisdom, we need to follow him.”

—Mustafa Akyol



Presbyterian Mission
World Mission

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202