

Introduction to A Common Word Between Us and You

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'The appearance of the A Common Word [Open Letter] of 2007 was a landmark in Muslim-Christian relations and it has a unique role in stimulating a discussion at the deepest level across the world.'
— **His Grace Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, 2010**

'[T]he more recent A Common Word letter ... echoed a theme consonant with my first encyclical: the unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor, and the fundamental contradiction of resorting to violence or exclusion in the name of God (cf. [Deus Caritas Est](#), 16).'

— **His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI,**
May 9th 2009, at the King Hussein Mosque in Amman, Jordan

On October 13th 2006, one month to the day after Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg address of September 13th 2006, 38 Islamic authorities and scholars from around the world, representing all denominations and schools of thought, joined together to deliver an answer to the Pope in the spirit of open intellectual exchange and mutual understanding. In their *Open Letter to the Pope*, for the first time in recent history, Muslim scholars from every branch of Islam spoke with one voice about the true teachings of Islam.

Exactly one year after that letter, on October 13th 2007 Muslims expanded their message. In *A Common Word Between Us and You*, 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals have unanimously come together for the first time since the days of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam. Like the *Open Letter*, the signatories to this message come from every denomination and school of thought in Islam. Every major Islamic country or region in the world is represented in this message, which is addressed to the leaders of all the world's churches, and indeed to all Christians everywhere.

The final form of the letter was presented at a conference in September 2007 held under the theme of "Love in the Quran," by the *Royal Academy of The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought* in Jordan, under the Patronage of H.M. King Abdullah II. Indeed, the most fundamental common ground between Islam and Christianity, and the best basis for future dialogue and understanding, is the love of God and the love of the neighbor.

Never before have Muslims delivered this kind of definitive consensus statement on Christianity. Rather than engage in polemic, the signatories have adopted the traditional and mainstream Islamic position of respecting the Christian scripture and calling Christians to be more, not less, faithful to it.

It is hoped that this document will provide a common constitution for the many worthy organizations and individuals who are carrying out interfaith dialogue all over the world. Often these groups are unaware of each other, and duplicate each other's efforts. Not only can *A Common Word Between Us* give them a starting point for cooperation and worldwide co-ordination, but it does so on the *most solid theological ground possible*: the teachings of the Qu'ran and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and the commandments described by Jesus Christ (عليه سلام) in the Bible. Thus despite their differences, Islam and Christianity not only share the same Divine Origin and the same Abrahamic heritage, but the same two *greatest commandments*.

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