



Photo by Roger Harrison

This morning I want briefly to summarise the main messages of the lecture I gave last week in another great centre of Islamic learning.

My point of departure was that the roots of the faith that we share in the One God, the God of Abraham, give us enduring values.

First and highest among those values of our common inheritance, and born of our love of God, must always come respect for each other and for His creation.

Over the years I have taken a great interest in what motivates and inspires people over the centuries and I have a particular interest in the Three Abrahamic faiths.

Second, our beliefs and values call out for peace and not conflict, for mutual respect and understanding, not criticism and competition.

Third, the great Abrahamic traditions speak of a faith which rests in the heart, beyond the limitations of our intellectual knowledge and judgement.

I cherish the shared history of our different Abrahamic Faiths. I do not want you to imagine for one moment that I think that they are one and the same. There are differences, and we should celebrate them. But in the things that

matter most, we have a common root. God's purpose should never be in doubt: it is to bind us closer together.

Indeed, it has always moved me that the Holy Koran has a verse: "O Mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not but ye may despise each other"

I first voiced my thoughts publicly on relations between Islam and the West back in 1993, in a speech at another great university, Oxford. Something I said then has troubled me ever since. I said:

"...despite the advances in technology and mass communication in the second half of the twentieth century, despite mass travel and the intermingling of races...misunderstandings between Islam and the West continue. Indeed they may be growing."

In that same speech, I talked about the history of Europe and the Islamic world – how they were inextricably entwined. History shows what giant leaps of creativity in knowledge – in science, literature and the arts – have occurred when the members of the Abrahamic family have worked together.

We should draw inspiration from the great