
In Brief

Face Differences, Archbishop Says

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams told participants at an interfaith conference at Georgetown University this week that religious dialogue must focus on differences of belief and not just similarities.

"One of the darkest and most tragic parts of our history in relation to other faiths . . . is the construction of the other as the opposite," Williams said in a lecture Monday night, part of the third installment of "Building Bridges" interfaith conferences started two years ago by his predecessor, Archbishop George Carey.

Deepening understanding "is not about finding a common core at all," the renowned Welsh theologian said. "It is about finding the appropriate language in which differences can be talked about rather than used as an excuse for violent separation."

Christians and Muslims would do well to consider Jews' "unbelief" that God has disregarded his covenant with them and replaced it with Christianity or extended it through the Koran, he said. Jews and Muslims, meanwhile, could deepen their faith by considering Christianity's "unbelief" that "God needs to be persuaded by our virtue to love us or to act on our behalf."

In the process, he said, the three monotheistic faiths could leave behind the "dangerous" notion that "the God I believe in is by definition the God you don't believe in."

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