

that only what has been decreed will happen?" Jesus replied, "That is true." Then Satan said, "So throw yourself down from the top of this mountain, and let us see if you live or not!" Jesus answered, "The servant does **not** test his master; rather, it is the master who tests His servant." As Jesus did encounter the Luciferic principle, so will we. He was tempted and so will we. And through temptation one is asked to make a choice. Were the choice that he chose **not** balanced against another of equal attraction, how could he have drawn such power from that choice? Authentic empowerment is **not** gained by making choices that do **not** stretch you.

People said to Jesus (p), "O Spirit of God, inform us about the nature of wealth." He answered, "The possessor of wealth always has one of three qualities: they either gain it by unlawful means, obstruct it from reaching the one who deserves it, or by accumulating it is distracted from worship of his Lord."

Jesus, the son of Mary, (p) said, "God has given me the power to give life to the dead, sight to the blind, sound to the deaf; but He did not give me the power to heal the fool of his foolishness."

Jesus (p) said, "Woe to the possessor of this world, since they must die and leave the world behind. They place their hope in it and is deceived. They trust it and is forsaken. Woe to the deluded, for this world shows them what they detest. In the end, they must abandon what they love, and depart for that which they were promised. Woe to the one whose constant preoccupation is this world and whose grave mistakes are their very actions. What shame they will cause them soon enough!"

A woman said to Jesus (p) as he was working, "Blessed be the womb that bore you, and blessed be the breast that suckled you." Approaching her, Jesus said, "And blessed be someone who, having read the Book of God, acted in accordance with what was in it."

Jesus, the son of Mary, (p) said, "Work for God and not for your stomachs. Look at the birds: they rise up at dawn and enter into the evening having neither planted nor harvested, yet God provides for them. Now if you say to me, 'Our stomachs are so much larger than those of birds,' look then at the oxen, the wild beasts and the donkeys; they neither plow nor harvest the earth, yet God provides for them as well. Beware of the luxuries of this world, and fear them, for the luxuries of this world are filth in the sight of God."

Jesus (p) said, "Do not speak much without remembering God, for by doing so, you harden your hearts. Surely a hard heart is distant from God though you are unaware. Do not, like lords, look at the faults of

others. Rather, like servants, look at your own faults. In truth, humanity is comprised of only two types, the afflicted and the sound. So show mercy to the afflicted, and praise God for well-being."

Jesus (p) was known to have said, "Love of this world is the source of every wrong action, and there is much harm in wealth." They asked, "What is its harm?" Jesus replied, "Its possessor is never safe from pride and arrogance." They said, "What if they are free of those two? Is there still harm?" Jesus responded, "Yes, for by nurturing wealth, they are diverted from the remembrance of God."

Once Jesus (p) and his disciples were outside the temple of Solomon, and the disciples said, "O Messiah of God, look at the House of God! What could be finer?" Jesus replied, "Amen. Amen. But I say to you that God will not leave one stone of this House standing. Indeed, God will destroy it because of the misdeeds of its people. God does not build anything of worth with gold or silver, nor even with these stones. Righteous hearts are more beloved to God than these stones. For God cultivates the earth with **righteous hearts**; and, in their absence, the earth is destroyed." You are only truly righteous as that for which you stand. Do you stand for more money in the bank and a bigger house; an attractive mate; controlling others with your cleverness? Or. Do you stand for the clarity of wisdom; for forgiveness & humbleness? For the power of love! These are the elements of the righteous heart that Jesus speaks about.

Jesus, the son of Mary, (p) said, "Love of this world and love of the next world can never reside in the heart of a believer simultaneously, just as fire and water cannot be contained in a single vessel at the same time."

Jesus (p) was accustomed to say, "O my God, surely I have entered into the morning unable to neither forestall what I fear nor hasten what I hope for. The whole affair is in another's hand. I have arisen bound to my deeds. There is no one poorer than me. Do not make me the cause of my enemies being cursed, nor make me the reason any harm should come to a friend. Do not place tribulation in my spiritual path, nor empower anyone over me who shows me no mercy."

Christians & Muslims would do well to consider this verse in the Quran reaffirming God's eternal message of spiritual unity: "Say: 'We believe in God and the revelation given to us and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses & Jesus & that given to all the Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them & it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves.'" (2:136)

Let us take a very creative and imaginative approach in exploring "common understanding." This will reveal to us something of the reality of God and the relationship of God to the Universe and to us as we search for meaning within that Universe. **Show us Mercy, O God!**

J of Islam Jesus of Christianity

Walk on Water

Life...

...**without** dialogue can go on, but **life with dialogue** gives a new perspective on life and a new source of inspiration & understanding to accept the other for what it is, **not** what you think it is or what you want it to be. It is only after we have reached this mountain-top of transfiguration that we avoid babelization and join the faithful in the Kaaba of **common understanding.**

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What is needed is conciliation, reconciliation and inclusion. What is needed is grace, generosity of spirit, purity of intention. Faced with the complexity and the magnitude of misunderstanding, we require open-mindedness and shared commitment. Let us put aside the bitterness that marked the centuries of Christian-Muslim relations. Let us behave with the decency and civility which makes humans proud of our preeminence over other creatures.

What is needed is **better understanding**. It is the paramount ingredient for the endurance of humanity. The last to arrive, the first to escape: understanding is a restive companion. But this is the key that frees the present and unlocks the future. What is needed now is religious harmony; the seed. Human harmony is its flower.

The journey to discover the ultimate truth is **not** an easy one. Finding a system of life which suits all mankind in different societies and throughout the ages, is a difficult task. Questions about realities, claims and counterclaims have always been raised and always will be. What we do, what we think, what we believe is always right; and what you do, what you think, what you believe is always wrong. We are infallible; you are fallible. But a combative tone, a pointless criticism lead nowhere, only in circles. We have said it often enough. And we have heard, often enough. The inflammatory speeches, the misconstrued studies, the marathon theological debates: circular thinking, again. A sane person, an honest person, breaks away from the stalemate, and seeks a path to advancement.

It is essential we identify the building blocks of understanding; essential we advance. We have to clear away preconceived ideas about the Old Testament, the Gospels & the Quran. We have to separate what belongs to Revelation from the product of error or human interpretation. We have to place the Believer before a point of cardinal importance: the continuity of a Revelation emanating from the only God, with modes of expression that differ in the course of time. It should lead us to meditate upon those factors which, in our day, should spiritually unite – rather than divide Jews, Christians & Muslims. People must turn to the question of the authenticity of the writings that constitute the Scriptures of the monotheistic religions.

The very facts concerning Islam are **not** widely known in the West. Consider the way so many Western generations were instructed in the religious problems facing humanity & the ignorance in which they were kept about anything related to Islam. The use of such terms as “Mohammedan religion” & “Mohammedans” has been instrumental in maintaining a false notion; Islam was spread by man (similar to Christianity) & God had no place. Many cultured people today are interested in the philosophical, social & political aspects of Islam, but they do **not** pause to inquire about the Islamic Revelation itself, as indeed they should.

The Quranic Revelation appeared six centuries after Jesus. It resumes numerous data found in the Hebraic Bible and the Gospels; it quotes frequently from the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Quran directs all Muslims to believe in the Scriptures that precede it. It stresses the important position occupied in the Revelation by God’s emissaries. Jesus’s birth is described in the Quran, as in the Gospels, as a supernatural event. Maryam is given a special place: Chapter 19 bears her name. Western scholars have questioned the very nature of the Quran: is the Quran God’s word or prophetic work of Muhammad (p)? Regardless of the answers they found, there is no disagreement on the authenticity or originality of the Quranic text itself. There is **not** the slightest change, down to its punctuation. All scientific studies confirm the integrity of its text & the compatibility of its contents with the latest scientific discoveries.

The supernatural events are not unusual for the Muslims. We believe the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, was the first such event of the series. In the preliminary steps toward a closer relationship between Christians and Muslims, the elimination of one or the other is not an option. It perpetuates an endless battle where there is no winner. The open-minded attitude toward Islam, certainly, establishes a milestone in the relations between the two religions. The unification of the Christian & Islamic worlds in the worship of a single God, the Creator of the universe, is a must. The examination of the Divine message is the first step in this process.

The Quran is the expression of the Revelation made to Muhammad (p) by the Archangel Gabriel, immediately taken down, memorized and recited by the faithful in their prayers. Muhammad (p) himself arranged it into surahs

(chapters), and these were collected soon after the death of the Messenger, to form, under the rule of Caliph Uthman, the text we know today. In contrast to this, the Christian Revelation is based on indirect human accounts. We do not in fact have an eyewitness account from the life of Jesus (p), contrary to what many Christians imagine.

In the West the critical study of the Scriptures is a recent phenomenon. For hundreds of years people were content to accept the Bible – both Old and New Testaments – as it was. What strike us today, when we confront Biblical contradictions with well-established scientific data, is how those specialists studying the texts either pretended to be unaware of them, or else drew attention to these defects and then attempted to camouflage them with dialectic acrobatics. Often the camouflage, cleverly called a “difficulty,” is successful. But never entirely satisfactory. And the researchers are compelled to return to the task again and again, fitting the stubborn square peg into the obstinately round hole, season after season. In the season of God’s messenger from Galilee, we remember the seekers of truth. We uncover the seed. The root of Christianity is Islam. Jesus of Nazareth was a Muslim (one who submits to God). Christianity will come to see, if Muslims light the way.

From traditional Arabic sources:

According to Ahmad, Jesus (p) was known to have said, “Virtuous action does not consist in doing good to someone who has done good to you – that is merely returning a favour. Virtuous action consists in doing good to those who have wronged you.”

It is related that Jesus, the son of Mary, (p) said, “It is of no use to know something if one does not act upon it. In truth, an abundance of knowledge only increases one in pride if one does not act accordingly.”

Someone asked Jesus (p), “How are you able to walk on water?” Jesus replied, “With certainty.” Then someone said, “But we also have certainty!” Jesus then asked them, “Are stone, clay, and gold equal in your eyes?” They replied, “Certainly not!” Jesus responded, “They are in mine.”

Jesus (p) met Satan. Satan said, “Is it not true

The servant does *not* test his Master

Jesus Christ (peace)

it is the Master who tests His servant.