

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Ignorance, Arrogance, or Vested Interest?

By Qazi Fazlullah

We as Muslims have a really hard time understanding how any rational, intelligent human being can ever believe in a religion other than Islam. Islam as a religion to us is so utterly obvious, so rational, so reasonable, so logical, and so complete. This attitude of Muslims often infuriates people of other faiths, who often view us as being conceited and intolerant. In reality we are simply baffled by the irrationality of certain people, for instance those who choose to worship a cow, or a stone statue of a plump, half-dressed bald man. We are perplexed when we see people praying to the image of a shrouded lady or someone hanging from a cross. We are appalled when they say this is our savior and lord. We think to ourselves how clueless can you get? This is just the image of a man, like all men, he will be standing in front of Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment, fearing for his own salvation. The fact we must recognize is that people of differing faiths are born into their beliefs, much like most of us were. Their acceptance of these beliefs, no matter how outlandish they may seem to us, just comes naturally. Formation of a belief system in humans is a very tricky process. Faith, on one hand can be a powerful elixir and on the other, can be a formidable curse. Human need for a faith or a system of beliefs is not difficult to understand. Humans have an innate need to believe in a higher being or higher purpose, one that provides them with means to confront their own mortality and establish a link with eternity. They need something that can rationalize their very existence. Human beings are limited to the information that can be garnered in the material realm, but beliefs usually pertain to the realm of the unseen, the spiritual world. Man locked into the confines of his physical existence has no way of peering into the unseen, unless God, through Revelation gives him some insight. Through His

Prophets God has passed on His Revelations to mankind providing them with guidance in the form of the one and only True Divine Faith. Unfortunately man, although eager to establish a connection with God, also suffers from a very vivid imagination and plentiful greed. From the onset he was very quick to realize the power of religion and the hold it can exert over the masses. How it can be parleyed into means of gaining power and fortune. So man started trafficking in faith, tailoring it to suit his agenda. So came the countless variations in religions and beliefs. Some purely the handiwork of mans vivid imagination and others just evolve through mans corruption of the Revealed Guidance. Some he does to promote his vested interests, some merely for convenience, and some out of an exuberance of faith. Like elevating Prophets, deities, and saints to the level of Godliness. No matter how obscure a belief one is born into, as children, they are unknowingly and innocently embraced. It is the way of nature that a child will conform to any environment, regardless of how hostile. In much the same way he assimilates into his physical environment, he assimilates the prevailing customs and beliefs that surround him. His human nature and ego program him to accept without question the religion of his forefathers. Religion permeates into human culture, tradition, and heritage, creating a moral identity for its followers. People go on with their everyday life mindlessly clinging to their faiths, partly out of ignorance, occasionally out of vested interest but mostly out of arrogance. For those who are actively practicing their faith, practice in a state of delusional devotion. There can only be one Universal Truth. There can be only one Divine Religion. Most people would believe in the infallibility of God, which would imply that He does not change His mind every few hundred years about religion. So worshipping a cow versus

worshipping a stone cannot both be simultaneously true. Since most people of different faiths would agree that salvation of humans depends upon following the One Divine Religion, the One Universal Truth. Most people suffer from the illusion that they are indeed on the “Right Path” and first in line for salvation. But yet they belong to their religion because they were born into it. So what about all the rest who were not lucky enough to be born in that “right religion”? So can it be that it is just fate that determines one’s religion and ultimately one’s salvation. Is it just the role of dice? The answer must be an emphatic “No”, for we have faith in the infinite justice of the Creator of the Universe and in His infinite mercy He has given man a great equalizing factor. This equalizer allows him to transcend all boundaries that shackle him to the faith that he was born into. This great equalizer is one of God’s great gifts to man and that is his “Intellect”, embedded somewhere in the higher recesses of his consciousness. God has given man this formidable power to enable him to search out the Truth. Through this gift he derives his abilities of analytical and logical thinking and the power of deductive reasoning. Human beings can and should examine their belief system against the litmus test of reasonableness, rationality, and logic. His faith should not insult his intelligence but rather should appeal to his higher sense of impeccable logic and structure. For we live in a logical universe where all natural laws can be ultimately expressed mathematically, so why should our faith be illogical? So before we embark upon this introspective journey of discovery, we must first establish some ground rules. The first and foremost requisite is a commitment to let go of arrogance and our egos for a while and second is that of complete objectivity. So what are these litmus tests for a belief system? First of all the nature of ones belief in God or a Higher Power

must be intellectually satisfying. Faith is in the realm of the unseen but never the less the rational human can see reaffirmation in the physical world. For example, we have never seen electromagnetic waves or electrons, but we have absolutely no doubt, for all indirect observations point to their existence. One may ponder over the belief of Trinity from a logical perspective. We ask ourselves whether it makes any sense for God to be comprised of three components, albeit Trinity. A few logical questions immediately come to mind, for instance which one of the three parts is really in charge? Do all the parts get along? What happens when there is a disagreement? Experience and logic tells us that division of power is not absolute power, but God Almighty must be Absolute. Another belief is does it seem reasonable that the Creator of this universe would be breeding and have a son, but yet is so powerless that He could not even save his "only son"? Some use the arcane argument that Jesus (pbuh) is the son of God (Nauzobillah) because He was born without a natural father. By following this logic what does that make Adam (pbuh)? God's grandfather, because he had neither a natural father nor mother. Some people believe that God takes the shape of a cow or a stone statue. Does that seem logical? What happens to the cow god when somebody decides to have steak for dinner? Or what happens to the stone god when stone god meets dynamite (as in Afghanistan)? Even the popular metaphorical arguments that are used to explain all such outlandish beliefs just simply defy common logic and common sense. In order to believe in something like this a human being is really forced to stretch his imagination, abandon all reason. It is an affront to his intelligence, illogical rationale, and it just simply does not compute. In fact, these beliefs appear to be mans feeble attempt to humanize God, to bring Him down to his

own level. To somehow make the concept of God more quantifiable, more tangible and even a little more portable. However, a thinking man reflects on the infiniteness of the universe and the boundlessness of Gods creation. He concludes that the concept of a tangible, split-personality, touchy-feely type gods are trivializations of God Almighty and are merely 'man made' contrivances and therefore cannot be true. Through the power of deductive reasoning there is a way to separate the True Divine Religion from man made contrivances and distortions in religion. The True Divine Religion, over the course of its history should stay pure, uncorrupted, and free from man made 'customizations'. One must be able to trace the practices of that religion accurately and faithfully back to the Prophet of God that brought the Religion to mankind. Any changes in fundamental beliefs, practices, or rituals are surely telltale signs of man's corrupting influence on that religion, after which it can not be considered true nor divine. Similarly the Holy Books of a religion are also a good indication of the truth of a religion. Any changes, additions, deletions, revisions in contents or the message over the course of history are surely signs of man's handiwork. For instance one may inquire about the source of the current day Bible and one would be told that it contains the account of Jesus's (pbuh) life, as written by several of his disciples, many years after the passing of Jesus (pbuh). Now if it was written by man about a Man, that does not sound divine. Moreover there are many versions of the Bible, each one differing the other. A logical mind looking for a Divine Inscription would be forced to conclude that the current day Bible does not qualify. Fortunately, in addition to the test of our intellect, there are some very common sense telltale signs left by man when he tampers with a religion, particularly for his own benefit. For instance he tends to

institutionalize his religion, where it promotes an internal hierarchy that solely controls and administers divinity. This hierarchy extracts reverence and material benefits from the devotion of the masses, and often mandatory contributions are demanded from the devotees which goes to the institution and sustains the hierarchy. These kinds of things would make us suspicious of any worldly venture, so why would we not be suspicious when it comes to something as important as our faith? Now if someone were to apply these same criteria to Islam we see a very different picture. We see a Religion that asks its followers to believe in a Single, Eternal, All Powerful, and All Encompassing Almighty God. One that has no partners, no surrogates, one that does not beget nor was He begotten. The perfect balance, order, and harmony in which the infinite vastness of the seen and unseen universes exist is a testament to His Singularity. For a rational mind there is exquisite logic in this belief. Islam is a Religion that offers man a direct link to God. No priests, saints, sacrificed sons, statues, animal's symbols, or go-betweens, just man and God. In Islam we see Religion that has had absolutely no changes in it since the time that its revelation was completed to mankind, neither in its beliefs, customs, or practices. They are exactly the same as those taught and practiced by The Prophet Mohammad (SAS), the True and Last Messenger of God Almighty. Where his every word, every action is a manifest testament to the truth of His Message, and faithfully and accurately recorded till posterity. These are manifest signs of the True Divine Religion. Adding to the testimony, Islam is a Religion who's Holy Book, The Quran is the only Book known in human history in which not even a single letter or word has ever been altered. The Holy Quran offers the Muslims an irrefutable proof of purity of his faith, the divine power and balance of its Message. It's

profound wisdom and supreme guidance; it's exquisite, inimitable, and irrefutable logic, its infinite intricacies and mysteries that never cease to fascinate the Muslim mind. Its objective reasoning, absolute consistency, it's fascinating and enlightening insights into the human psyche, the structure and balance of the known and unknown Universes. Its foretelling of events, infinite complexity, and detail. Its inspiring, intricate, and awe-inspiring verbiage, and the power, command and rhythm of its prose. It provides mankind the guidance to take it from the depths of darkness to eternal light. It is this Quran that gives Mankind the One and Only True Divine Religion, Islam. It is the same Religion proclaimed by all the other Prophets of Allah (SWT) including Adam (pbuh), Abraham (pbuh), Moses (pbuh), and Jesus (pbuh). This is the Quran that God Almighty has taken the responsibility to preserve, in its entirety till the Day of Judgment. It is this Quran that throughout the History of Islam, millions of Muslims have committed to memory, word for word, the entire Quran and will continue to do so till the Day of Judgment. This is testament to the fact that God has promised in the Quran that he has made it easy for mankind to remember. In Islam we see a religion that does not glorify any human, or elevate him to a level of godliness. We see a religion that instills compassion for all living creatures and requires Muslims to spend money directly for the needy. A religion that holds a man accountable for his every passing second of his life, for his every thought, word and action. A religion that knows no hierarchy, where ranks exist only in terms of piety and devotion to God Almighty and not for fame, fortune or race. A Muslim's faith is reinforced through his faithful following of the Life and Sunnah of his Beloved Prophet (SAS). The more a Muslim delves into his religion, the greater the degree of affirmation that stimulates his intelligence. A

devout Muslim derives a profound sense of contentment from his faith, and this contentment stems from the fact that Islam stimulates the mind, body, and soul. Islam is a reasonable and rational faith, one that instills factual devotion. No doubt people who follow other religions exhibit extreme devotion, but it is a delusional type of devotion, devoid of any significant intellectual contentment. We as Muslims have a responsibility to convey the message of Islam to all of Humanity and for this we are answerable to Allah Almighty. A profound understanding of the Quran and the power of deductive reasoning are two indispensable elements of Dawah work. Guidance is in the Hands of Allah (SWT), but it is incumbent upon us to make the effort.