

Perfecting Man's Faith and Conviction

Human beliefs, like man's knowledge, science and technology, advance with the centuries. Religion predates history, and has always engaged mankind's particular affection and attention. Language, writing, and means of livelihood have all progressed in parallel with man's mental and spiritual growth. They wax and wane, as is the human condition. Religions multiplied; deities proliferated. Some were represented as imaginary beings, some as animals, then some as humans; and so step by step ascended towards the metaphysical, the spiritual, and the transcendent, to the ultimate reality of the Unity.

Knowledge and religion had similar lowly origins. It is debatable whether man's road to spirituality was harder than his path to science and morality. Tangible entities are easier to accept than ideas; the seen world easier to grasp than the unseen. Aeons are required for minds to rise to the heights needed for knowledge of the Divine. The sun, the most obvious of objects, shines on all. Yet analysis of its composition and conformation has been reached only after the creation and abandonment of innumerable hypotheses. Despite the sun's light, the truth behind the hypotheses remained in darkness. This darkness was not due to depravity or depression of thought. Science and knowledge were equally backward and had to go through the same eras of myth and superstition as the philosophies and beliefs of our forebears.

Myths and legends gave savage tribes their creeds and developed their morality. Slowly knowledge and experience attained a level capable of grasping the unity and orderliness of creation and the mathematical perfection of relations between natural phenomena.

From these man deduced that all obeyed the will of a single unique Creator, One Totally Other, unlike any visible object. He deduced that every effect has its own separate cause, and posed an independent creation for each phenomenon. They went further. In early stages they imagined that such creations, or creators, had the form or appearance of animals. Speculations advanced through man to spirits and eventually to the One.

Research through all regions and eras shows that this progress is an expression of the essence of the nature of man as much as language, thought, and customs.

The faculty which distinguishes man from all other animals is his mind. A newborn infant manifests this power of mind. As its body grows, so do its mental muscles. They develop as observation, reflection, comparison, deduction, imagination, prognosis and cognition. Just as the physical must be tended and trained, so must the mind. And just as the physical community of the political and world state must be advanced by united effort, so also must the intellectual ethical, philosophical, and scientific community–mind of mankind be advanced by mutual endeavour.

During the millennia of human existence, man has developed a store of ideas which had deepened, widened, and enhanced century by century. Finally this store became so enriched and supplied that faith and conviction were generated. This was a great advancement for man as each discovery in turn had been.

It brought into being a new era in history, giving purpose to existence in pursuit of values not before recognised.

Despite science's admission, on the basis of historical research, that the religious sense is one of the oldest of human qualities, differing ideas are held as to its origins and how it arose. Some hold that humanity felt the sense of oppression at its weakness and impotence vis-à-vis the forces of nature and of living creatures, and so turned to religion.

But weakness cannot explain religion. The source of faith is not feebleness. The firmest believers are not feeble and frail. The saints and prophets who put humanity on the road to faith and assurance were people of greater resolve, will, force, and religious faith than anyone else.

What power could have armed these noble personalities in their holy strife against rebellion, evil, and corruption? Could expectation of material gain or of political success strengthen them to endure the bitterness of tragedy, persecution, and opposition? Never!

So it is not the sense of weakness which gives strength to faith. The pioneers who led humanity onto the path of religion could not have done so from a position of weakness, inferiority, and impotence.

The more man grasps the glory of the world and penetrates the secrets of the universe, the stronger grows his faith.

Religion is no malady. No healthier person can be found than the one who searches for reality, both about the world and within himself. Illness makes a man forget all other realities except his own pain and suffering.

Faith and conviction are too large a subject to be contained within the scope of one treatise. It is a vast domain. Exploration of it must range far and wide. Like the study of every quality in human nature, no single treatise can cover the entire sphere of their causes and effects.

The rich storehouse of the treasures of faith and conviction cannot be inventoried in any single treatise;

no more than can any of the deepest movements in the human heart. No single definition can cover any one of them. For instance, 'love' is more than affection for another, 'attraction by beauty', 'altruism' or even a combination of all three. What treatise can probe the depths of the reality of what love is in its entirety? How much less, then, can it explain the universe of existence and the reality of its entirety?

The science and art of medicine progressed from superstition and magic into becoming a useful craft. Chemistry progressed from alchemy and fantasy to modern science. Inevitably, research starts with erroneous hypotheses, and by trial and error seeks and finds truth.

"Religions have been erroneous", many say. True, but that is not an adequate argument – despite its use by enemies of God – to disprove God's existence. The errors are merely mankind's stumbling steps in its search for truth.

Bertrand Russell says that religion is rooted in human fear; fear of the unknown, of death, of destruction, of mysteries. [*Why I Am Not a Christian*, p. 37] He gives no reasoning to support his contention nor can he answer the question: "If fear was the only motive that prompted man to turn towards the Creator, does that prove that no Creator exists?" Even if it was in search of a refuge from fear that man discovered God, does that invalidate His reality? Would it invalidate the reality of any other truth that man should discover under the impulse of fear? If it was fear of lightning which drove man to discover the secrets of electricity, is electricity any less real for that?

It is true that faith in an omniscient, omnipotent Providence which is very apparent in time of trouble. That is one subject. Whether man's first impulse towards seeking some such refuge sprang from fear is a different subject. The two questions must be handled quite separately.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/knowing-god-sayyid-mujtaba-musavi-lari/perfecting-mans-faith-and-conviction%C2%A0#comment-0>