

(Thank people) Faith and Reason... when I read the topic for this year's Quaker meeting I was filled with both excitement and confusion. Faith and Reason?? What am I going to say? But quite soon the real Reasonable Toivo stood up and was like I got dis!! (Lol) So I was in Namibia when I got the confirmation that I would be doing this talk and the first thing that I did was ask my Mom and Dad for advice on what to say. Now my parents are very smart people and have always forced me to think so what they said was well what do u think it means? (Ugh!) So I thought about it and two things popped into my head.

The first idea was an idea pushed by many today is that as human beings have gotten more advanced and have gained more knowledge (reason) we rely less and less on Faith as a means to explain things. Through discoveries in science we now have explanations for our daily environment that challenge the notion that say God created it when now we "know" that do to evolution or cells recombining into whatever plants and animals developed. Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden is not logical because we have not found it and we know that the earth took millions of years to become habitable for life and living plants and animals took millions more years to grow and flourish. People have critiqued Holy Books such as the Bible, Torah, Koran and Hindu Wedas (to name a few) as not being scientifically proven writings and were done for their respective times and have no bearing on us today.

There is a man who preaches Islam, named Dr. Zakir Naik who has started preaching to these kinds of concerns. By showing people that there is total reason in the Holy writings of the Koran he hopes to show people that faith and reason many times can not be separated.

The second idea that popped to my head and the one that I relate more personally with and will be the subject of my talk to today was centered on me. To me, Faith is almost synonymous with emotional or emotions and reason with rational thinking. And when this idea came to me I realized that ever since I could remember these two conflicting personalities or modes of looking at the world existed in me. I have two voices or shall we say Toivo's existing in my head (I am not schizophrenic or crazy!!... I think... okay if I ever start verbally talking to an answering myself I might have a problem!!! lol) and each of these voices argue on how to react to the world. My emotional, or shall we say Faith side generally advises me based on how I feel about a situation. Naturally lots of what I feel is based upon my value system, the way I was raised and things like this but it is driven more by my wants and desires than my any rational thought. My rational side is the side that relies on facts and figures and cold calculating logic to make decisions and as you guys can imagine this leads to very heated and interesting conversation in my head!!

I would like to just remind u guys to remember the story my sister read of the good Samaritan. I will be coming back to this later on. But before that I would just like give a few stories to illustrate to you how my conflict of two minds plays itself out. I have a cousin in Namibia about five years younger than me. I love him very much and he has always been like a little brother to me and an active member of the family in Namibia. However, when I left Namibia now three years ago to come here to college, it seems that he lost his way. I am not sure what happened but what I do know is that his grades slipped, he started acting out, and he was really being strange. He eventually failed a grade and had to repeat. He used to stay at our house in Namibia for most

weekends and holidays and my mom offered to do whatever she could for him to get his grades back up so that he could pass the 9th grade and continue his education. His parents are divorced and his dad lives in Grootfontien a small mining town in the north of Namibia about 500km from Windhoek. My cousin opted to go there and go to an inferior system of schooling instead of staying with my family in WHK. He failed and as I hear it has just been messing up his life ever since.

This broke my heart. I felt responsible. My faith (emotions) were telling me that I had to do whatever I could to help him. I had to maybe fly back to Namibia and talk some sense into him. I asked some of my friends to talk to him because I knew from info I heard from Neni and others that he was probably dealing and getting into the crime world. I couldn't bear to have that happen. I believed that I had to save him. I believed that I had to because I loved him and felt responsible for him. Maybe I felt if I talked to him he would see reason. It was so hard for me because my reason, was telling me that there was nothing I could do... I reminded me that I can not fly down and save him. He was making his own choices and he does have a mother and father (not the best by any means) but still he has support systems. It is there responsibility to be there for him not yours. My faith (emotions) could not handle this and I was so depressed. Everybody around me from my best friend Ibrahim, to my family in Namibia, to my girlfriend at the time were telling me that I had to let go. Write him yes. See if I could call him yes. But other than that there is not much that u can do Toivo.... I hated that too because I felt that if I did that and conceded I had no power I was giving up on him. But as time went by my reasoning side was working furiously to convince my faith side that I did love him

but just because I can not help him doesn't mean I care any less for him or am any less of a person. Hard lesson to learn but Reason and Faith found a balance.

It is so hard sometimes to love someone who doesn't love them-self. It is so hard to care more for an individual than they care for themselves. I am sure many of us can relate to this as we all have either gone through similar situations or at one time or another was the situation!! How do we reconcile our emotions and want to express these emotions with our reason which tells us something we many times don't want to hear?

Another story I would like to share is one of my experiences from the summer when I went to Palestine for an internship. I went to a protest against the Apartheid Wall that ran through the middle of the village of Bilin (40min drive north of Ramallah) and marched with around 130 people in a peaceful protest against the wall. Here my Faith and Reason had a flowing consensus that enabled me to defy my parents and go to Palestine anyway even though they were against it. I was able to speak at the demonstration and after I finished we, the peaceful protesters, were tear gassed and shot at. After we had recovered my faith (emotion) surged with anger at the injustice of what just happened and I wanted so dearly to charge head first into the Apartheid Wall (even risking arrest) and detention in an expression of my anger at the wall. But at that moment, my reason started to speak to me in a very strong and clear voice. I looked around me, the hot sun beating over my head, the after effects of the tear gas still in the air, and realized that of the around 130 people marching, 120 were internationals and maybe ten were Palestinians. I realized then that my job is not to "lead" a charge against the Israeli Army that was guarding the wall and that if I did charge in and get arrested, I would be doing that for myself (emotions) and not for the Palestinians (the higher cause). I

realized that there were indeed limits to what I could do to help. I will admit to you freely that I am very arrogant and did indeed enter Palestine with a small but definitely present notion that I could be the spark that started a flame of revolution. I was wrong. This fight is for the Palestinians to lead and for the international community (us) to follow.

The Palestinians and Israelis need to be the ones who find the keys to the doors of peace and all that I can do is help raise awareness of what is going on and give ideas and suggestions to what we as the international community can do to help bring peace to that troubled region. Reason scored a victory that day as was reminded again, that you can't fight every battle. You just can't (although I do despise that word!!! lol).

In writing this speech, I am reminded of a scene from the great Anthony Quinn movie, Shoes of a Fisherman. After numerous votes to try to decide who the new Pope will be the College of Cardinals breaks for some small socializing and thought. It is agreed upon that these are trying and dangerous times and with WWII potentially on the horizon, it will be important who they choose as Pope. During the recess, Quinn's character gets engaged in a conversation about his past, especially about his imprisonment in a Siberian camp and his experiences there. Quinn tells a story about his experience in the Siberian camps and I think it best to quote this entire long passage word for word because of its strength. Quinn starts off by saying, "In the camps in Siberia we were starved and brutalized. I stole. I stole some bread; I feed it crumb by crumb to a man whose jaw had been broken by a guard. I fought the guard to save my friend. I could have killed him. That was a terrifying experience; I a bishop could have killed a man." And one of his other bishops asks, "So as a bishop, you would give your approval

to social disorder?” Quinn answers, “I might be forced to accept it, as a price for social change yes.” The other bishop then says “you are walking a morale tight rope.” Quinn answers that, “we all have to walk it that is what we pay for, for being men.” The bishop then asks, “what if you had killed the guard?” Quinn then heavily replies, “I don’t know... I don’t know Eminence. I do know we are in action in a brutal world. The children of God are ours to protect, and if we have to fight, we fight.” Later on, Quinn’s character is elected Pope.

This is just food for thought in that what is it that Quinn’s character is saying? Is it his Faith that is speaking? Or is it his reason that is enhancing his Faith (set of beliefs) to form this thought that is very revolutionary? How does Faith differ from emotion? Maybe his emotional experiences have showed him other ways of seeing the world with his faith? I don’t know.

My final story, was inspired by from my parents!! (Smile) It goes back to the story read by my sister of the good Samaritan. In the 80’s Namibia was in the thick of its fight against Apartheid South Africa for its freedom. My father and mother were continuing that fight here in the US and went to a Lutheran, Quaker and other religious sects meeting in which they were discussing whether to support SWAPO (the party fighting for Namibian Independence) or not. They wanted to support us but were very hesitant because SWAPO used violence. My parents came with an Anglican Bishop named Bishop Kaundo. He, after hours of listening to them debate asked for the floor and told them this very same story of the Good Samaritan. He asked them to now consider, what if we are all the good Samaritan. And I want everybody here to also consider this. And we come not after this man is being beaten, but during his beating.

What do we do? Me personally, I would charge head long into that fight fists swinging aimed at beating these robbers off this person. I could not have been able to stand there and watch injustice happen and not do anything. However, that is pure emotion speaking... my faith in what is right. But my reason tells me that maybe that course of action is not the right way to go. What if I get my behind beat too and instead of one person getting beat there are two people being beat? Is it right to answer violence with violence? The Bible tells us that Jesus preached that if we are slapped by an enemy we should turn the other cheek. However, aren't there are cases littered throughout the Bible of situations in which Good had to vanquish Evil? I don't know the answer to this question.... (Pause) (challenge the crowd to think on it.)

Thank u all for coming to this talk and I hope that together we have thought more about something. I hope that I can now move forward in this world and find a better balance between my faith and reason and thus be able to make better decisions in my life. I hope the same for all of you here as I am sure we all have similar conflicts. Maybe not as my own with two voices in my head speaking to me and then me walking as if in a trance on the heart and through campus in deep contemplation!!!! Lol but we all have our perks!!! Lol Again thank u all for listening to my words and have a great day!