

*Paul Simon in one of his famous song states  
"Faith is an island in the setting sun,  
but proof is the bottom line for everyone".*

*Simon's approach to faith is shared by a number of believers today  
who maintain that faith is not something you can prove with reason  
but something you believe without reason.*

*This view is technically called Fideism.*

Very frequently we hear people in the media insisting

*"You have your Faith,  
but I have Science and Reason".*

According to Fideism,

Faith is a matter of the heart  
not a matter of the mind.

One cannot arrive at religious truth  
by the reasons of the mind...  
only by the feeling of the heart.

Fideism believes that faith is prior to understanding.  
One must believe - before one can experience. Therefore

**Commitment precedes Content,  
Belief before Understanding,  
Trust before Truth, and  
Faith before Facts.**

Thus, Faith is the necessary precondition for any genuine  
religious encounter.

Thinkers who promoted this mind set include Soren  
Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, A W Tozer,  
D.T. Suzuki, Allan Watts, Shirley McLean and many others.  
Even atheist's like Fredrick Nietzsche abandoned reason  
and appealed to human instinct to justify his belief.

These leaders insist that logic doesn't apply to religion  
or reality. As the old saying goes

**"He who would destroy logic  
will, by logic, be destroyed".**

Fideism may appear impressive on the surface, but upon  
deeper reflection it is meaningless and deficient.  
It leaves us in the sea of subjectivism, wondering in the  
wilderness of uncertainty & confined to the cave of darkness.

Although there are numbers of problems with Fideism we  
will consider 3 of its most serious defects.

## **(1) The first major problem with Fideism is its failure to provide an adequate ground for belief.**

In the light of Fideism, we have no reason for our belief.  
In Fideism you are

**Confined to the feelings of your heart -  
without any reasons for your mind.  
Unable to verify your belief, and  
Cannot be sure if your faith is true or false.**

You have no basis or ground to confirm your commitment.  
You are lost in a world of religions and philosophies not  
knowing if what you believe is true.  
All religious thinking becomes equal guessing!



No light to guide you, no reason to help you.

You keep on believing you are right without any objective  
ground. Plato was right:

*"Anyone who holds a true belief without  
understanding is like a blind man  
who happen to take the right road".*

Fideism condemns you into the prison of darkness.

A Fideist will never be able to answer the fundamental  
question

*"How do you know you are not deceived?"*

*"How can you be sure that you are not mistaken?"*

In reality what we have in Fideism is a case of one blind  
man telling another blind man how to get lost.

Fideism is unable to support what you believe to be true.  
In the light of Fideism no beliefs are justifiable or defensible.  
One is forever lost in the wilderness of subjectivism.

## **(2) The second major problem with Fideism is its failure to provide a logical basis for dialogue between believers and the sceptics.**

If your faith is not rational or logical it is not possible to  
communicate meaningfully with someone who has no  
clue as to what you believe.

If faith is non-rational how can anyone meaningfully  
understand that which has no meaning?

Fideist's from the school of Zen are famous for their esoteric expressions.  
'Kung Fu: The Movie' presented a number of deeply impressive sounding statements,  
such as

*"He who knows doesn't speak,  
he who speaks doesn't know."*

But wait... who spoke just now?

So, he must not know either.

Reason has defeated the false assertion.

There are many more examples of these  
assertions, to which you can apply the  
same critical analysis.

Such statements as

*"When the mouth is opened everything goes wrong."*

*"I owe everything to my teacher...*

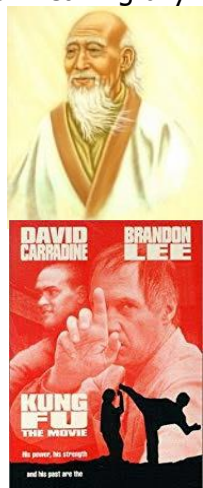
*... because he taught me nothing".*

These statements are plainly nonsense.

They are meaningless, irrational and self-contradictory.

When your friend says, *"Let me share my silence".*

Be prepared to tell him **"But your silence is very noisy".**



The Fideist may deny logic and reason, but they themselves use it at every point.

Without logic no meaningful communication is possible.

If life is totally irrational...

Why are there Zen gatherings?

If reason is irrelevant...

Why would the disciples of Zen use their mind to congregate at the same place.

The moment the first Zen student starts using his mouth he has lost his common zen (common sense!)

Why do Fideist use common sense most of the time?

The answer is because

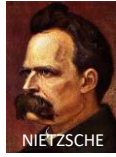
**"Life is impossible without the laws of logic."**

Referring to Nietzsche's approach to truth,

Philosopher Gordon H. Clark was right "



***"If Nietzsche's theory is true, it must be false".***



### **3) Finally, Fideism offers no hope for those fallen in the world of deception.**

A Fideist has no logical tools to rescue those caught up in the web of deception.

If faith is not logical or provable how can one distinguish between genuine faith and counterfeit faith?

How do we recognise a true faith from a false one?

If there are no objective ground to test a subjective commitment, how does one escape the power of delusion?

H.J. Paton notes

**"To declare war upon reason is to alienate all who care for truth and to hold open the door for the imposter and the zealot".**

In essence Fideism provides the entry key to the house of insanity. One could entertain Fideism in the halls of meditation - but when we move in to the world of reality Fideism disappears like a vapour.

The statement by Sigmund Freud in another context could equally apply to Fideism:

***"It is a beautiful theory but ruined by a brutal gangs of facts".***

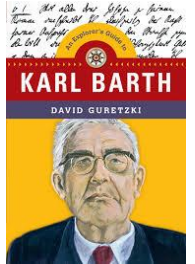
A number of years ago a theological student attended my evening lectures on Christian Philosophy. Being a devout student of Karl Barth, who is outspoken for his Fideism, the student challenged me with these words:

***"The famous theologian Karl Barth does not believe reason matters in religion".***

My immediate response was

**"If reason does not matter when you worship God how do you know it is God that you worship ...and not the Devil?"**

After a troublesome night the young man decided to give up the theology of Karl Barth.



**When reason is rejected, we move from:**

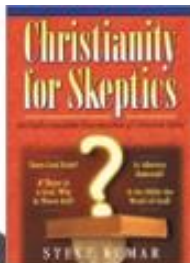
**Sanity to *Insanity*,**

**Decency to *Indecency*,**

**Common-sense to *Nonsense*.**

Isaiah's wisdom must never be ignored...

***"Come now and let us reason together says the Lord"*** Isaiah 1:18



**Dr. Steve Kumar** is an Author, Lecturer, International Speaker and Apologist, committed to answering the Skeptics tough questions and equipping believers with the tools to think more about their faith and answer questions more effectively

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