

From Religion to Spirituality, From Imagination to Reason

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Religion, especially when one is young, largely appeals to the animal imagination and soulful emotions. We are told stories of David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, Daniel and the lion's den. All of these stories engender a response rooted in the animal or soulful nature, where we are encouraged to imagine a small boy defeating a giant, where we respond emotionally to Delilah's treachery, and where we admire the courage of Daniel in the den of lions.

But as one grows older, these stories give way to experience and we find we are not courageous, that we in fact are just as treacherous as any Delilah, and we certainly need more than three stones gathered from a nearby riverbed to slay the giants in our lives.

The imagination, the soulful, begin to give way to some other faculty within us that will not be denied. Our reason.

Come let us reason together, said the apostle Paul.

As an adult, where passion has given way to agreeableness, the center of activity has shifted from the loins to the stomach, from the stomach to the heart, then the heart now to the mind.

The ancients taught that imagination was a faculty we shared with the 'lower' animals. Being sublunary, we were endowed with the same animal nature as our pets. What we share in common with the gods, said they, is our reason, and this reason will not go unsatisfied.

But we have built the ladder in the proper order. The first rung being imagination, the next rung being belief, the following rung is knowledge, while we make our final step to the last, gnosis or intelligence.

Here, in intelligence, we are introduced to a new discipline of 'why'. Why we do the things we do. Most importantly, why don't we do some of the things we should? We begin to realize we've been admiring 'religious paintings' as opposed to 'sacred art' and that we've given up festivals of saints, feast days, lunar calendars, iconography, because they have been deemed provincial by the urban mass of christianity.

Exhortations to 'have more faith' while we lack objects of faith create a vacuum in us that alarms us to the point we may have a soulful crisis.

The answer.

To begin reintegrating some of the most beneficent practices of the ancients. The prayer of the heart. Rhythmic breathing. Meditation. Observance of the times that we may know when to pray for increase, or to pray for decrease, and that we are not prodigal out of season. We begin to recall that Jesus said there was a time to sow and a time to reap, and that these times were governed by those great lights of the heavens, and that these lights then are worthy to be observed. We begin to seek a deeper harmony with the natural world, that in the city, we have been so far removed from.

In short, we discover spiritual practice.

This then is our opportunity to express ourselves to our Creator in our own personal way. We select some things to do, eschewing others, in building our own inner temple for the Spirit to inhabit.

This personal faith, this expression of *our own* imaginings, *our own* beliefs, *our own* knowledges, and *our own* intelligences becomes an expression of the crown of our being, our spirit, and satisfies deeply, I believe, in it's uniqueness, our Creator.