

REALITY QUEST

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WE NEED MYTHOLOGY

One would be surprised to know the extent that mythology plays in our lives. Without mythology and symbolism, our world would be unrecognizable. Consider the position of judges in our society, for example. If this position was just a role, the judge could wear a standard gray suit to court instead of the magisterial black robe. For the rulings of a judge to hold authority, the judge is ritualized, in other words, mythologized. What would be the difference in the ruling of the judge if he wore a bathing suit when he rendered it? The difference is, those who hear the ruling must think of this mere man as something of a higher power than themselves. If they thought less of the judge, his ruling would mean less. Uniforms are products of mythology. In ancient times, any member of a community or tribe who was distinguished as holding a role of power, wore a headdress or something to set him or her apart from the rest. Usually the article of clothing which these wore was symbolic of a certain belief or myth which was generally believed by all. When humans look at a policeman in "plain clothes" they show no respect compared to the respect the same person would command if they were in their uniform. I used to work for my father as a deputy constable for the state of Utah. I took an oath, which is another form of mythology, in the essence that it was suppose to make me perform my job better; the taking of an oath has nothing to do with the way a person will perform a job or act in a position, yet, without an oath, the person is not accepted by a society that recognizes this myth (the oath) as something necessary to the performance of the job. Anyway, I found that when I wore a suit and tie, the people always opened their doors and treated me much more respectfully than had I came into their presence in street clothes. (I used to carry around a broken pellet gun in the waistband of my pants so that people could see it. Yes sir, and no sir was all I heard then.) When one sees the President of the United States in a jogging suit, the way he is perceived is much different than when he wears his orthodox business attire. Youth gangs are no different. Each have their own colors and their own style of clothing. It seems that there is something in human nature that finds this type of mythology necessary. Could it be that we humans are just imitating our ancestors who wore the headdress and the mystical costumes, but in our own way? I believe this is precisely what is happening.

Mythical symbols are also as important to us as they were to the Ancients. Let's examine the U. S. dollar bill, for example: (look at the backside of a dollar bill)

Look at the symbol of the eagle on the right hand side. Above the eagle are thirteen stars symbolic of the original thirteen states. But why are they arranged in the fashion of the "Star of David"? The "Star of David" is generally called Solomon's Seal. The star is composed of one triangle pointing down and the other pointing up, thus indicating "God" looking down on man, and man looking upwards to "God". The eagle itself is symbolic of Deity. The ancient bird of the Greek god, Zeus, was the eagle. The eagle holds *thirteen* arrows in his left claw and a branch of the laurel tree, (some maintain that it is an olive branch), with *thirteen* leaves in his right claw. The arrows represent war and the leaves represent peace. The eagle's head is pointing towards "peace". This whole symbol represents what America is suppose to stand for. "*E pluribus Unum*" written in the banner in the eagle's beak, means "United We Stand". Why didn't we just write the English words instead? The answer: our insatiable need for mythology. Even the nine feathers jutting (this word's for you, Alesa) out of the eagle's posterior are symbolic. Nine is the mythological number of the descent of divine power into the world. When the Angelus rings, it rings nine times. The Angelus is a devotional prayer given morning, noon, and evening in the Catholic religion commemorating the announcement by the angel Gabriel that Mary was to have the baby, Jesus. A bell is rung nine times to call the participants to prayer.

Now, look at the symbol on the left of the dollar. This pyramid consists of thirteen ranges, again symbolizing the original thirteen states. The pyramid has four sides. When you are at the bottom, you are either on this side or that side, or one of the other sides. When you're on top, you are at the point where all sides come together. At this point is where the "all seeing eye of God" looks out on what man has done. The words, "*Annu't Coeptis*," means, "He smiled on our doings." At the bottom of the pyramid the year 1776, (MDCCLXXVI), of course commemorating the date of the declaration of independence, is inscribed. The most interesting thing about the symbol, something I am sure is going to "get the goat" of all conspiratorialists, are the words, "*NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM*," which mean nothing less than, "NEW WORLD ORDER". It amazes me how ignorant these conspiratorialists are. Most are Christians who believe a "New World Order" would destroy the sovereignty of the U.S.A. and the originality of the American culture, i.e., greed. Yet these same people believe that Jesus is coming to establish a "New World Order" anyway. So what's their problem? Once we realize that it is up to us, as human beings, to solve our own problems, and once we stop looking to someone or something else to do it for us, then we will finally make some progress. Alas, my words are like a swallow's song in a rainstorm: It is not more intelligent philosophers humans need, WE NEED MORE MYTHOLOGY.

Unlike most animals, man is not satisfied with his natural existence. Animals are not aware of their existence, and therefore seem satisfied with food, shelter, and sex. Man, on the other hand, has to solve a problem; he can never rest in the given situation of a passive adaptation to nature. Even the most complete satisfaction of all his instinctive needs (food, shelter, and sex) does not solve his *human* problem. His most intensive passions and needs are not those rooted in his body, but those rooted in the uniqueness of his existence. When the animalistic needs of man are met, the cravings from "within" propel the human being to search for the meaning of his existence. There are societies of humans where the want and needs of the body are secondary to the needs of the spirit. In these societies, an individual might go without the necessities of life, fasting, for example, in pursuit of more spiritual understanding and enlightenment. In my younger years I was taught that fasting would indeed enhance my potential for spiritual growth. It worked many times for me. Today, I have given up many passions and worldly desires in pursuit of truth, or better said, I follow the dictates of my conscience and its needs more than I concern myself for the needs of my body. I never get the same satisfaction out of watching a football game, as I do out of reading a good book. I find it hard to enjoy a vacation of learning for a long period of time. I even find it hard to stay in human relationships where only my bodily needs are satisfied. Like my *Quest*, all religions whether they are ancient or modern, theistic (belief in a god) or non-theistic, are attempts to give an answer to man's existential problem. Therefore, I surmise that humans are more spiritual in nature than animalistic. I make this conclusion based on the fact that humans have done more in their existence in the name of religion, than in the pursuit for bodily happiness-at least they used to!

With this understanding of the human psyche, one can see the importance of mythology in the life cycle of mankind. Myths, legends, scriptures, stories, revelations, ect., have been produced by men and women who seek for the answers to their existence. When a man or woman produces an answer which pleases his or her fellow beings as to the purpose for their existence, thus is formed a prophet, teacher, shaman, brahmin, ghandi, or god. These beliefs, or religions, are established based on the conclusions made by these "leaders". The foundation of religion has not changed at all in the many thousands of years of human existence. This foundation is the need to know the answer to the *human* problem. However, the religions themselves change according to the knowledge which man obtains through the use of his *reason*, i.e., scientific and analytical study. For example: In my former religion, Mormonism, one of the early prophets, Brigham Young, stated: "*I will tell you who the real fanatics are: they are they who adopt false principles and ideas as facts, and try to establish a superstructure upon a false foundation. They are the fanatics...Who can tell us of the inhabitants of this little planet that shines of an evening, called the moon? When we view its face we may see what is termed 'the man in the moon,' and what some philosophers declare are the shadows of mountains. But these sayings are very vague, and amount to nothing; and when you inquire about the inhabitants of that sphere you find that the most learned are as ignorant in regard to them as the most ignorant of their fellows. So it is with regard to the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain. It was made to give light to those who dwell upon it, and to other planets.*" (Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, page 271).

This statement has proven to be quite an embarrassment to this particular religion. However the Mormons have a excellent safeguard against these "false precepts". They believe that the current prophet of the their church is the spokesman for God on earth. Any proclamations made by the current leader negate any previous proclamations given by former ones. The current prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, has proclaimed many times that communism is the "work of the devil". If through time and reasoning we come to the knowledge that communism is the best for the human race, something which I sincerely doubt in the forms presented to us by modern communistic countries, then the current prophet of the Mormons, at the time we make the discovery, will most assuredly change the doctrine and teachings of the mormon church to acquiesce to the "truths" of society. The Mormons have made serious changes in their mythologies which have caused many of their members to leave their church. Polygamy was taught in former times of this church as a necessity if one was to gain the "highest degree of glory" in the kingdoms of God. When the rest of society decided that they did not want polygamy as a part of their culture, they pressured the Mormons to change their doctrine. However, there were many Mormons who were "Mormons" because they believed strongly in the principle of polygamy. These left the main body of the church and formed their own myths based on their own beliefs. This same scenario took place in the late 1970's, when the Mormons finally allowed negroes to hold the priesthood. This was also brought on by the pressures of a society which is increasingly denouncing all forms of bigotry. Many people thought their leader at the time, Spencer W. Kimball, had failed them in his duties as a "prophet of God", because he had changed a previous doctrine established by an earlier leader of their church, and in essence, changed the mind and will of God.

Mormons are "Mormons" because they have accepted the answers that their religion is providing them to the question of human existence. This is equally true of all forms of religions and beliefs. I was excommunicated from the mormon church for nothing less than claiming that I believed that the answers the mormon leaders were perpetuating at the time I was a member, were not the same answers given by the earlier leaders of the mormon church. Eventually I was not satisfied with any of the answers given by Mormonism. I left that religion and established my own, which can probably be called, *Reality Quest*.

I find that the religions (mythologies) of the world satisfy, for the most part, the needs of the human's "inner self", or spirit. There are so many different answers to choose from. When one is satisfied with the answers one receives from any particular myth, one stops his or her search for the answers to the questions that eat at their conscience, i.e., Why do I exist? The individual who has accepted one of the many myths as "truth", can know live out their existence in peace and sanity. Once the inner lusts have been satisfied, they are free to pursue the lusts of the animal side. In the Christian world, one day a week is all that is needed to keep the inner lusts satisfied. That is why there is an intense fetish to "attend church". The Moslems are a little bit more eccentric in that they bow down and pray toward a mythical point five times a day. Each religion is different and each serves the needs of its followers.

What would happen if I were God, let's say, (heaven help us all), and I taught the human race that we would no longer have faith (the fuel of myth), but we would only *reason* with *reality*. The cases of mental distress and illness would increase a thousand fold. The suicide rate would soar, and man and womankind would do nothing more than "screw" each other figuratively and literally. Humans would find more happiness in the pursuit of the "animal instincts", (sex, food, and possessions), than they would in trying to figure out the reason for their existence. In fact, the reason for their existence would be the pleasures and lusts of the body.

This brings me to my point. Our society appears to be drowning in corruption, greed, lasciviousness, and hate. Young people are forming gangs as their own type of "myth" to replace the religions which they have lost. The pursuit of wealth is so prevalent in the christian world, that the mythical remarks of their Lord, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...*" ring out in irony. On the U.S. dollar is the statement, "In God We Trust", when in reality, the "God" in whom Americans trust is the paper the "metaphor" is printed on.

Should we perpetuate myth in order to bring peace and order to our existence? Or would it be better if we "*reasoned*" out our problems? To me, reason seems to be the best route to go. However, the human's inability to use reason leads me to believe: **WE NEED MYTHOLOGY!**

JOSEPH SMITH JR.

Being a former member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), I am often asked about my feelings on its founder, Joseph Smith Jr. The intellectual faction of our society considers J. Smith an impostor and deceiver for his own gain. I guess I cannot consider myself a member of this self proclaimed "elite group", because I strongly disagree.

Joseph Smith lived in the early 1800's when religion was, like explained in my previous epistle on mythology, a vital part of the lives of the people who had just fought for and won the most liberal freedom to practice religion that has ever been known in the recorded history of the human race. People could finally pursue their own feelings on religion without the worry of being persecuted by everyone else, (so J. Smith assumed). J. Smith's family were poor farmers who worked hard in the spring, summer, and fall, and rested during the long winters of northeastern America. Though J. Smith attended little public school, his mother schooled him at home where he became a very good reader at a young age. During these long winter months, Joseph would read anything he could get his hands on.

The Smiths were a divided family when it came to religion. However, Joseph Smith Senior had the insight not to force any particular faith on his children. This allowed each to choose what church they wished to belong to. At a very young age, Joseph could perceive the hypocrisy of the various religions, and decided to investigate religious truth for himself. (My life has followed very much the same path as J. Smith's) He determined as a youth, that he would find the "truth" no matter what he had to do.

Joseph was very intrigued with the Indians who occupied the Americas before the white man migrated in. He studied all he could find on the subject of the Indians and where they came from. He came in contact with the writings of one, F.S. Spaulding, who had written a book in which he claimed the Indians had migrated from the Middle East where they were once members of the Jewish faith. J. Smith used the knowledge he gained from this book, and many others which existed at that time which discussed the Indians, as the basis for his religious work, *The Book of Mormon*.

When the young Joseph attempted to discuss his ideas about religion with members and leaders of other faiths, he was met with criticism and contempt. He was told to abide by what "God has given to the world in *the Bible*, and leave all other speculation alone". Thomas Jefferson was a respected American leader who gained the respect of the young Joseph. Jefferson wrote about the corruption of the Bible as it was in that day. He believed that the Bible had been corrupted by spurious translators and leaders of the early Catholic church. Jefferson even wrote his own "inspired version" of the New Testament which he thought was much more inspirational than the orthodox text. His fan, Joseph Smith, later did the same thing when he presented his own "*Inspired Version of The Bible*".

Joseph Smith knew his ideas about religion would never be accepted by a people so entrenched in the "written word of God" that even the slightest mention of a new idea was blasphemous. (The last sentences of *The Bible* say, "...If any man shall add unto these things (the writings of *The Bible*), God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book...") Therefore, he came up with a way to present his ideas to the world in a way which wouldn't appear so blasphemous.

Joseph did what he did to express his ideas on the questions that have always plagued the minds of humans, i. e., "Where did I come from?", "Why am I here?", and "Where am I going?" He created myths to help him present to the world his ideas in a way he thought the people would accept. He was a brilliant, charismatic leader who perpetuated one of the most unique religions of modern times. He was just as inspired as those who wrote the words of *The Bible*. He reached the heights in personal achievement shared by Socrates, the Essene's "teacher of righteousness", Mohammed, Ghandi and many other great spiritual leaders. And like these "inspired" men, he died defending what he believed.

Was he a man of truth? To millions he is. He was a man of his truth. And that is good enough for someone like me who is still pursuing his own. I admire Joseph Smith for his insight, courage, and the indelible impact he has had on the lives of many people. I only wish those who honor him as a prophet would learn about his life and become as he was: a searcher of "truth".

