

Brand New Story of Creation is the journey of a former Jesuit with a question: What am I doing on a ball spinning in space? He concludes alongside Joseph Campbell: We need a new world-unifying myth. Audaciously, he describes a new story of creation to provide a quiet and salient universal personal ethic, called Person-Sited Theocracy.

BRAND NEW STORY OF CREATION

**Today's Jihad comes from the Koran Story;
The Crusades: from the New Testament Story;
Arab-Israeli Conflict: from the Torah Story;
Our World Needs a Brand New Story!**

by GIL GADZIKOWSKI

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Brand New Story of Creation

Today's Jihad

COMES FROM THE STORY OF THE KORAN

Past Crusades

CAME FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT STORY

Arab-Israeli Conflict

BASED ON THE TORAH STORY

WE NEED
A BRAND NEW STORY
OF CREATION!

Gil Gadzikowski

Lucid and concise, an ex-Jesuit and banker traces his life-long “intuitive” quest for a new, highly unique myth and religious practice that preserves faith in God while leaving many triumphalist aspects of religion aside. A distinction between moral and civil considerations brings his proposal to bear usefully on current questions that are widely salient, thus providing a practical application of this gentle and loving philosophy.

—Gordon H. Mundell, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of English and Linguistics, Emeritus,
University of Nebraska, Omaha

Gil’s humility only underscores the tremendous thought, knowledge and experience on which this proposal is based. His personal stories engage the reader while synthesizing and challenging long-held views. After reading this book, I approach my beliefs, my fellow humans, and nature with greater wonder and reverence.

—Jerrid Kruse, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Science Education,
Drake University

Joseph Campbell’s challenge for a new story to unite the world is met here, honoring his principle that the new myth has to align the individual citizen not just with his or her locale but with the planet itself.

—The Author

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ISBN: 978-1-64438-053-6

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2020

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Gadzikowski, Gil

Brand New Story of Creation by Gil Gadzikowski

SOCIAL SCIENCE | RELIGION | HISTORY

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019915697

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CHAPTER 1

What Am I Doing on a Ball Spinning in Space?

I was the “caboose” in my family of seven. I came down the tracks some thirteen years after my brother, Marty. A psychiatrist suggested that perhaps my mother saw my brother getting ready to enter the rebellious adolescent years, and she decided she needed another “baby” to smother-love. So she birthed me, “Gilly.” I was certainly smother-loved. I admit I was spoiled, and sometimes but not often was a brat.

For any of my brat activity, my pa had fashioned for my ma a “pida,” the word I knew for “whip” in Polish. As I grew older and bigger, ma used the pida as her disciplinary equalizer, not often but for the big ones. Pa was a teamster when they really were teamsters, and he knew about the use of whips for driving teams of horses. Pa drove the ice wagon for the Random Ice and Coal Co.’s route serving the bars and hotels along the main drag, then Grand and now Wisconsin Avenue, in downtown Milwaukee.

What Pa did was saw off a section of a broom handle; at the business end he attached four strips of leather about 15 inches long and about a half-inch wide. These were attached to the wood by nails, which he ingeniously covered with thick electrical rubber tape to prevent harm if Ma missed high.

I knew I was in trouble when my ma would tell me to get the pida from the hook in the pantry. I always knew why I was in trouble because she would explain my offense to me before administering the punishment. Let me say the straps stung. I recall instances, especially in summer when my T-shirt was wet with perspiration, coming home to find my ma waiting for me with a serious complaint, and the straps **stung!**

I mention my occasional bratty behavior because I am convinced that in a modified form it contributed a great deal to my success in life and various businesses. When it came to sales or production I wanted to know: “Why can’t we have everything we want?” “What is keeping us from getting it?” “Well, how can we take care of that?”

Growing Up in an Adult Household

Back to the caboose, here’s the family that arrived before me: I had two brothers, Al, some 25 years and Marty 13 years older than me. I had four older sisters: by 22 years, Suzanne; by 20 years, Claire; by 17 years, Margaret; and by 15 years, Isabelle. Again, my point is to note that I grew up in an adult household and never really was free to be a “kid.”

How adult? My sister, Isabelle, taught me algebra when I was ten. And I got it. The idea of finding the value of “x” absolutely intrigued me.

I recall that at age five I was reading. The family subscribed to bound books that were represented as classics in their advertisements on the back page of the Sunday **Parade Magazine**. I recall them well; they had a cream-colored imitation-cloth cover, and the titles were printed in gold lettering on a red square background on the back binding. There was one by an author named Plato. I tried reading that book but soon gave up because I had no idea what Plato was talking about. Later in philosophy class I would learn of those shadows and caves.

In my five-year-old naïveté and frustration, I decided then and there that if no one could write a book that was easy to read and would change the world, I was going to have to do it myself. At a minimum, you can say I was a very serious-minded child, product of an adult-oriented household. Perhaps that seriousness generated in me a melancholy-yearning for some “ultimate,” some solution to all those world problems I heard recounted in our family’s regular and diverse dinner conversations.

Elementary School Catholicism

I was steeped for eight years in Catholic doctrine and practices as a school boy at St. Casimir Parochial School in Milwaukee. All I learned in school confirmed and intensified the faith and practices of my home life. Our curriculum was not sophisticated but it presented an educational rigor with some breadth of exposure. I definitely bought into the entire formal religious program, mainly because it appealed to my serious orientation from my adult-home milieu. And I always had a melancholy-type yearning for some ultimate solution, but I would not have been able to tell you at the time what it was or how powerfully I was longing for something.

I recall at ten years old standing on the bridge that spanned the Milwaukee Road's railroad tracks running through Gordon Park right across from my home on Humboldt Avenue. My brother Marty was off to war, in Germany. I would look down the parallel tracks that stretched out toward North Avenue some two miles away. A melancholy wish that there were no wars; that the family would always be together; that no one was fighting anyone; and that everyone was getting along; all of those wishes would cover me like a coat. Where was the key to all that was missing? I was yearning for that key.

Jesuit High School Rigor and More Catholicism

I didn't do well on the entrance exam and almost didn't get into Marquette University High School as expected. In fact although admitted, I was initially placed in the last freshman class of competency, 1-G. That meant there were at least 280 eighth-grade applicants who did better than I did on the entrance exams. Once in Marquette High, I was scared to death that I was going to flunk out. I studied really hard. I hated history; it seemed like nothing but dates and what happened on a particular date. But out of fear, I recall memorizing just about everything I could for the first semester's standardized Ancient History final exam in Mr. Geisinger's 1-G class.

On the first day of the second semester, Mr. Geisinger announced to the class that I had scored the highest on the history exam among all eight high schools in the Jesuit Missouri Province. He congratulated me on that achievement.

To be honest, I wasn't impressed. I didn't think much about it. I had memorized a lot and I figured that if I had to take that exam over again as of right then, I probably wouldn't do well. In fact, I felt a little sheepish because I knew that out of fear of flunking all I did was memorize a whole bunch of dates.

On the other hand, the Jesuits must have thought they had something in me, and Father Foley, the Principal, came shortly after and called on me to follow him. I gathered my books and junk and in silence I followed Father Foley. He took me to 1-A, the highest freshman competency class. No one told me anything. I was assigned a seat, alphabetical order, quite unceremoniously, in Father Conley's English Class. It took me a while before I realized what had happened. I was now a member of this smart-kids' class. That really scared me because now I was definitely expected to perform, when all I wanted to do was make sure that I didn't flunk out.

Actually, I did well: second honors (an average of 85 to 91 in grades). I made some jovial friends in 1-A. Most were on the first honor squad with grades often well above 92. Of course, they cheated: They were very, very smart and even worse, they studied. In literature, however, I did outshine them. I enjoyed reading, read deeply and, most importantly, readily retained what I had read; even to this day that is my forte.

I admired several of my Jesuit teachers. I took the opportunity to engage them in what I saw as the most important question in the world, a question borne of my melancholy-yearning and now finally formulated: What am I doing on a ball spinning in space?

I was serious and the Jesuits treated me seriously. They had formulary answers up and down the gamut of my questions. We argued some but they seemed to come out on top. I admired them to the point that I decided to become a Jesuit upon graduation from high school. I, too, wanted to be learned and wise in the way I had come to admire in my teachers.

A Jesuit for Eight Years

I gave myself to the Jesuit program of training and studies. I learned to meditate, to study hard, to work hard, and I learned what I lacked: discipline. I was confident that I was getting closer to resolving my deep melancholy-yearning for “something more.”

Prior to my Jesuit training, most things came easily for me. I was a natural in a lot of ways. But if I simply got tired of an activity, if I found it a bit more difficult than I had thought or if it began to weigh on me, I simply gave it up. Perhaps I’d take it up another time. As a Jesuit that was no longer possible. I had to be responsible to God, to others and also to my inner self. Integrity had to be satisfied. I was learning discipline in my life.

In my studies, I was especially impressed by an injunction of St. Ignatius: “Strive that the truth may appear and not that you may seem to have the upper hand.” I no longer could be satisfied with half answers or dismiss the matter. And so I worked and studied harder than most.

As a Jesuit, the main question of my quest remained: What am I doing on a ball spinning in space? I had to be truly satisfied; the truth had to appear. For example, I found St. Thomas Aquinas’ five philosophical “proofs” for the existence of God unsatisfying; who finds God at the end of a syllogism? I was getting closer to knowing what that ultimate something was that loomed as the target of my melancholy-yearning. I had to look beyond the proffered logic and tidiness of human life.

Ultimately the Jesuit life, however satisfying from an intellectual and disciplinary point of view, turned out to be one of loneliness that I could not live. While I taught Latin and Greek at Campion High School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, I made the decision to honorably part ways with the Jesuits. Upon completion of the formal process and paper work, I left the order from the Jesuit Residence at Marquette University High School and went into a snowy Milwaukee on Christmas Eve, 1957.

I remember that day vividly, because I left with a heart filled with gratitude for the blessed and fruitful years I spent as a Jesuit. The Jesuits favored me more than I can ever repay them.

Business Occupied and Kept Me Busy

I immediately secured a job with the IBM Service Bureau in Milwaukee. That sent me off on a business career that went from IBM Salesman to Economic Analyst and then Claims Director of Michigan Blue Shield; then to Assistant Vice President of the National Bank of Detroit, and on to Lester B. Knight as Senior Consultant in Banking in the United States and Europe. Management positions followed as Executive Vice President of the Omaha National Bank; President, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of First National Bank in Sioux City; and President, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of First Federal Savings and Loan of Council Bluffs, Iowa. I retired in 1990. I always enjoyed suggesting there were so many different career stops because I had trouble holding a job. Actually, my career in its constant search for more and different business experiences mirrored my heart's continuing quest for that "ultimate."

At no time did I forget my quest to be truly satisfied about an answer to my question: What am I doing on a ball spinning in space? In fact after I left the Jesuit life I continued to meditate for at least a half hour daily. I carried this on well into my late sixties, growing in prayerfulness but in less formal and more simplified forms. I learned to drift into Eastern forms of contemplation. Now, meditating and

contemplation comes without even thinking about it. My wife sometimes calls it “nodding off.”

The seriousness of my childhood never left me. I lost a carefree adolescence to my serious pursuit of being as good a Jesuit as I could be. That seriousness followed me into retirement along with my melancholy-yearning. My pre-retirement readings and prayer were loosening my ties to formal religion and its formal doctrine. My soul resonated to see the impact of life experiences on others, people who viewed simple human acts as sacramental signs of God. I found my new focus to be “sacramentality,” i.e., the power of an outward sign, like an act of kindness, to become a testament to God’s spiritual operation in my world.

Everyday sacramentality in my life and that of others became important. I saw my family’s expressions of care to others attest to God. I saw others reverently bless the doer of a kindness to them. Even in my business dealings with others I measured my actions as positive or negative: Could the customers or employees later reflect on fairness in my encounter with them, and maybe find themselves feeling good/God about being in this world?

A Scandal Rocks My Faith in the Sacramentality of the Vatican

The daily papers reported the Vatican’s scandalous cover-up of sexual abuse by its clergy. I read of the Vatican’s failure to acknowledge penitentially the harboring of sexual predators and, worse, foisting the perpetrators anew on still other religious venues. Reading that, I immediately recalled a high-school class experience.

Father Richard Forey, S.J. taught us Third Year English. He was a “with it” priest who made sure we became aware of and had at least a basic appreciation of all the arts, including good literature. One class assignment was his having us read **The Power and The Glory** by the British author, Graham Greene. The novel centers upon the ministry of a young Mexican priest who falls for the beauty of a young peasant

girl, with whom he has an affair. Father Forey also had us see the Hollywood film by the same name. (All of us in the class, with hormones wild in our seventeen-year-old bodies, found it easy to forgive the priest when we saw the gorgeous Ida Lupino in the role of the peasant girl.)

In the discussion that followed the assignment, Father Forey drove home his special point: The failure of an individual minister of the Catholic Church does not call into question the validity of the Church. **The Church as an institution remains “Holy,”** as Catholics are taught in their catechism instruction. The institution as such remains a faithful servant of God. Fair enough.

But now sexual abuse: Widespread, in the institution! Covered up by the institution! Dissimulation by the institution! Institutional denial of its own members’ failures! All of that destroyed the Vatican as my representative of God in this world. Formal Christianity had lost its Sacramentality. The organized Christian church no longer was my testament to God’s presence in this world. The Institution itself not only did not act God-like, but just the opposite: It had committed an institutional deception out of organizational pride, the Greek **Hubris**, **“unaccountable even to the gods.”**

As if to place an exclamation mark alongside the sexual abuse, Saint Pope John-Paul II (dubbed by many in the Catholic Church “The Patron of Youth”) called Boston Cardinal Bernard Law to a post in Rome. The not-so-subtle point was to allow the Vatican, as a sovereign state, to repulse the Boston District Attorney’s subpoena of Cardinal Law. The subpoena called the Cardinal to return to the U. S. to testify in the multiple and lurid sexual-abuse cases against clergy in Law’s Boston Archdiocese. The subpoena was ignored by the sovereign Vatican. In my mind and heart, the Catholic Church had now rested its case against itself: **The Church of Rome had decided it is accountable to no one, not to the legal civil authorities and not even to God!**

Partial Answer to the Final Answer

I had now detached from my root religious base; I was on my own at this point. I had found a partial answer to my quest: As we are on a ball spinning in space, **we intuit God**. We see God in the everyday goodness of people and in the beauty of the world around us. There have been religious discussions in which I've told my friends, "I believe in sunsets." I know that the color and hues of the sunset are airborne particles of dust/dirt diffusing and reflecting the sun's rays. The mystery is how can a very basic phenomenon evoke such a deep-seated longing in me, a longing to freeze the world and right then and there want to reach out and touch the eternal?

An elderly couple I know confided in me that they witnessed a gorgeous Hawaiian sunset on their honeymoon. From then on sunsets became a time for the couple's private, special love and prayer time. Their love became overwhelmingly tangible and eternal. The variety and evolving beauty of sunsets became a sacrament for them as it has been for me.

But what do we know of God? What's behind our intuition? Going forward into retirement, I was listening to my inner whispers and those of other thinkers and writers. And so I devoted my retirement not only to the study of religion itself but also to the study of myths. Myths, the stories of the formation of the world and the origin of its people, are the stories that provide meaning and purpose to peoples' lives. Those meanings and purposes translate into how people behave and what values they cherish.

I was forced deeply into how we know God and of God. Scratch off the philosophical proofs. Witnesses and their testimony continuously cite practical events in everyday life that caused them to find God: mysterious life-happenings; the unknown and unexplained in this world; neighbor helping a neighbor; kindness from a complete stranger; acts of bravery to save another person. Incidents like that seem to demonstrate the operation of God in this world. My

melancholy-yearning found an echo in those reports. We find God intuitively but what of God do we know?

I started looking right inside myself; it was a magnum mystery to me why I had such deep wishes. I'm composed of matter as well as consciousness. My yearning is born of material experiences but reaches out to the very contradiction of the material, to what the material can never provide. I came to call this magnum mystery my Teleological Aspiration.

But how could I have an inborn aspiration without having a corresponding fulfillment? Nature appears to have provided autonomous resolutions to my other needs. Attacks of germs or viruses automatically trigger my immune system. In our world, needed moisture in the plains is provided by oceanic heating and cooling via rain clouds. I became convinced that somehow my teleological aspiration would be fulfilled. I was on this ball in space and somehow I was getting ready for the eternal! I was reminded of St. Augustine's plea to God, "My heart is restless until it rest in Thee."

I had hope! I had hope in God because God seemed to keep showing up in my life and that of others. Favoring sacramentality as my guide turned out to be my key to the "ultimate." I'm on a ball spinning in space with a hope that my meaning relates to God or is God.

Other mysteries and the "unexplained" in this world also caused me to hope in God. I was coming upon the full realization that there is more to this world than meets my eye. Given that there are mysteries and unknowns, the idea of God's operating in the world did not appear to me farfetched. Besides my Teleological Aspiration, there are near-death experiences and periodic unexplained occurrences. The mysteries and unexplained in this world began to add up.

The God of the Gaps Fallacy

I asked Professor Kruse of Drake University to read the manuscript and favor me with his comments. His specialty is the teaching of science, nurtured by his own past proficiency in Chemistry.

Professor Kruse noted that my use of the “unexplained” to arrive at a God might very well weaken my narrative in the minds of some. Using the unexplained to decide there is a God is called “The God of the Gaps” fallacy. After all, when each of the unexplained is explained, you have no God. The “gaps” are gone and so then is God.

In my opinion, The God of the Gaps fallacy is based on the presumption that eventually everything will be physically measured and nothing outside of what can be measured is. Obviously, I do not hold that presumption. By definition, science and its measures are designed to explore and determine that which constitutes the world of matter and energy. If a reality lies beyond matter and energy, science is incapable of recognizing its existence.

But Professor Kruse raises a legitimate point: Do I want my God to evaporate? That question brought to mind a conversation I had years ago in the early 1970’s.

I had hired George Klein, a Senior Consultant with the Stanford Research Institute out of Menlo Park, California, to work with us on the Omaha National Bank’s computer simulation models. Besides being a brilliant consultant, he was a very affable gentleman who hailed originally from Minnesota. We dubbed him “the Minnesota Farmer in bib overalls with an MIT-Ph.D.-PLUS intellect.”

During the consultancy, George and I hit it off. Along the way, I had the privilege of several familial-type conversations with him. One of our subjects was the unexplained. George indicated that he simply had on his mental shelf a box labeled “The Unexplained,” into which he placed items awaiting eventual explanation. I suggested, and George

allowed, that I might figuratively take his box of “The Unexplained” and place it on my mental shelf and label it “Signs of God,” knowing that I might have to empty it as its contents became explained. I acknowledged I was willing to face the risk that in the end my God box might end up empty, and therefore my God would be not.

I looked the other day after all these intervening years and found my God box is somewhat brimming over. No one as yet has explained away what I call “the spiritual.”

The Spiritual in Near-Death Experiences

Reports of Near-Death Experiences (NDE) I had read during my business years fascinated me. Doctor Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, writing in her appendix to **On Death and Dying**, started me off on my interest in NDE. Her reports of clinical studies pointed to the ability of the subjects of NDE to know matters that were outside their normal realm or ken and were revealed to them while in the near-death state. To my surprise I found multiple reports of NDE by people from all walks of life, from all nationalities and even from all religions. I found especially compelling the testimony of medical doctors about their own near-death experiences.

I recall reading some years ago in the Wall Street Journal about five different hospitals participating in a worldwide experimental study of NDE. Each was equipping its surgical theater with works of art on the ceiling, with the art set facing the ceiling. The point was that if there truly was levitation of the psyche during the near-death experience, as is commonly asserted in surgical theater NDE revelations, such a claim could be verified by asking for a precise account of the art adorning and facing the ceiling. I’ve looked for but disappointedly have yet to find a follow-up article in the WSJ.

Dr. Eben Alexander, a neurosurgeon who had spent time debunking near-death experiences of others prior to his own, has published his

case, **Proof of Heaven, A Neurosurgeon's Journey Into The Afterlife** (Simon and Shuster, 2012).

Dr. Alexander deliberately took time afterward to analyze his medical case extensively. He called in other physicians to review his medical records. They and he concluded that his cortex was indeed dead. That means that his brain could not have functioned at all. He was dead!

Dr. Alexander experienced the full panoply of the near-death experience as described by many others before him. Dr. Alexander subsequently published **Map of Heaven, How Science, Religion and Ordinary People Are Proving The Afterlife** (Simon and Schuster, 2014). He explores how science might be on the verge of gaining an understanding of consciousness in humans.

But I found one incident most interesting about Dr. Alexander's experience. It happened to him months later. After his own NDE, the doctor began to read extensively of the experiences of others. In all of them, he noted that a **recognizable relative** accompanied the deceased on a tour of the afterlife. He was puzzled because **a little girl whom he did not recognize** had been his guide.

At the same time Dr. Alexander found something also important; he learned he was a child given up by his birth mother. He pursued leads and located his family of birth. Among correspondence with his newfound family, he was presented a picture of the family's youngest sister who had died at an early age. Dr. Alexander then marvels at what he recognized in the picture: "**She was the little girl who had accompanied me on my tour of heaven.**"

The mystery of the near-death experiences of heaven both encouraged and troubled me in my quest. The eternal seemed to lie so close to and yet so far from us humans.

The Unexplained Persists

In addition, news reports of unexplained occurrences popped up regularly. The Utah **Deseret News**, in its March 10, 2015 edition, reported the rescue of a baby hanging upside down from its seat belt in a half-submerged SUV. The baby's mother, who drove through barriers off a bridge, died in the crash. What makes the rescue amazing is that four police officers rushing to the car in an icy Utah river all say they heard the same thing: They heard a female voice calling out "Help!" from inside the vehicle's cabin. But the driver was dead and her 18-month-old daughter, while still alive, could not have been the speaker.

"It wasn't something that was just in our heads," said Officer Beddoes to the **Deseret News**. He went on to say that one of the other officers responded to the voice, "We're trying. We're trying our best to get in there." Four officers, a dead woman, a baby, and a voice crying for help. Another unexplained. Another mystery.

Religion Revisited

Was I wrong in abandoning Christianity? I returned to the study of religion itself, the presumed purveyor of God in this world. I learned what framework regularly makes up a religion, any religion.

Each offers a specific hope by giving meaning to our lives; without hope we live in purposeless despair. Usually that hope and meaning is codified in a statement of beliefs we call a creed. The creed answers why we are on a ball spinning in space. I found the nexus between meaning and hope to be universal in religion, even though there are multiple religions. All codify a hope.

Since hope keeps us from despair, I wanted to know and to examine the root of religion's hope, i.e., the root of life's meaning. Each religion appears to come from a story of God. The story of God, or myth, attempts to explain the how and why of existence, and therefore

the human meaning from which springs hope. For example, the myth or story of creation in the Hebrew Bible provides the root meaning and hope to Judaism, Christianity, and in part, Islam. In North America the Indian Tribes have myths upon which they base their meaning and hope and then formulate their religious expressions. The same holds true of myths found all across the globe from the Near East to Asia to South America.

The next step was to study creation stories. Religions tend to build their theologies off of creation stories. In Christianity, the story of Adam's creation and original sin places upon Jesus the role of having to atone for the rest of us. That interpretation of the story is theology. Further, because God was pleased with Jesus' job, God raised Jesus from the dead. That's more theology. In fact, I found the story makes for some jam-packed theology resulting in dogma, including the doctrines of Original Sin, the Immaculate Conception of Jesus, the Incarnation of God in Jesus, and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, to name a few.

I found that religions then build ethics and religious practices off of their theological dogmas. Again, an example: Because of Adam's sin we need Baptism, Fasting, and Penance. I found that religion assigns God's presence and operation to those religious practices.

Those religious practices are called "Sacraments," i.e., what brings God down into this world. That phrase, what brings God into our world, led me to describe good deeds as sacraments, and the doing of good deeds as "sacramentality." A sacrament is an outward sign of the spiritual action of God right here and now in this world. Another example: In baptism, the pouring of water upon the person being baptized is the outward sign of the spiritual action of God's forgiving. I found acts of care and kindness likewise are outward signs of bringing God's concern into this world.

Finally, the almost universal idea of a restricted caste which alone may participate in God's ministry I found repugnant. The idea that you

need to be ordained or called to God's ministry makes ministry an elite licensed craft, like plumbing or welding. Further, to maintain that not just anyone can be empowered to dispense the blessings of the sacraments restricts ministry to a specialized and privileged few. Such a concentration of power has been revealed to result in cases of hidden embezzlements of the faithfuls' funds and outrageous sexual abuse of naïve and innocent children. It is not uncommon that clergy have been found to exaggerate their importance at the expense of caring for the lowly laity.

My experience was that anyone could cause sacramentality; anyone could cause another to intuit the operation of God. I saw sacramentality as a spiritual blessing. Blessings do not discriminate as to the performer. Good works are welcomed by anyone and everyone.

Understanding Creation Myths

Recalling that religions are based on myths, we know that no one was around at creation, the "Big Bang." I asked myself, "Why do we make up stories about the origin of the world?" I decided that myths are not simply and only good entertainment around a campfire. In my readings, I found that myths are made up to give people purpose and hope. The myths define, mold and meld a people, a community, a culture, a kingdom. They certainly appear to serve that purpose; they espouse the beliefs and therefore the values and virtues that hold a given people together. They define the aims of that community.

The Ancient Mesopotamian Valley is the early birthplace of many myths. One myth is of a god who gave us writing. The god Enki came out of the sea at night to teach people to write. I note that the Latin word for writing is "scripta;" and because the writing was presumed to come from the gods, specifically Enki, we call some scripta "holy;" The gods taught man writing; scripture came to be seen as God-inspired, and therefore was called Holy Scripture. It starts with the Mesopotamian myth of how the god Enki emanated from the sea at night to grant men the art and craft of writing.

I studied further to find a set of broadened myths: Multiple Mesopotamian gods came out of the sea at night to teach the variety of arts and crafts needed for people to socialize and to be civilized. Those ancient myths served the Persian leaders a very useful, down-to-earth purpose. Honoring the myths helped to transition the Persian people from satisfied nomads to an agricultural community. The myths taught them to settle into a life in a localized community, learning to grow their sustenance and to build their permanent shelters. All the arts and crafts that enabled people to form and live in communities were justified by the myths. They served to transform Persian nomads into dwellers!

The Power of Myth

That's when I fully realized the power of myth! The Persians were transformed from a nomadic tribe to a settled-down community founded on civilized crafts and arts. **Is it possible to do it today: To unite the diverse world peoples into a blended and harmonious civilized community? Is the ultimate that I sought in my melancholy on the railroad bridge in Milwaukee's Gordon Park a new myth, a brand new story of creation myth?**

I plowed on in my study of myth. I found what I call the ancient "Magna Regal Myth," the deification of human rulers. Why should the Persians settle down? They were happy nomads. Implementation of the Magna Regal Myth was the reason. It deified the Persian leaders, who then called upon their divine status to command and enforce the Persian people to settle in communities.

Magna Regal Myths are found all over the world. They depict the same: gods giving birth to a human king, or marrying a royal person, or bestowing special life and blessing upon the then current leader. For example, myths of the Greek gods and goddesses portrayed them as lasciviously profligate with favored humans. In so doing, the gods and goddesses deified them and thereby made them the most powerful persons in the community.

The gods' intercourse with the Persian leaders cast a divine status on them and their progeny. Hence, the people were provided with the key to their obligation of obedience. The people had a Divine Leader who offered the common folks reason to defer to his/her commands: These were orders of the "God-King."

In fact, the Magna Regal Myth became a tradition, perpetuating the belief in the divine right of kings and emperors. This tradition carried over into the Caesars of the Roman Empire. It persists in muted, traditional or honorary form even to this day, e.g., the King of Spain and the Queen of England.

Can we put our trust in any current myth? We know there cannot be an actually human-witnessed story of creation. We have made-up myths. But the myths we have now, as Joseph Campbell pointed out, aren't working except to divide people. Religions claim exclusivity. Exclusivity leads to offensive comparison and resentment. Resentment leads to division and contention.

Perhaps a myth must be constructed to reform our culture, to picture for everyone the kind of world we want. The ancient Persians did that. They created the myth of the god, Enki, to give a sacred aura to the writings of the holy men of the tribe; they proceeded to tell myths of gods who favored human leaders with their divine powers through intercourse; they did all this with the aim of motivating obedience to the royal leaders in the formation of Persian community settlements. **Should we and can we construct a myth for our times to have the world we want?**

My Conclusions

You have just accompanied me on the long road I traveled in my lifelong quest for an answer to what I am doing on a ball spinning in space. My first clue came as a Jesuit, when I rejected the logic that syllogisms would convince people to believe in God. As I moved on, I observed the operation of God in this world by ordinary folk who

exercised kindness and showed mercy in their relations with others. I came to see that the practice of ordinary good works was in fact calling God to be among us.

At the same time as I discovered good works to be an instigator of God, I became aware of Doctor Kubler-Ross and her work. I delved into a study of near-death experiences; my fascination with NDE led me to investigate other reported unexplained happenings. These fascinations added to my lifelong reflections on my own teleological aspiration for the eternal. All this led me to the conclusion that there is more to this world than I physically experience.

Because I suspected God was at work in these unexplained instances, I went back to the study of religion. I found the nature and construction of theology and dogma to have their basis in myth. This drew me into the study of myth, and there I discovered the power of myth as exemplified in the Mesopotamian Valley and in particular the Persian experience. Seeing the power of myth transform a tribe of nomads into an agriculturally settled citizen-community opened my eyes. Myth has the capacity to influence and thereby even to create the world one desires. The discovery of all the above was quite a journey.

The starts and stops, the dead ends, the detours, all the convoluted paths I followed on my journey of prayer and study brought me to this point. It all started with my search for something more; it continued as a quest to answer the question “what am I doing on a ball spinning in space?” The journey ends with these, my conclusions:

(1) There is mystery in this world and that leads me to hope there is something beyond my sensory facilities; the mystery and the unexplained in turn suggest that the eternal may lie close to me; I have hope beyond this material world. I call that hope “God.” **I intuit God and I know God as my Hope.**

(2) We possibly can have the type of society or world we desire by creating a myth. The ancient Persians did it. The story of creation

could define and support our moral compass, the values and practices we desire for ourselves and our society. **We need to design our own myth to have the kind of world we can enjoy and in which all of us can prosper as human beings.**

(3) My research did not uncover anyone who had prepared a myth for our times, nor did anyone appear to be in the process of designing a new myth; I concluded that someone had to do it. Therefore, **I was encouraged and emboldened to proffer a brand new story of creation.**

CHAPTER 2

Evidence That We Need a New Myth

I've told you of my journey to the very basic reason I want a new story of creation. It's those old myths, the religious stories from which demanding dogmas come, that have cross-wired the needed love-lines between the peoples of the world. Nike says "Just do it!" The dogmatic say "No, reconcile our dogmas." Hence, there is rivalry and no peace and no love. Some folks would like the world to have a new myth to serve as our unifying guide into our future. Other reasons for a new myth have come forward. Reporting the views of myth scholars will confirm that we need a new myth and tell why it is important.

Joseph Campbell

During a visit to my sister-in-law in D.C., I learned of Joseph Campbell in the souvenir shop after a tour of the Smithsonian Museum. I saw his book, **The Power of Myth**, lying on one of the shelves and picked it up to skim a bit. I didn't buy it at the time but it hung in my memory. Then when I came upon my interest in myths during my journey, I remembered and bought the book.

Professor Campbell was both an accomplished scholar and a student of human civilizations. He was recognized worldwide for his insights. In the late 1980's Campbell participated in a Public Broadcasting Network program concerning the modern world and its problems. The moderator and interviewer was Bill Moyers of Public Broadcasting fame.

The interviews of Campbell came to be published in a book edited by Betty Sue Meyers and published in 1988 by Double Day. **The Power of Myth** fascinated me. Joseph Campbell's conversation with Bill Moyers about the status of the world caused my own thoughts to vibrate. In short, Campbell observed that what we have now simply is

not working. We face nuclear annihilation. Short of that, we face worldwide pockets of division among the peoples of the world continually leading to violence and wars.

Then I learned Professor Campbell's key to how the world operates: Campbell observed that it is certainly if not generally true that stories form and grow the communities of society. He cited how small communities, for example neighborhood gangs and family clans, form their own stories about life. Those stories in turn tell the members how to live their lives.

The story a family tells its members creates an outcome in the family's behavior. The story might inspire salutary behavior. For example, I thought of folks we call "saints." I thought of Francis of Assisi. His family's story was that of the Judeo-Christian testaments. The Biblical granting to Adam and Eve of dominion over the beasts spoke to Saint Francis. He cared for God's creation, especially his favorites, the birds. His legend portrays Francis with arms outstretched feeding several sparrows, with a bold sparrow perched on his arm.

I remember family stories passed on at almost every family reunion. Uncles usually did not fair well in those recollections: "For heavens sake, Gil, you've seen what Uncle Jim does and says at dinner; don't eat with your mouth open or try to eat and talk at the same time!"

Campbell cautions us, however. The result from the family story might not always be desirable as we would wish. In fact, there are times the result could be fatal to those involved. I remembered Leonard Bernstein's popular musical, **West Side Story**. We saw the tragedy of gang life. To be a hero, the leaders of the rival gangs are compelled to fight against each other to assert their territory and power. The sad result is that the beloved of Maria dies!

Then Professor Campbell homed in on what I, in my own naïve and stumbling way, had come to recognize: Speaking of the condition of our world, Campbell cited the failure of the major religions to

capitalize on their stories in a way that unified and harmonized the people of the world community.

Campbell confirmed the conclusion that took me so long to find: each of the major religions tells its own story about creation. Each claims to hold an exclusive connection to God. It's as though each says, "We have the real and only phone line direct to God; the others all have wrong numbers." Each story is exclusive of other stories. "My religion is the true religion and your religion is false." Exclusiveness fosters divisiveness, which in turn leads to competition, and next to contention, and then even to violence. Past wars like "The Holy Crusades" and today's "Call to Jihad" can be traced to the divisiveness and ultimately the exclusiveness of a religion's fervor to foster its own story to the elimination of other religions.

Professor Campbell called for a new story, a new world myth. He wanted a new unifying story. It did not necessarily have to be but perhaps could be about creation. He urged a story, a myth that would unite all peoples.

Campbell called attention to Europe in the Middle Ages for an historical example of how a story could serve to bring unity among multiple nations. The Roman Catholic story and its religious elaboration united Europe. The European continent united in a common creed and religious practices. That example could serve as what he envisioned for the whole world.

The Cathedral of the time was the town's centerpiece, both the center of the town's geography as well as the center of the lives of its citizens. The values and ideals of the Old Testament myth and the Jesus legend of the New Testament not only prevailed but were embedded in the fabric of the people. I found his analysis compelling, because on my own visits to Europe I saw and experienced vestiges of the Christian myth and how it united the continent.

Professor Campbell's reasoning that the old myths were not uniting the world serves as a call for a new world myth. The need appears to bear an immediate necessity. The possibility of world annihilation (the nuclear bomb) is very real. The emergence of rogue nations alongside the previous tensions between world powers looms large. I found myself nodding in assent as I read Campbell's text.

We All Own the Nuclear Bomb

I said to my daughter the other day, "I'm sure glad I'm not raising you kids today." She wanted to know, "Why?" I readily replied, "I see technology virtually collapsing the entire world into a mobile phone. Your daughter has a phone. The rush of science and technology can or has introduced every virtue and good thing as well as every vice and bad thing in the world to her by way of her phone."

I know I'm still fighting to get into the Twentieth Century, as my son has sometimes accused me. And I'm embarrassed to admit to the ten-year-olds in my life, as they thumb-dial the latest game, that I still rely on a land line. But I haven't lost my every-century skills of observation, and I realize that technology is what brings news and opinions immediately to the forefront. I myself am keen on staying abreast of what's politically or militarily transpiring, as that is vital to our survival and prosperity.

I acknowledge today's living is based on technology, and (cue the Music Man) that starts with "t" and it rhymes with "v" and "v" stands for **values** (or loss of them). The STEM factor (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) influences our daily lives. It therefore requires integration into and eventual synthesis with our common values. The integration of values and technology can serve to keep the people of the world from destroying themselves. But I worry: We all own the nuclear bomb. Lots of work is required, as all the multiple dimensions of society must work to integrate their values with technology.

Specifically, we need to integrate technology into how each people's culture helps them to survive and prosper. Technology must respect the soul of each of our multiple cultures, specifically what is good and beautiful in our cherished ethnicities. We need to address how to bring those lagging in technology into the modern world. In short, the advanced specialized nations cannot lord it over and simply take a one-sided advantage of the technological laggards.

I see a real challenge in offering a myth with the hope of unifying the world. We need a story that offers basic welfare as well as our highest fulfillment, via unity and harmony in a valued-based technological world. We must identify a myth to guide us. Otherwise, technology creates a myth for us. Such an impersonal myth would deny us our spirits, reducing us to simple happenings spit out from an evolutionary process.

The Myth Must Push the Power of Praxis

I've watched ecumenical projects directed at Habitat for Humanity's house-refurbishing and home-constructing. I admire those participants and their goodwill to unite in a common purpose. They rise above parochial religious biases. I'm especially impressed because these projects are precisely the attempt of different religious organizations to join in a good work.

Some efforts have been astoundingly successful. Catholic nuns who have run charitable hospitals known for excellent care have been imitated by medical personnel of all faiths to provide outstanding hospital services. On the other hand, there have also been disruptions in the work of medical charities because cooperation between faiths stumbled. The issue of a religion's creed or a theological consideration, for example the dogma prohibiting abortion or the practice of contraception, sometimes has stood in the way of needed care.

What we need is to concentrate on the good work to be done. That is called **praxis, the practice of religious good deeds simply because of love of God**, without reference to any dogma or creed. The good deed is how God's presence is shown in our world. I call that sacramentality. In medical healing the presence of The Divine especially shines forth; the hands that heal are lathered with antibacterial soap but slathered in sacramentality.

We need a new myth to allow and encourage praxis. We need to liberate people from myths that box them into dogmas. The full potential of people's loving God needs to be cut loose by a new story of creation. Definitely, the new myth has to refrain from dogma in order that people might freely practice ecumenical good works.

How the Myth Turns Loose the Power of Praxis

I ran across a book that explains this conflict of dogma and praxis. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter edited a collection of essays published under the title, **The Myth Of Christian Uniqueness, Toward A Pluralistic Theology Of Religions**, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 1987). The authors were experienced in the Maryknoll missionary work around the globe.

When I was about five years old, I read about the Maryknolls. My family sent donations to them and in turn they sent us newsletters of their work. I can still see in my mind's eye pictures of missionaries dressed in white cassocks standing with their black parishioners against the African jungle bushes. The Maryknoll priests had early exposure to other religions. They had to deal with other religious ideas from the get-go.

On Sundays in the U. S. and Europe, the priests have it easy. They and their parishioners, versed over a long time in the gospel and church routines, are almost rote-like. They are like a group of folks who have all read and memorized the same joke book. The leader calls out "Number 72" and everyone laughs.

But the Maryknolls, deep in the jungles of Africa, dealt every day with peoples of different religions and superstitions. The Maryknolls rubbed elbows with people who wanted to be good, folks determined to the good as much as any Christian. Those folks loved God in their own way; they treated others as equals and were good to them. The people were practicing praxis.

The Maryknolls were talking religious ideas that confused the Africans. For example, a native mother wondered how is it that the newborn innocent babe in her arms is an enemy of God. But the baby needed to be baptized. That Christian dogma confused the mothers.

The Maryknolls developed ecumenical insights; their conclusions are reported in **The Myth of Christian Uniqueness**. One insight in particular came home to me: We, we ourselves, are the God-derived inner dynamism that creates the Kingdom of God on earth. Doctrine and religious practices are simply human conclusions drawn from the myth, the story of creation. But we are the ones who create the Kingdom. What drives us to unity, to praxis, and to sacramentality is our inner spirit derived from God. We find God by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and loving and working with one another. We do not need religion. We do it because that's where we and others find God.

The Maryknolls realized that a God-inspired personal commitment to love was sufficient. Let the love from God and of God flow into our world. We'll find the infinite God in a specific act of mercy. We'll find the divine absolute in an individual kindness. We'll find **God in everyday living** because that is **where we live**. We'll bring the **Eternal God** out from the **present moment**. I recognized what was called for: intuition and sacramentality.

The new myth must point us to our inner goodness and love, the dynamism to just love and do good; it must loose praxis and sacramentality in our world.

Spiritual People Are in Need of a New Story of Creation

Just the other day I received a 5- by 11-inch multi-colored postcard advertisement in the mail for My City Church. “WELCOME HOME” it proclaimed. I was invited to join a coming Sunday service at 9:30 AM or 11:15 AM at Christ’s Place. I also was invited to a virtual visit of the church at their email address.

The appeal was to “you who are seeking or restless.” You would find a place where you could belong even before you believed. My City Church promised to empower you in every sphere of your life, while it provided a fun and safe environment your children (birth-5th grade) would love.

Three photographs lined the bottom of the card: the pastor and his wife; a young white couple with a 10-month-old boy in the mother’s left arm; and two black women holding a sign that said, “The Best is yet to come.” The church was all-inclusive.

What was my impression?

I immediately remembered the recent polls I had seen. In the United States, the Public Religion Research Institute published its poll of 100,000 folks over the period January 2016 to January 2017. Those who identified themselves as “Religiously Unaffiliated” comprised 27% of the U. S. population, or about 100 million folks. Of those, 58% identified as “Secular, Non-Religious.” Another 16% of “Unaffiliated” still considered themselves a “Religious Person,” but without a hookup. This last group of 16 million people would be candidates for the advertised My City Church.

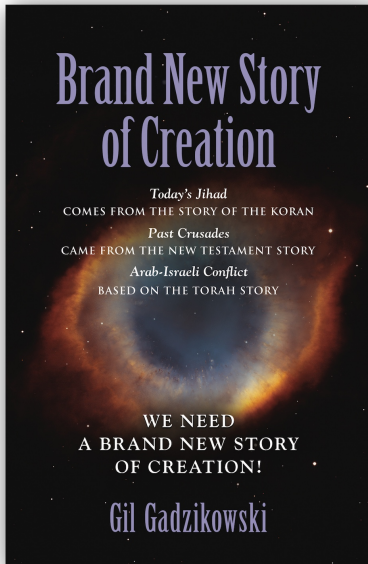
I figured that the pastor of My City Church saw a niche to be filled and was letting those 16 million folks know he was there for them. But going forward, the pastor had to remember they already deliberately chose to leave the old myth and dogma. Those 16 million folks were looking for something new. A new myth?

Moreover, it's worldwide! In the United Kingdom, the National Center for Social Research found that of 66 million people the "No Religion" population was as high as 53%. The Center found that result from polling some 2,942 U. K. resident adults. If the same 16 percent of "Unaffiliated, but Religious" applies in Britain as in the U. S., then about 5.6 million Brits comprise the niche for My City Church.

The postcard advertisement of My City Church reminded me of the polls. The polls made me aware of the "Religious Person" without a hookup. A niche of "Religious Persons" appeared to be forming around the world. They would need a new myth, perhaps a brand new story of creation. The new story would provide them the base from which to generate a sectarian-neutral drive to love God, to love their friends and neighbors, and to love even those all the way around the globe.

Conclusion

We need a new story. A new story is needed to unite the world's peoples; to save us from ourselves; to neutralize the inhibiting dogma-based approach to good works; to liberate us for free-wheeling practice of good deeds; and to help us recognize and abet the workings of God in our world. Now you know why I was strengthened to try my hand at a brand new story of creation.



Brand New Story of Creation is the journey of a former Jesuit with a question: What am I doing on a ball spinning in space? He concludes alongside Joseph Campbell: We need a new world-unifying myth. Audaciously, he describes a new story of creation to provide a quiet and salient universal personal ethic, called Person-Sited Theocracy.

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