

FAITH IN THE JOURNEY:
PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY AS PATHWAY TO THE SACRED

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the idea of personal mythology as an approach for engaging in the search for a more personal relationship to the sacred. Underlying this work is a concern with the post-modern dilemma of how to approach religious renewal in an age dominated by a reductionistic, materialistically oriented secularism on the one hand and dogmatic religious fundamentalisms on the other. Seeking to avoid both the demythologizing tendency of secularism and the equally damaging tendency of fundamentalism to literalize archetypal and mythic material, this dissertation explores the possibility of a third alternative. That alternative approach requires an ongoing personal engagement with both the world's religious and mythological traditions and the sacred dimension of each individual's life story from a perspective that is inherently symbolic, metaphorical, archetypal, and imaginal.

This work is interdisciplinary in nature and draws on content from the fields of comparative mythology, religious studies, and depth psychology. It is hermeneutical in approach, exploring and synthesizing this varied content in order to explicate the concept of personal mythology as a religious endeavor. In doing so, this dissertation first focuses on the evolution of the concept of personal mythology over the past century. Secondly, it explores a range of contemporary theological approaches for understanding the nature of the sacred, of divinity, and of religious faith that make sense in relationship to the

concept of personal mythology. Thirdly, this work explores ways in which personal mythology effectively synthesizes insights drawn from both depth psychology and religion. Fourthly, it focuses on relevant aspects of the work of Joseph Campbell and C. G. Jung, two individuals who have played key roles in conceptualizing the contemporary mythological approach to the religious domain of life. Lastly, this dissertation proposes the concept of “faith in the journey” as a metaphor for the religious implications of exploring one’s personal mythology. In this context, it is argued that seeking the sacred through the mythic dimension of one’s life story fosters an evolving form of personal religious faith predicated on a profound sense on the inherent rightness and necessity of one’s unique life journey.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to William Bostrom, my beloved partner and companion on the journey of life for the past 26 years. Without his loving encouragement and generous support in so many ways, this work would not have been possible. Most of all, I thank him for always having faith in my journey even when my own faith falters.

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