Reversers and restorers of religion: Mourning and meaning in contemporary psychological portraits of religious leaders

Author
Carlin, Nathan

Date
2010

Advisor
Parsons, William B.

Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract
After reading in psychology of religion and pastoral theology for several years, I began to notice that a certain strand, which might be described as iconoclastic or subversive with regard to traditional religion, runs through both fields, and characteristic of this strand often includes what I call a dynamic of reversals and restorations. That is, pastoral theologians and psychologists of religion, from Oscar Pfister to the present, often use psychological methods to critique (reverse) and then to rebuild (restore) religion. Here I explore this strand as it exists in the present by examining three recent psychological portraits of religious leaders---Donald Capps's portrait of Jesus, James Dittes's portrait of Augustine, and William Bouwsma's portrait of Calvin---in light of each author's own personal experiences. What I find is that this strand can be understood fruitfully in light of Peter Homans's writings on, and William Parsons's elaborations of, mourning religion.

Keyword
Pastoral counseling; Theology; Psychology; Personality

Citation

Metadata
View full item record

Collections
Rice University Electronic Theses and Dissertations [13084]
Zen Community, New York, NY, USA. Pamela Cooper-White Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, USA. Reversers and restorers of religion: Mourning and meaning in contemporary psychological portraits of religious leaders (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) Rice University. N Carlin. The male predicament: On being a man today. The psychologists' extrinsic-intrinsic distinction and the sociologists' church-sect typology have similar origins and similar characteristics. Both were developed as tools of analysis in the service of prophet-like concern for the purity and the social efficacy of religion. Both reflect their originators' philosophical struggle with the relation between the historical and the transcendent. Sharing the same religion or religious interpretation of the meaning of life unites people in a cohesive and building moral order. The social cohesion is developed through rituals such as reciting prayer in the honour of God, institutions of worship (church, temple, mosque, etc.), performing Namaz, and multitudes of observances and ceremonies practised by different groups. The unifying rituals of different faiths are also observed by individuals on the most significant occasions such as birth, marriage and death. In contemporary industrial societies, people are also bound together by patterns of consumption, ways of life, laws and other forces. 2. Creating a Moral Community