Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations*

Jason A. Bembry [Ph.D. 2004]

YHWH's Coming of Age

This dissertation studies old age in biblical Israel and Ugarit, a relatively untouched subject. Chapter one examines how senescence was portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes old age is a time of wisdom or an occasion for dispensing blessings to descendants; sometimes it is a time of weakness and decline. Chapter two treats old age in the kingdom of Ugarit. The Ugaritic literature yields a similarly mixed account of old age. Chapter three addresses why Israel's god, YHWH, is not explicitly portrayed with old age imagery in the early biblical traditions. The imagery used of YHWH is in many ways a compilation of features seen in the Ugaritic depictions of the gods El and Baal. But Baal is portrayed as a youthful warrior, while El is explicitly portrayed as old. Biblical writers preferred to resolve this tension by depicting YHWH as a youthful warrior. They thus avoided associating the deity with the weakness often seen as a concomitant feature of senescence. Chapter four examines the striking reversal in this tradition during the second century B.C.E., when YHWH is called "the Ancient of Days" in Daniel 7. Two trajectories may account for this development. First, there was a renaissance of cosmic or mythological themes in late biblical Israel: motifs once rejected because of concerns for orthodoxy were now welcomed into the tradition. The writer of Daniel 7 employs motifs earlier attested at Ugarit to portray God in a new light. YHWH's epithet, "Ancient of Days," is reminiscent of the elderly El, who has a younger divine agent, Baal, who reigns with him; this younger agent in Daniel 7 is the "Son of Man" figure.

*_HTR_ periodically includes summaries of Harvard doctoral dissertations recently accepted in the Th.D. and Ph.D. programs under the Committee on the Study of Religion, a standing committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences with membership from both that faculty and the Faculty of the Divinity School. Relevant theses from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC) are also included.

Dissertations submitted for the Th.D. are deposited in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library at the Divinity School. Dissertations submitted for the Ph.D. are deposited in the Widener Library, Harvard University. All the dissertations summarized in this section are available from University Microfilms, Inc.

HTR 97:4 (2004) 495–505

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The second trajectory is the growing tendency to portray YHWH as a father. YHWH is only occasionally portrayed as a father in Israel's early traditions, but paternal imagery re-enters the tradition at a later date. YHWH is thus portrayed as a father to David the king, to David's descendants, and to the Israelite nation as a whole. The conjunction of these two trajectories produced the image of YHWH as the bearded and white-haired "Ancient of Days."

Whitney S. Bodman [Th.D. 2004]

The Poetics of Iblīs: Qur'ānic Narrative as Theology

This thesis explores the application of reader-response criticism, specifically that of Wolfgang Iser, to Qur'ānic narrative. The narratives in question are the seven different renditions of the Iblīs story.

Commentary on the Qur'ān traditionally approaches the text atomistically with few exceptions. In this study we address whole narratives, asking questions drawn from literary theory such as: What information is provided to the reader and what is left out? Where is the narrator positioned? What repertoire of knowledge does the implied reader bring to the text, and what might actual readers bring? How do specific narratives relate to the larger *sūrah* in which they are located, and how might this relationship contribute to an understanding of both the narrative and the *sūrah*?

In the first chapter we point out that al-Shayṭān and Iblīs show different semantic and theological ranges in Islamic tradition, al-Shayṭān being a figure of absolute evil and Iblīs spanning an interpretive range from evil to tragedy. We assemble the tools of reader-response criticism to help us understand how to analyze this range.

Chapter two argues that the Qur'ān itself suggests an understanding of narrative as *mutashābihāt* and expects that the reader will be conversant with the narrative salvation history. Chapter three explores various stories of the origin of evil in that salvation history—the possible repertoire that the reader, or the Qur'ān itself, brings to the text.

The second section, chapters four through ten, examines each telling of the Iblīs story in turn for its relationship to the *sūrah* in which it is located, the specific dynamics of the telling, possible repertoires of meaning that an implied or actual reader might bring to the reading of the narrative, and theological implications of all of this. In each case we are trying to read a particular telling of the Iblīs story as a unique story, as well as in relationship with and contrast to other tellings of the story. We are allowing the Qur'ān to be multivocal.

In the final chapter, we give a brief demonstration of modern interpretations of the character of Iblīs, all of them tending to interpretations of Iblīs as a tragic figure, and we claim that these interpretations are rooted in the Qur'ānic corpus itself which permits, and even encourages by its own example, a range of theological interpretations of Iblīs and of the nature of evil.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Margaret Widdifield Izutsu [Th.D. 2004]

The Geography of Grieving: Exploring Bereavement with the Compass of Japanese Confucian Rites

This thesis examines the role of Japanese rites known as *hōji* in mediating the personal and social reintegration processes attending bereavement. Since *hōji* are observed at increasing intervals for a potentially unlimited period, they provide a unique opportunity to investigate over a longer period than hitherto attempted the affective dimensions of the bereavement experience within an ongoing social context. Evaluating the anthropological and psychological literature on the subject of bereavement to date, I argue that each discipline has analyzed bereavement experience with insufficient attention to the other, and that neither psychology nor anthropology has paid adequate attention to the religious dimension. Further, ethnographers have been reluctant to question how their subjects appropriate traditional religious discourse. Religious studies of these rites have treated them as part of "ancestor worship" or with attention to their Buddhist and Shinto roots, but only scant attention has been paid to their Confucian elements. This thesis attempts a new style of fieldwork and reflection to integrate the requisite disciplines. It focuses on one family in depth over a period of more than two years following the death of their matriarch. In addition, it discusses interviews over the same time frame with another dozen subjects who are at various points along the infinite continuum governed by these rites with respect to a variety of losses (of spouses, parents, children, cousins, a pet). In addition to extensive description as a participant/observer, I reflect on these "thick descriptions" in the light of the concerns of psychologists and anthropologists, but also with respect to normative issues in both Confucian and Christian traditions (Confucian notions of sincerity and reciprocity and Christian conceptions of God). I approach the work of Confucian philosopher Tu Weiming and Christian theologians Richard R. Niebuhr and Reinhold Niebuhr as both an ethnographer and an Episcopal priest attempting a theologically sound and ethically responsible appreciation of the personal religious and moral experiences undergone by my subjects. Studying classic and modern Confucian texts helps us to see bereavement as a species of opportunity for lifelong moral self-cultivation where the stakes include confronting the pressing question of what is worth dying for.

David Kim [Th.D. 2004]

Politics and Religion: The Religious Significance of Charles Taylor and Judith Butler on Agency

This thesis is an examination of the religious, moral, and spiritual motivations that underpin an understanding of agency as meaningful action. Through a comparative study of the work of Charles Taylor and Judith Butler, two influential approaches (communitarianism and post-structuralism, respectively) in the contemporary

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

debates over the self and agency, the study analyzes the problem of agency as action and freedom, as well as constitutive of moral, cultural, and political identities. In examining the religious salience of these approaches to questions of agency, I highlight the dynamic relationships between identity and the formation of values and norms. In calling agency "melancholic freedom," I focus on agency as arising from the losses and costs to subjectivity in modernity and post-modernity, specifically through the moral cultures that arise through secularization, liberalism, naturalism, and the valorization of difference. These losses are evident in Taylor's depiction of the moral identity of secularized modernity, for which estrangement and subsequent alienation result from a detachment from and lack of clarity about the moral ideals and higher goods, such as benevolence, justice, and freedom, that figure prominently in making judgments of value, worth, and affirmation. These losses also originate in the social, political, cultural, and even psychic alienation that Butler argues is at once the common experience of those who suffer the indignities of racial, gender, class, and sexuality discrimination and hatred, as well as the terrain on which agency is generated. I characterize the work of Taylor and Butler as projects of regenerating agency that require a commitment to the cultivation of religious attitudes and dispositions—in particular, vocation. Through a retrieval of Romantic tropes such as authenticity, irony, and the sublime, I develop a conception of the religious imagination: the faculty that enables the subjects of melancholic freedom to aspire to regenerate and realize agency and moral identities that seek to transcend constraints of varying kinds through the reawakening of a moral attunement to higher goods and values, as well as through the strenuous effort to live within—yet also resist—the oppressive conventions and customs of discrimination, such as sexism, homophobia, and racism.

David A. Lambert [Ph.D. 2004]

Topics in the History of Repentance: From the Hebrew Bible to Early Judaism and Christianity

Modern biblical scholarship has misidentified as penitential a number of religious rites in the Hebrew Bible. This dissertation deals with two examples, including fasting and the very phrase associated with repentance in the Hebrew Bible, namely "to return to the LORD." Far from serving as a means of penitence, fasting constitutes a physical manifestation of affliction, often in conjunction with prayer, designed to attract the compassion of the deity. In its earliest attestations, the phrase "to return to the LORD" appears not in the context of renewed obedience, but of worship. A better translation might be "to have recourse to the deity"—bringing an appeal, not expressing penitence.

This penitential bias has influenced the scholarly interpretation of the Qumran sect and related literature of the late Second Temple period. In actuality, the concept of change through repentance is quite absent from Qumran. Instead, the hope and expectation for an act of divine re-creation of human nature appear to have held

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sway during this period. Distinguishing between these two views of the role of human agency illuminates a variety of practices of the time, such as banishment, hymns of thanksgiving, and immersion.

The emergent concept of repentance not only changed the nature of religious practice; it changed the way in which earlier texts and traditions were read. This development, more than any other, led to the view that the Bible emphasizes penitence. For instance, evidence suggests that scribes and editors transmitting and redacting biblical books interpolated repentance into earlier traditions. So, too, works of biblical interpretation from the late Second Temple and early rabbinic periods consistently construct models of repentance from the decidedly non-penitential narratives of Genesis. Luke's consistent introduction of repentance into his version of the gospel message provides a Christian example of this tendency.

Hiromi Maeda [Ph.D. 2004]

Imperial Authority and Local Shrines: The Yoshida House and the Creation of a Countrywide Shinto Institution in Early Modern Japan

This dissertation examines the formation of central authority that oversaw Shinto priests and institutions during the early modern period (1568–1868). Contrary to the prevailing opinion that Shinto before 1868 lacked an overarching institutional structure and consisted of disparate local cults attached to Buddhist temples, this dissertation argues that the Tokugawa state control of religion led to a degree of institutionalization and standardization of Shinto practice, thereby shaping a common religious and political culture of *kami* worship.

The early modern institutionalization of Shinto priests and shrines was led by the Yoshida house, one of the noble houses that constituted the imperial court. During the fifteenth century, the Yoshida house (specifically, Yoshida Kanetomo) constructed for the first time in history a vision that unified all cults of *kami* and defined the jurisdiction of the imperial council of *kami* affairs (*Jingikan*) over administration of general *kami* affairs. In the name of presiding over the *Jingikan*, the Yoshida house began extending its influence over local shrines by disseminating its esoteric rituals and credentials to local shrine priests. Recipients of various Yoshida Shinto rituals and credentials ranged from emperors to priests of peasant status. In 1665 and 1792, the Yoshida house won *bakufu* patronage that solidified its authority to control the majority of shrine priests. Supported by the *bakufu*, the Yoshida house integrated regionally organized shrine priests into its countrywide priestly organization. By the early nineteenth century, the Yoshida-conferred credentials came to serve as the markers of professional Shinto priests, thereby fostering among shrine priests of diverse social origins the consciousness that they participated in a shared occupation. The Yoshida house's construction of an extensive priestly organization and credentialing system gave shape to an institutional structure into which imperial and popular forms of *kami* worship were integrated.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Aisha Yusef Musa [Ph.D. 2004]

***A Study of Early and Contemporary Muslim Attitudes toward Ḥadīth as Scripture with a Translation of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿi's* Kitāb Jimāʿ al-ʿilm**

The present study scrutinizes the opposition to the use and authority of the Ḥadīth that is recorded in various classical Sunnī Muslim sources spanning several centuries and compares that early opposition to its recent and contemporary counterparts. Scrutiny of relevant materials and consideration of the evolution of the arguments on both sides of the issue reveals the most important bases of opposition to Ḥadīth and elucidates how the Ḥadīth eventually came to hold and maintain, in mainstream Sunnī Islam, the high status they retain in spite of such opposition.

Part I of this work deals with the early controversies over the authority of the Ḥadīth, focusing primarily on the works of al-Shāfiʿi, Ibn Qutayba, and al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī. These three figures address objections to the Ḥadīth more directly and in greater detail than other early sources. Moreover, they shed light on the evolution of the debates over the Ḥadīth from the second through the fifth centuries A.H. In addition to these three authors, supporting evidence found in a variety of other early works, including those dedicated to the issue of problematic Ḥadīth (*mushkil al-athār* or *mushkil al-ḥadīth*), commentaries on the Qur'an (*tafsīr*), prophetic biography/war chronicles (*sīra*/*maghāzī*), biographical dictionaries (*rijāl* works), histories, and the Ḥadīth collections themselves, is also examined.

Part II deals with recent and contemporary challenges to the authority of the Ḥadīth, focusing on the most prominent figures and key arguments that have dominated the debates during the last several decades.

Part III of this work is a translation of al-Shāfiʿi's *Kitāb Jimāʿ al-ʿilm*, which is both the earliest known and also one of the most important works on the authority of the Ḥadīth. The arguments articulated by al-Shāfiʿi in the *Jimāʿ* have remained a cornerstone in mainstream Muslim defense of the authority and necessity of the Ḥadīth in Islam.

Susan Elizabeth Schomburg [Ph.D. 2004]

"Reviving Religion": The Qādirī Sufi Order, Popular Devotion to Sufi Saint Muḥyīuddīn ʿAbdul Qādir al-Gīlāni, and Processes of "Islamization" in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka

Through a multifaceted research strategy incorporating ethnographic, literary, and historical exploration, the dissertation documents living and literary Qādirī traditions and popular traditions of devotion to Sufi saint Muḥyīuddīn ʿAbdul Qādir al-Gīlāni in the Tamil-speaking region of South Asia. Part I, the ethnographic portion of the dissertation, describes the special characteristics and annual *ʿurs* (saint's death anniversary) celebrations at four regional shrine-like sites devoted to the saint, and presents an in-depth description of Qādirī traditions in the Tamil

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Nadu coastal *maraikkāyar* (Arab-settled) town of Kāyalpaṭṭaṇam. Part II presents profiles of important Kāyalpaṭṭaṇam Qādiriyyat from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, as well as Qādirī literary traditions of devotion to Saint Muḥyīuddīn. Part III, "Analyzing Islamization," first highlights the theoretical contributions of Catherine Bell on ritual theory and Paul Connerton on social memory, in an attempt to shed new light on the relationship of ritual practice to historical processes of Islamization. Research findings suggest that commemorative ceremonies, bodily habit, and ritual creativity have played critical roles in "Islamizing" processes. Next, the important role of Tamil Qādirī literary traditions in the Islamization of the Tamil region is analyzed with reference to other South Asian regions. Evidence suggests that Qādirī scholars engaged wholeheartedly in well-established Tamil literary traditions, emulating and adapting extant literary works and genres to fit their own devotional and didactic agendas. Lives of the Kāyalpaṭṭaṇam Qādirī community leaders suggest that basic Islamic scholarship and educational efforts—integrated with a Qādirī Sufi worldview—and an emphasis on Islamic reform, especially reform agendas directed toward Muslim women, preoccupied Qādirī scholars from at least the seventeenth century. Interest in "conversion" of non-Muslims is only faintly discernible in our sources. Finally, a critique of Susan Bayly's *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700–1900* (1989) suggests that that scholar's pioneering study of conversion to Islam in Tamil Nadu presents a valuable, but incomplete, explanation of "Islamization" in the region.

Stanley Marc Sherrod [Th.D. 2004]

That Great and Awful Change: Death and Protestant Practical Theology in the American Northeast, 1700–1900

Historians of death in America have given insufficient attention to the role of Protestant clergy and their churches in mediating the symbols, beliefs, and spiritual practices that enabled survivors to overcome the angst associated with dying, death, and grief. Various theories have been offered to explain the American way of death, including secularization and consensus models. But these models fail to account for the rich religious content and historically varied practices associated with death and dying. In particular, the manner in which practical theology and pastoral practices informed the everyday world of church members who faced the reality of death has been neglected.

This thesis uses three interrelated topics to organize an analysis of ministry to death's survivors: the dead body, funeral rites, and consolation practices. A close reading of various pastoral "death" materials (e.g., funeral sermons, "last days" narratives, cemetery consecration addresses, ministry guides, funeral manuals, and consolation literature) enables the historian to better understand the theological frame of reference and practices of piety that eased the burden of mortality.

Several key shifts become apparent, which represent momentous changes in the American history and culture of death. Initially, the corpse is understood as an

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

object lesson in sin, but it becomes an object of admiration. Funeral rites, which originally served as a time to rehearse fundamental beliefs, develop into a time to commemorate the deceased. Mourning becomes an occasion to focus on "my" grief instead of on the spiritual crisis of "my" dying.

The regional study that I have undertaken, spanning two centuries of pastoral discourse on death, offers a window on the role of ministry practices in shaping the emergence of new ideas about death and bereavement. Rather than passively witnessing the changes that transpired in America's spiritual and cultural landscape of death, both conservative and liberal Protestant clergy worked to keep religious affirmations relevant as churches faced the ambiguity and paradox of death as both friend and foe. An analysis of the historical intersection of practical theology and death lends critical perspective to the contemporary pastoral problem of death.

Neelima Shukla-Bhatt [Ph.D. 2004]

Nectar of Devotion: **Bhakti-rasa** *in the Tradition of Gujarati Saint-Poet Narasinha Mehtā*

An enduring legacy of the devotional (*bhakti*) movement that swept across India during the medieval period is the practice of singing the devotional lyrics composed by regional saint-poets in vernacular languages. The tremendous popularity of the songs has also given rise to hagiographic narratives about these saint-poets. Together, the songs and the hagiography of a saint-poet form a regional tradition of *bhakti*, linked to other such traditions through shared elements. In the spread of the *bhakti* movement, networks of such traditions have played a pivotal role. This dissertation is a study of the tradition of Narasinha Mehtā, the most celebrated saint-poet of Gujarat in western India, who is believed to have lived in the fifteenth century C.E.

In addition to being an important regional tradition, Narasinha's tradition, being non-sectarian in nature, represents a significant current within the *bhakti* tradition that is more ecumenical in its spirit than the sectarian *bhakti* traditions that define themselves more narrowly on the basis of theological distinctions, such as the conception of the divine as having form (*saguṇa*) or without form (*nirguṇa*), or worship of Śiva or Viṣṇu. Providing translations of Narasinha's lyrics, and examining various components of his tradition, this study draws attention to the inclusive nature of the non-sectarian *bhakti* traditions, followed by a large number of Hindus.

As its main theoretical category, this dissertation employs the indigenous concept of *bhakti-rasa*, which recognizes a link between the religious (*bhakti*) and the aesthetic (*rasa*) experiences. The term *bhakti-rasa*, expounded elaborately in sophisticated *bhakti* treatises, is also a commonly used term in a number of Indic languages. Its use as an analytical category throws light on the functional links among the aesthetic forms—poetry, music, and narrative—that make a saint-poet tradition. Through an examination of the three components of Narasinha's tradition using the concept of *bhakti-rasa*, this thesis draws attention to the contribution of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

performative genres in the emergence of the meanings of religious texts. In employing this Indian concept in combination with the methods of theological studies, literary analysis, and ethnomusicology, this dissertation argues for usefulness of indigenous categories in the study of religious practices.

Valerie A. Stein [Th.D. 2004]

Anti-Cultic Theology in Christian Biblical Interpretation: A Study of Isaiah 66:1–4 and Its Reception

Although both Jews and Christians consider the Hebrew Bible sacred scripture, they often differ on the interpretation of its text. In fact, throughout history it has been common for Christians to interpret Hebrew Bible passages in a way that criticizes or condemns Jewish religious practices. This dissertation examines how theological factors have shaped Christian anti-Jewish biblical exegesis through a study of the history of interpretation of Isa 66:1–4.

Many Christian interpreters have understood this passage as a prophetic indictment against both temple and sacrifice and have adopted its polemic for use against their own theological opponents. As a result, theological controversy accounts in part for different understandings of this text throughout the history of its reception. Through a critical analysis of representative interpretations of Isa 66:1–4 from the Patristic Era, the writings of Martin Luther, and the Modern Era, I demonstrate that the anti-cultic interpretation of Isa 66:1–4 is itself theologically motivated.

I argue that a historical reading shows that Isa 66:1–4 is not criticizing temples or sacrifice as illegitimate in themselves. Rather, the theological position represented in these verses is aligned with the temple cult and criticizes *syncretic* cultic practices. The contrast is not between material and spiritual worship, but between God's nature and human nature, God's choices and human choices. The problem is not cultic worship per se, and the text itself is certainly not anti-Jewish. Instead, the text is addressing a theological controversy embedded in issues of postexilic reconstruction. The prophet is criticizing specific individuals (likely of a neo-Canaanite group) within his community in early post-exilic Judah for what he believes to be abhorrent worship. He effectively casts his opponents as God's opponents.

This dissertation illuminates theologically biased interpretations of one particular passage in the history of Christian interpretation and offers new possibilities for understanding those verses. It also sheds light on anti-cultic and anti-Jewish biblical interpretation overall and calls for a re-evaluation of such readings.

Henrietta Lovejoy Wiley [Ph.D. 2004]

Gather to My Feast: YHWH as Sacrificer in the Biblical Prophets

This dissertation is a study of four prophetic texts that employ an image of the god of Israel sacrificing his enemies. In Isaiah 34, YHWH places Edom under the war

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ḥērem; in Jeremiah 46, Egypt is the sacrifice; in Ezekiel 39, the figure Gog is the victim; and in Zephaniah 1, the elite of Judah are consecrated for ritual slaughter. In all these oracles, the author describes the destruction of an enemy army or of Judahite apostates as a *zeḇaḥ*, the Hebrew word that overwhelmingly signifies blood sacrifice, and YHWH is the agent of the ritual.

The chief purpose of this dissertation is to establish that the ritual connotations of the image are rhetorically significant. A second task is to explicate the image, its theological underpinnings, and its rhetorical force. In order to understand the meaning of the image of YHWH as a *sacrificer*, I examine both terminology and descriptions of Israelite cult offerings in an effort to determine whether there was an overarching category that we might call sacrifice, and where its boundaries might be. I determine that ancient Israelite sacrifice is the annihilation of a perishable offering in the context of a devotee-deity relationship, performed at a time and in a place marked as appropriate for sacrifice by the deity.

From there I argue that the war *ḥērem*, the martial practice of annihilating a defeated people and their property as a means of devoting them to the deity, is the explicit or implicit context of the four passages, and qualifies on its own as a kind of sacrifice. As a result of these analyses, I conclude that in all four oracles, YHWH's sacrifice is a means of maintaining relationship between the human and the divine, expressed through similar forms with similar meanings as those associated with sacrifice performed by humans. In each of the four prophetic moments, YHWH performs the necessary ritual action when his people can not or will not.

Francis Ching Wah Yip [Th.D. 2004]

Toward a Critique of Capitalism as Quasi-Religion: A Study of Paul Tillich's Critical Interpretation of Capitalism and Modernity

This dissertation paves the way for constructing a religious critique of global capitalistic modernity through a reconstruction and evaluation of Paul Tillich's critical interpretation of capitalism and modernity, which is found to be a persistent theme continuing from his early to his later works. I examine Tillich's critique of capitalism and show how he is indebted to Marx and goes beyond him as well. I analyze Tillich's theology of culture and his theological critique of capitalism as demonic. His idea of the demonic as a structure of evil with an ambiguous union of creativity and destructiveness enables a nuanced critique of capitalism that, I argue, is more adequate than the usual critique of capitalism as idolatry.

After his immigration to the United States, Tillich sharpened his focus on the cultural dimension of capitalism, a dimension I identify as cultural modernity. I reconstruct Tillich's critical interpretation of cultural modernity, with autonomy, self-sufficient finitude, technical reason, objectification, and dehumanization as key features. His idea of theonomy is ingeniously formulated as both the critique of and answer to these problems of modernity. As a result, Tillich's assessment of modernity is less pessimistic than that of Weber and the Frankfurt School. All

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of these factors give Tillich contemporary relevance for the critique of global capitalistic modernity.

Drawing upon the insights of Jürgen Moltmann and Émile Durkheim, I argue that Tillich's religious critique of capitalism and modernity can be strengthened in three ways: by a greater emphasis on the material-economic dimension, by moving from a Eurocentric to a global-critical perspective, and by adopting a social conception of quasi-religion. In my constructive proposal, I critically interpret capitalism as a quasi-religion in the Durkheimian sense, that is, as a unified system of beliefs and practices in relation to sacred things, including the market. Its beliefs construct a meaning-giving sacred order (including the social imaginary of the market) which constitutes social—even global—solidarity, and its practices reinforce such solidarity. In effect, capitalism functions as a global civil religion and as the religious substance of modern society. Features of cultural modernity thus constitute expressions of this religious substance. I conclude by highlighting the contributions of my constructive proposal and outlining my own theological response.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816004000811 Published online by Cambridge University Press