

©1992 The Institute of Mind and Behavior, Inc.  
 The Journal of Mind and Behavior  
 Spring 1992, Volume 13, Number 2  
 Pages 193-194  
 ISSN 0271-0137

**Current Studies on Rituals: Perspectives for the Psychology of Religion.**  
 Hans-Gunter Heimbock and H. Barbara Boudewijnse (Editors). Amsterdam and  
 Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1991, 197 pages, \$65.00 hard.

*Reviewed by T.L. Brink, Crafton Hills College*

---

This is a well edited and well done book of 12 chapters. The editors and authors are scholars from the Netherlands. One nice editorial touch is a common bibliography. Although there is no index, each article is so highly internally organized, it is very easy to find something specific.

The first section of the book includes five chapters which review and apply the theories of anthropologist Victor Turner. The approach of these chapters is qualitative and theoretical. Boudewijnse reviews Turner's work on the Ndembu and his concepts of liminality, rites of passage, and the tension between individuality and the maintenance of social order. Geerts applies the theories of Turner (and pragmatist philosopher C.S. Peirce) to the celebration of the Eucharist by Dutch Catholics. Heimbock reviews psychoanalytic approaches to ritual (e.g., Freud, Winnicott, and Jung), tying them into the rites of passage theory by Van Gennep and Turner. Faber also takes a psychoanalytic approach (e.g., Freud, Erikson) to the Christian liturgy. Wikstrom ties in the works of historians of religion such as Otto and Eliade, taking more of a phenomenological perspective.

The next section contains three well done empirical studies: all questionnaire based. Janssen, de Hart, and den Draak quantify the decline of rituals, such as prayer, in Dutch youth. The next chapter, by van de Lans and Geerts, looks at the interaction of variables such as age, gender, educational level, degree of religious commitment, and liturgical setting (geographical location) on "community consciousness." The conclusion was that "the liturgical environment hardly contributes to the variance" (p. 102). Vischer and Stern examine family rituals: celebrations, traditions, and interactions. They found that for thirty-one church involved married couples, there was high ritualization and a balance between tradition and spontaneity.

The last section contains four chapters and is entitled "From Christian to Psychological Interpretation." Reich considers the moral dimension of rituals and social structure, using the theoretical structure of anthropologist Mary Douglas and the example of the 1985 Live Aid Rock Marathon. Ouwehand examines women's rituals in feminist church groups. Vandermeersch views the secularization of religious rituals as psychotherapy. (He concludes that psychotherapy definitely uses rituals, but

he could not find the myths.) The next chapter, by van Uden and Pieper examines the motives of Dutch pilgrims journeying to Lourdes, and concludes that younger pilgrims have more social motives, while older pilgrims have more spiritual motives.

This book will clearly be of interest to anthropologists and psychologists studying religion. Despite the fact that English is not the first language of the authors or editors, the writing is clear. The theoretical level is basic enough for undergraduates, yet the research applications are first class scholarship.