

Religious Experience through Practice

Prayer, Meditation, Ritual, and Ceremony



Overview

- Explore 2 specific practices in depth.
 - Prayer
 - Meditation
- Explore the psychological aspects of ceremony and ritual



Religious Practices

- What are religious “practices”?
- James (*Varieties*)
 - “Heart of [Christian] religious practices”
 - Prayer
 - Confession
 - Sacrifice
- Other important/common religious practices?

Prayer

- What is “Prayer”?

- Types of Prayer
 - Poloma
 - Hood



“Prayer does not change God, but changes him [or her] who prays.” -Soren Kierkegaard



Research on Prayer

- Galton (1872)
 - Correlational experiments on efficacy of petitionary prayer.
 - Investigated the health and length of life of religious versus nonreligious individuals.
- Byrd (1988)
 - Effects of prayer on coronary patients
 - Method and Results



Research on Prayer

- Leibovici (2001)
 - Effects of *retroactive* prayer on blood-infection patients
 - Method and Results



Research on Prayer

- Bensen et al (2006)
 - Effects of intercessory prayer on cardiac bypass surgery patients
 - 1802 people in three conditions
 - Uncertain, did not receive prayer
 - Uncertain, received prayer
 - Certain, received prayer
 - Results
 - No effects for prayer
 - Certain of prayer group had more complications



Research on Prayer

“There is a great difference between prayer that is treated as a magical, mechanical trick to bypass the laws of the universe and prayer that is ‘a dynamic harmony within and without that heals conflict and loneliness in renewing one’s sense of belonging to a larger wholeness.’ ” (Johnson, 1953, quoted in Wulff, p. 172)

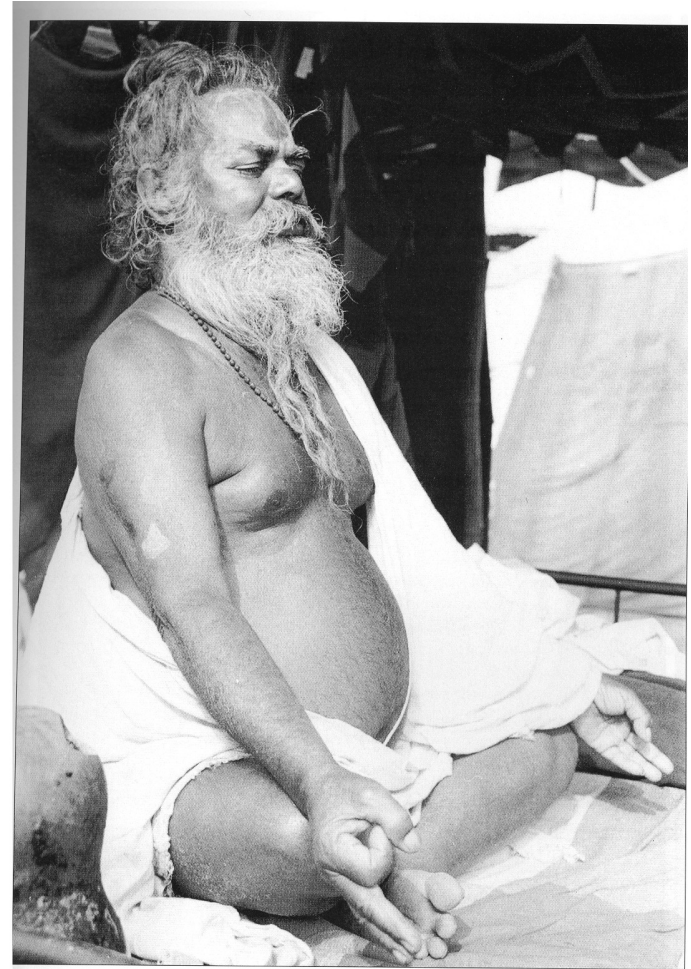


Prayer and Subjective Well-being

- Multi-dimensional understanding of prayer
- Importance of studying the subjective
- Correlates of prayer
 - Existential quality of life
 - Feelings of unity
 - Absence of negative affect
 - General quality of life

Meditation

- ❑ What is meditation?
- ❑ Personal experiences with meditation
- ❑ Applications in psychology
- ❑ Types of Meditation





Meditation

- Yoga: defocusing, emptying the mind.
- Zen: focusing on the “proper (or real) things.”
 - Practice related to brain wave
 - Masters can reliably detect quality of meditation
- Transcendental Meditation (TM)
 - Practice only
- Other forms of meditation



Religious Ceremony and Ritual

- Aspects of religious ceremony or ritual.
 - Extensive use of symbolism, liturgy, and tradition.
 - Often uses basic, “natural” patterns.
 - Typically centers on a time of transition.
 - Attempts to stimulate all five senses.



Religious Ceremony and Ritual

- Potential psychological uses/benefits of ritual.
 - Attempts to express that which is incomprehensible.
 - Attempts to align group with larger mysteries or truths.
 - Describes a change in a state of affairs.
 - Aids in expression and moderation of religious emotions.
 - Transmits information important to a culture or group.