

Towards Cultural Psychology of Religion: Principles, Approaches, Applications

Jacob A. van Belzen

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Towards Cultural Psychology of Religion: Principles, Approaches, Applications Jacob A. van Belzen The aims pursued in this book are quite modest. The text is not an introduction in the traditional sense to any psychological subdiscipline or field of application, nor does it present anything essentially new. Rather, it shows 'work in progress', as it attempts to contribute to an integration of two differently structured, but already existing fields within psychology. In order to explain this, it is probably best to say a few words about how the book came into being and about what it hopes to achieve. As a project, the volume owes very much to others. While lecturing in places ranging from South Africa to Canada and from California through European co- tries to Korea, colleagues have often urged me to come up with a volume on 'c- tural psychology of religion'. For reasons that should become clear in the text, I feel uncomfortable with such a demand. To my understanding, there exists no single cultural psychology of religion. Rather, there are ever expanding numbers of div- gent types of psychologies, some of which are applied to understanding religious aspects of human lives or to researching specific religious phenomena, while others are not. Within this heterogeneous field that is, correctly or not, still designated as 'psychology', there are also many approaches that are sometimes referred to as 'cultural psychology' or as 'culturally sensitive psychologies'. It would be wor- while applying many of these to research on religious phenomena, but at present not too many are in fact so applied.



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