

IACSR 2015 submission

Title: *(Not) only the circumcised may circumcise*
Theological correctness and intuitive religiosity in Judaism

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Theological correctness and intuitive religiosity in Judaism

A system of religious rituals that lacks special-agent rituals is predicted by McCauley and Lawson 2002 to exhibit the *tedium effect*. It will be characterized by Whitehouse's *doctrinal mode*, unless some splinter group reintroduces *imagistic mode* elements. Judaism has been argued to lack special-agent rituals, and hence we ask how it copes with the tedium effect.

Using circumcision as an example, we shall explore various ways. In the theologically correct (or "halakhically correct") realm, circumcision is shown not to be a special-agent ritual: a special-patient ritual at best, if one generalizes the framework of Lawson and McCauley 1990. Then, mainstream rabbinic texts will be contrasted to three alternative sources. These tend to introduce ideas that jointly facilitate mentally to conceive circumcision as a typical special-agent ritual. Later *midrashim* are aggadic (non-halakhic) collections, which will be argued to display a stronger influence of intuitive religiosity within rabbinic literature. Secondly, popular understanding of circumcision, unsurprisingly, also displays the same influence. Third, non-rabbanite "splinter groups" seem to experiment with alternative approaches to circumcision, as will be demonstrated in Anan ben David's *Book of Precepts*. While this experimentation is consistent with the proposal of Whitehouse, McCauley and Lawson, neither Anan's halakhic codex, nor the later Karaite movement can be viewed as a typical "imagistic splinter group".

In sum, Judaism challenges cognitive theories of religion. Not fully corroborating them, a detailed analysis of Jewish rituals enables us to reconsider CSR's concepts.