

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Psychology and the Christian Life by T. W. Pym

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**PSYCHOLOGY AND
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

Psychology and the Christian Life

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TO
MY WIFE

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Preface

This book is intended to be simply an introduction to the study of psychology in its application to the Christian way of life. Each chapter touches upon subjects which deserve a volume to themselves.

Chapter I is the barest skeleton of general psychology, admittedly only just sufficient to give to the beginner an idea of its method and of some of its principles. Chapter II does no more than open the door to the possibilities of psychology applied outside religion. In Chapter III I have omitted the deliberate criticism which the teaching of the New Nancy School might seem to require before it was applied to Christian teaching on Faith. Nor in this chapter is the psychology of Faith considered except in one limited aspect. Throughout the constant references made in Chapters IV and V to the new psychology and psycho-analysis I have intentionally refrained from attempting to divide and further define the "sub-conscious," and from using such words as "sublimate" or "complex." (Apart from a desire to avoid difficult and technical language I find in the new psychology many phrases or words used

freely but seldom with exactly the same content by different psychologists. "Complex" is just such a word.) Again in these chapters neither sin nor temptation are considered fully; examples of both are given to illustrate certain principles; further application of those principles can be easily made by the reader.

Chapters VI and VII, dealing with the Personality of Jesus Christ, must seem, after what has been written during the centuries since His earthly life, superficial and inadequate, chiefly because of their omissions. In Chapter VIII I have not tried to do more than illustrate the possible application of psychological common sense to life in general.

Some of this book's omissions can be repaired by anyone willing to read one or more of the books mentioned in the bibliography on page 172. The object of this book is to provide something in the nature of a summary of psychological theory, in so far as it bears on Christian Faith and ethics, for the use of those who have not the time to read deeply in psychology yet need the help that psychology can give.

The full application of psychology to Christianity obviously demands more exact scholarship and greater scientific learning than any page of this volume displays. It is strange that no such book has yet been written; when it comes to be written it is

bound to be, in language, length and price, beyond the range of the ordinary man and woman. I have, therefore, done my best to fill a need which I believe to be real and urgent, but I am also conscious of the inadequacy of this book to its subject.

The new psychology is developing so rapidly that it may seem risky as yet to attempt, on the foundation of its conclusions or inconclusiveness, to build anything into the fabric of religion. I believe that the risk must be run. Although we cannot afford to adopt as axioms in religion what are only disputed theories in the realm of psychology, neither can we afford to disregard and to neglect the use of discoveries in this science simply through the fear that the scientific conclusions of this year may be modified by those of another. However, with one exception, I hope I may fairly claim to have taken as a basis for discussion moderate rather than extreme theories in psychology. Admittedly in following Coué and Baudouin in Chapter III I have attached much greater importance to the influence and power of reflective auto-suggestion than most psychotherapists would probably allow.

On many points the psychologists differ so considerably that one is bound to choose between alternate theories; as for instance, in the adoption of "self," "sex" and "social" (or "herd") as the three most fundamental or primary instincts in man.