

**PUBLIC WORSHIP: A
STUDY IN
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
RELIGION**

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Public Worship: A Study in the Psychology of Religion by John P. Hylan

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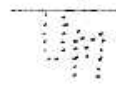
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PUBLIC WORSHIP

A Study in the Psychology of Religion

BY
John P. Hylan
JOHN P. HYLAN



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	I
INTRODUCTION	5
THE SABBATH	15
WORSHIP	46
CONCLUSION	88
APPENDIX	92

PREFACE.

The present study belongs to a somewhat distinct type of psychological investigation. Not being a laboratory study in the narrower sense of the term, it has not the restricted area and exactitude which laboratory studies usually lay claim to. In a search after scientific stability, the psychology of our present time is inclined to ignore the deeper interests and broader bearing that characterized the "science of the soul." It is said of the older psychology, which was designed for the senior class in educational institutions, that its study marked a very noticeable attainment in mental development and moral insight on the part of the students. A statement which would have to be made with many qualifications if applied to the experimental psychology of to-day. No one who appreciates the demands placed upon modern psychology is likely to ignore the scientific accuracy for which it hungers and thirsts as no other branch of knowledge with which I am acquainted. But while this accuracy is very admirable in itself, it has been applied to but a very small region of the subject as a whole, and the effort to do this has caused the rest of the field to be neglected.

It may be that a considerable portion of psychology will refuse practicable treatment by laboratory methods, and that, for this reason, a new method will need to be developed. This need not lack in scientific accuracy, although not expressible in diagrams of brain

tracks or mathematical formulas. Its first aim should be to remain true to the inspiration expressed in "the science of the soul," and then to reduce that science to as exact terms as possible.

Unfortunately there is a very large class of people prejudiced against such a treatment of their deeper mental life. They do not object to seeing their sensations and associations, as it were, impaled and dissected. But when it comes to a similar treatment of their beliefs and affections they call a halt, for this admits to their inner sanctuary. In Greece there was a law which made the dissection of the dead a crime, and the discovery of the circulation of the blood caused Harvey to be branded as a heretic. It was believed that the human body was a sanctuary which science should not defile. Unfortunately, this sanctuary was prone to disorder and needed the ministrations of a priest. It came finally to be understood that the best theological preparation for such a priest was a scientific training in medicine, and this accordingly is what they came to have.

In a similar way the mind is subject to thirsts and nauseas, heart-burns, disorders and epidemics. If human happiness is at stake, it is not difficult to see that more is sacrificed through the maladies of the mind than through those of the body; and yet, what can be prescribed for such mental and moral afflictions? Those who know most are hardly advanced beyond the medicine-man who paints his face and performs incantations with a rattlesnake to cure indigestion. It is the need of meeting this grave state of things which will force psychology to expand and deepen to the status of a comprehensive and well-defined applied

science, for not till it reaches this state will it find its proper sphere of influence.

Another disadvantage in the way of attaining this goal is the fact that it is the every-day phenomena which are the most important, because they most concern the questions of practical life; yet it is for this reason that they are the most difficult of observation. It is instructive to note that astronomy was one of the first, and perhaps the first, of the sciences to be developed. It is the things which most readily differentiate themselves from us that require the least effort to observe. Since astronomy received its impetus in the direction of scientific development, other classes of phenomena, physics, zoölogy, physiology, etc., which have approached nearer and nearer the observer have, in their turn, received attention. Similarly, the most of psychology is yet engrossed with the abnormal, the striking, and sensations which are so readily identified with objects apart from ourselves, for the more ordinary phenomena have come to be woven into our habits so early that, like the blind spot in the eye, they are unconsciously allowed for and ignored without further thought. A considerable confidence in the significance of the network of our habitual life thus becomes necessary, so that, like the philosopher's stone, it may be held to the light and gazed at until what at first appears as a tangle of unrelated elements may take the form of a significant and interrelated whole. It is a clarifying process of this kind that the following pages aim to effect.

It is, then, with a feeling of confidence in the aim and nature of the present study that one whose interests