

**THE LIVING FORCES OF THE GOSPEL.
THE LIVING CHRIST AND DYING
HEATHENISM; THE EXPERIENCES OF A
MISSIONARY IN ANIMISTIC
HEATHENDOM. [NEW YORK]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649638161

The Living Forces of the Gospel. The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism; The Experiences of a Missionary in Animistic Heathendom. [New York] by Joh. Warneck & Neil Buchanan

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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JOH. WARNECK & NEIL BUCHANAN

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The Living Forces of the Gospel

The Living Christ
and
Dying Heathenism

*The Experiences of a Missionary
in Animistic Heathendom*

By
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Authorized Translation from the Third German Edition

By
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NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THIS book is a psychological study based upon the author's experience as a missionary among the animistic heathen of the Indian Archipelago. There has been much unanimity among German missionaries as to his conclusions, and the author would take advantage of this translation of his work to appeal to all English speaking missionaries, and those interested in the work and literature of missions, for their criticism and observations. He found that the conversion of heathen in Netherland India was effected by stages; it would be extremely valuable to him to know whether the experience of missionaries in Africa, in Oceania, in Central America, in India and China are similar to his own. He would like especially to learn the minds of missionaries on the following questions: Whether the first thing in the Gospel that attracts is deliverance from the fear of demons; whether the sense of sin and the longing for forgiveness is a later growth; whether Christ is accepted first of all as a Deliverer from the devil, then from the state of fear in which their lives are spent, and last of all as the Saviour from sin? Are the features of Animism as he has described them in the first part of his book essentially the same among other peoples? Similar notions of the soul are found in China, Africa, Suriname, even in Greenland, and many other places. It would seem as if Animism were the primitive form of heathenism, maintaining itself, as in China and India to this hour, amid all the refinements of civilisation. The study of Greek and old German Religions exhibit the same animistic features. The essence of heathenism seems to be, not the denial of God but complete estrangement from Him. The existence of God is everywhere known and a certain veneration given Him. But

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He is far away, and is therefore all but ruled out of the religious life. His place is taken by demons, who are feared and worshipped. The author would esteem it a favour were any missionaries to communicate with him (Missionshaus, Barmen, Germany) their experiences and thoughts on any of these matters.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD GERMAN EDITION

THE favourable reception given to his psychological study of missions strengthens the author's conviction that foreign missions have something to say to the home Church and to theology, which is ever called upon to consider the movements of the times. The essays which appeared in Kählers "Angewandten Dogmen," almost contemporaneously with this book, called upon missionaries to prepare their experiences amid their conflict with heathenism for the use of theologians. The "Living Forces of the Gospel" was quite unconsciously a modest answer to that invitation. It is very gratifying to missionaries to find that theological speculations about missions agree so strikingly with their practical experience. I have observed with increasing surprise and delight how a believing study of the Bible supports the theory and practice of missions, and how the experience of missionaries confirms convictions which such students have already reached. That is a suggestive fact of which I have not been able in this treatise to make any use, but which I may turn to account in a later work.

As my enquiry was breaking fresh ground I was ready to welcome any new facts or criticisms from the experience of my colleagues. However, they have been in essential agreement with me. In this edition I have attended to some minor objections and have changed phrases that were misunderstood. Too little time has elapsed since the appearance of the book to allow colleagues of the mission field to pass any detailed judgment upon it. It is to them mainly that I look for help in dealing with the questions which I have raised.

From another quarter, however, I have been counselled to

give a more thorough and dispassionate study to problems in the history of religion, especially in view of the results in the science of comparative religions, *i.e.* to recognise that the idea of evolution at present ruling the scientific world must also rule in the investigation of religion. I am not so unacquainted with the literature of the subject as my critics suppose. But as I have come to different results it could not lie in the plan of my work to show any agreement with the religious and philosophical presuppositions of those men, for whom I have a high esteem. I had and have no desire for controversy; my object is simply constructive. I described animistic heathenism as concretely as I could; I confined myself strictly to that. I set down facts of my own observation and those of other colleagues. I began with the facts of experience; then I drew inferences from them. If these do not agree with the dominant hypothesis of evolution, that is due to the brutal facts and not to the "religious and historical presuppositions" of the observer. I do not deny that something can be said for the idea of evolution in the religions of mankind, but the study of Animism, with which I have long been familiar as an eyewitness, did not lead me to that idea. Rather the conviction which I arrived at is, that animistic heathenism is not a transition stage to a higher religion. I think I have adduced sufficient facts to establish that, and facts do not vanish away before hypothesis. Let them produce facts to prove that animistic heathenism somewhere and somehow evolved upwards towards a purer knowledge of God, real facts, not imaginary constructions of such an evolution. Any form of Animism known to me has no lines leading to perfection, but only incontestable marks of degeneration.

I have worked as a missionary for many years in intimate contact with thousands of the adherents of animistic heathenism, and I have been convinced that the determining force of that heathenism is hostile to God. I was forced in a hand to hand conflict with it to consider the powers at work therein. Behind the animistic notions which interest the observer are mighty forces; whether these come from above

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or from beneath cannot be decided *a priori*. The missionary comes sooner or later to feel them. And the attitude of heathenism towards the Christian religion, always hostile, suggests that it divines an enemy, not a superior brother. As a matter of fact, Christianity succeeds only when, after much deep ploughing, it has turned up a fresh human soil. The best converts from heathenism are its severest judges.

This stern estimate of heathenism does not forbid the missionary, to whom a thorough knowledge of his people's religion is of the first importance, collecting with care and recognising frankly as of Divine origin whatever it contains of longing for God, of moral feeling, and of desire for better things, nay rather it demands it. I thought I had made that sufficiently plain in my book. But in heathenism the gold of the divine thoughts becomes dross. At best what true thoughts are there are an undercurrent; in no case do they afford a decided religious or slowly ennobling motive. I have not devoted a special chapter to these religious values; I thought they were more likely to be rightly estimated when placed in their proper connection. Who would care, as a missionary among the heathen, to lead a life of conflict, of disappointment and privation, unless he were convinced that the *vox vera evangelii* would be heard even in the most depraved heathen heart; unless he believed that even the Animists because they are *ék θεῶν* are also *εἰς θεοῦ*.

The author's intention was to set the darker powers of heathenism over against the quickening forces of the Gospel. He felt impelled to do so by experiences similar to those which befell those earlier missionaries, who determined to declare to the Church at Antioch, "All that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27; xv. 3, 4, 12). It is written of them: "They caused great joy to all the brethren." To-day as of old the victory is with the Gospel, that Gospel of which the great Apostle to the Gentiles, from a rich experience, testifies that it works *οὐκ ἐν λόγῳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ὀνόματι καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ* (1 Thess. i. 5).

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