

**RELIGION AND
MEDICINE, NO. 3, THE
ENERGIES OF MEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649233458

Religion and Medicine, No. 3, The Energies of men by William James

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM JAMES

**RELIGION AND
MEDICINE, NO. 3, THE
ENERGIES OF MEN**

Religion and Medicine

PUBLICATION NO. 3

The Energies of Men

By

William James

Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University



NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

1908

Lr 5

*And they shall call his name Emmanuel;
which, being interpreted, is, God with us.*

THIRD IMPRESSION

Reprinted by kind permission of AMERICAN MAGAZINE

Copyright 1907 by
AMERICAN MAGAZINE

EMMANUEL HUAL

R39
no. 3
1908

INTRODUCTORY.

THOUGH it would seem that the sane and simple message of this essay could not be misconstrued, the fact that it has been wholly misunderstood in newspaper comment warns us that it is necessary to preface it by stating that it does not counsel all persons to drive themselves at all times beyond the limits of ordinary endurance, that it is not a gospel of overstrain nor an advocate of the use of alcohol and opium as stimulants in emergencies.

It states that "second wind" is a reality in the mental as in the physical realm and that it can be found and used when needed—nothing more.

Publication Committee.

I certify that this is Publication No. 3 of the Emmanuel Church Publications on Religion and Medicine.

ELWOOD WORCESTER.

EMMANUEL CHURCH
Boston, Mass.
July, 1908

65652

The Energies of Men

EVERYONE knows what it is to start a piece of work, either intellectual or muscular, feeling stale—or *oold*, as an Adirondack guide once put it to me. And everybody knows what it is to “warm up” to his job. The process of warming up gets particularly striking in the phenomenon known as “second wind.” On usual occasions we make a practice of stopping an occupation as soon as we meet the first effective layer (so to call it) of fatigue. We have then walked, played, or worked “enough,” so we desist. That amount of fatigue is an efficacious obstruction on this side of which our usual life is cast. But if an unusual necessity forces us to press onward, a surprising thing occurs. The fatigue gets worse up to a certain critical point, when gradually or suddenly it passes away, and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue-obstacle usually obeyed. There may be layer after layer of this experience. A third and a fourth “wind” may supervene. Mental activity shows the phenomenon as well as physical, and in exceptional cases we may find,

THE ENERGIES OF MEN

beyond the very extremity of fatigue-distress, amounts of ease and power that we never dreamed ourselves to own,—sources of strength habitually not taxed at all, because habitually we never push through the obstruction, never pass those early critical points.

Getting One's Second Wind.

For many years I have mused on the phenomenon of second wind, trying to find a physiological theory. It is evident that our organism has stored-up reserves of energy that are ordinarily not called upon, but that may be called upon: deeper and deeper strata of combustible or explosible material, discontinuously arranged, but ready for use by anyone who probes so deep, and repairing themselves by rest as well as do the superficial strata. Most of us continue living unnecessarily near our surface. Our energy-budget is like our nutritive budget. Physiologists say that a man is in "nutritive equilibrium" when day after day he neither gains nor loses weight. But the odd thing is that this condition may obtain on astonishingly different amounts of food. Take a man in nutritive equilibrium, and systematically increase or les-

THE ENERGIES OF MEN

sen his rations. In the first case he will begin to gain weight, in the second case to lose it. The change will be greatest on the first day, less on the second, less still on the third; and so on, till he has gained all that he will gain, or lost all that he will lose, on that altered diet. He is now in nutritive equilibrium again, but with a new weight; and this neither lessens nor increases because his various combustion-processes have adjusted themselves to the changed dietary. He gets rid, in one way or another, of just as much N, C, H, etc., as he takes in *per diem*.

Just so one can be in what I might call "efficiency-equilibrium" (neither gaining nor losing power when once the equilibrium is reached) on astonishingly different quantities of work, no matter in what direction the work may be measured. It may be physical work, intellectual work, moral work, or spiritual work.

Keeping Up a Faster Pace.

Of course there are limits: the trees don't grow into the sky. But the plain fact remains that men the world over possess amounts of resource which only very exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use. But the very same