



**AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE STUDY OF  
JACOB BOEHME'S WRITINGS**

**A. J. PENNY**

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**BY  
A. J. PENNY**

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*An Introduction to the Study of Jacob Boehme's Writings By A. J. Penny.*

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## WHO WAS JACOB BOEHME?

One of the most remarkable cases of spiritual mediumship, in the highest sense; of a man chosen by God for revealing knowledge that he himself had never sought, and did not understand, while at the urgent dictates of an invisible guide he wrote what was communicated to him. The saying of our Lord that as "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit," is true of the knowledge born of the Spirit also: it was never more strikingly proved than in the case of Boehme. To this unlearned shoemaker, living more than two centuries ago in an obscure town of Germany, we owe revelations so profound, so various, and so divinely central, that while in nothing do they contradict the Holy Scriptures, in many points they supplement, in many more they explain and emphatically confirm, its teaching. The Bible would not have for me half the depth of meaning it has if this more recent messenger of God had not poured light on some of its most perplexing passages: a light to which human reason could never have won, but for which he had unconsciously made himself ready by intense singleness of purpose in seeking the one only refuge for the soul of man.

"I never desired," he says in one of his letters, "to know anything of the divine mystery, much less understood the way how to seek or find it; I knew nothing of it, as is the condition of poor laymen in their simplicity. I sought only after the heart of Jesus Christ, that I might hide myself from the wrathful anger of God and the violent assaults of the devil; and I besought the Lord earnestly for His holy spirit and His grace that He would be pleased to bless and guide me in Him."<sup>1</sup>

So seeking he found. With that ardent and humble approach to "the Centre" — to which he so often invites others to follow — he won access to the unsearchable riches of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These were opened to him in such unwonted measure, that to this day they have not been even approximately estimated at their true value; and a future generation will wonder why, when such writings were extant, anyone could think that inspiration from on high ended with the writers of the New Testament, or that the promise of guidance into all truth, far more than the immediate followers of Jesus Christ were able to bear, had been broken, and eighteen centuries pass away with no further utterance of the spirit of truth.

But for facts. Born in 1575, Boehme was as a youth apprenticed to a shoemaker at Gorlitz in Saxony; married to a daughter of a butcher in 1594, and had four sons, all of whom he brought up to some trade. While still a lad, alone in his master's shop, busily sweeping it out, we read of his having an interview with a mysterious stranger,

<sup>1</sup> Epistle II., par. 6.

who, after buying a pair of shoes, spoke very impressively to him of his duties and his future, and this is supposed by his biographers to have influenced his conduct, making him more zealous in all religious exercises, more studious of the Bible, more earnest in striving to live blamelessly. The natural consequence of such endeavor was a keener sense of sin, with that tumult of conflicting desires and reactionary evil impulse which so often precedes the outburst of victorious light.

Truly it is darkest before the dawning with very many, as Boehme seems to have experienced. But while he tells us of the fierce onsets of the enemies of the soul, he cannot find words glad enough or expressive enough to describe what followed. "I wrestled, in God's assistance, a good space of time for the crown of victory, which I afterwards, with the breaking open of the gate of the deep in the centre of Nature, attained with very great joy."<sup>2</sup>

At the age of twenty-five he was first consciously overtaken by "the Spirit of the Light, which loved him exceedingly."<sup>3</sup> Walking one day in the fields, the mystery of creation was opened to him suddenly, and, as he narrates, "in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at an university, at which I did exceedingly admire, and I knew not how it happened to me; and thereupon I turned my heart to praise God for it. For I saw and knew the Being of all beings, the Byss and Abyss, also the birth or eternal generation of the Holy Trinity; the descent and original of this world, and of all creatures through the divine wisdom; I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds, namely, the divine, angelical, and paradisaical world; and then the dark world, being the original of nature to fire; and then, thirdly, the external and visible world, being a procreation or external birth; or as a substance spoken forth from both the internal and spiritual worlds; and I saw and knew the whole being<sup>4</sup> in the evil and in the good, and the mutual original and existence of each of them."... "I saw it<sup>5</sup> in the internal, for I had a thorough view of the universe, as in a chaos, where all things are couched and wrapped up, but it was impossible for me to explicate and unfold the same."<sup>6</sup>

But it was ten years later, when, finding these unsought riches of revelation come to him more and more, that he first tried to record their purport. He wrote the "*Aurora*" — his first work — for a help to his own memory in 1612. After a while he lent the manuscript to a friend, by whose agency it got into the hands of a gentleman who was so much impressed with its unique value that he had it unstitched and copied from end to end by many different hands before it was returned; and this transcript, getting abroad, fell under the eyes of the authorities of Gorlitz, As a matter of course it was vehemently condemned, chiefly by its Primate, Gregory Richter.

<sup>2</sup> Apology I., Part I., par. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, par. 33.

<sup>4</sup> or working essence

<sup>5</sup> as in a great deep

<sup>6</sup> Epistle II., par. 8.

A religious writer who presumes to teach more than contemporaneous religious teachers know, and to understand what they deem an impenetrable mystery, is sure to be denounced as a heretic, a heretic all the more dangerous if, as in this case, the bringer of new things is evidently devout, and impugns, not the words of Scripture, but the wisdom of its interpreters, in supposing current meanings to be all that are contained, or that are to be found in it. This — and an unsparing rebuke of evil wherever it was, high or low, decent or gross — was the unpardonable sin of Boehme: to this day unpardoned by every reader who is not in good earnest fighting against self with Christ and for Christ. To those who are not, his writings may be interesting; to every thinker they would be, for "if a man would satisfy the human mind so that it may give itself up into the eternal rest, then a man must show him the root of the tree out of which spirit and flesh hath its origin."<sup>7</sup> And Boehme alone offers to show it, —but for this repulsive severity of reprobation, this obnoxious thoroughness of unconventional Christianity, which lays bare the cunning of self-deception under every kind of "devout shows," and presses on unwilling minds the "rude uncouth message" that in all the world there is no such cruel evil beast as that harbored in the breast of every man and woman, — self-love. In saying this, I by no means assert the converse. The most sincere conversion of the will from self-seeking to the obedience of Christ does not secure a liking for books so obscure as his. They bristle with terms so unusual, and thoughts so unlike the accepted coin of the religious world, that for a large majority of readers repulse must at first be far stronger than attraction. A little patience, a little passing over what has no meaning at first, and dwelling on the sublime intensity of clearest utterance which is to be found in almost every page, and vigorous intellects will be more stimulated than baffled. But all minds are not vigorous, neither have all leisure for such exercise.

What embitters ordinary Christians more than anything else in this old teacher, is that he takes ignorance as to spiritual mysteries for proof positive of arrest in Christian life. Again and again he meets the charge of speculating beyond bounds of holy awe, with the counter charge that if we were led by the Spirit more and more would be revealed to us of the deep things of God, and that the going on unto perfection to which St. Paul exhorts would include increase of knowledge as well as greater holiness of life.

In his Apology or defense against Gregory Richter he justly says: "You say that I will search out the Deity, and call it devilish; thereby you show your ignorance to the daylight, that you understand nothing of the Book of Nature, and also do not read the New Testament, for St. Paul saith, "The spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. It is not of man's ability, but God's Spirit performeth that searching through man's spirit."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Considerations of *Threefold Life*, par. 2

<sup>8</sup> 4th Apology, Part I., pars. 44, 45.

Recognition of this was at once his own safeguard and his credential as a man sent by God. Speaking of his own writing, he said: "I cannot say that I have comprehended it, but so long as the hand of God stayeth upon me, I understand it; but if it hides itself, then I know not my own labor, and am made a stranger to the work of my own hands. Whereby I may see how altogether impossible a thing it is to search out and apprehend the mysteries of God without God's Spirit."... "If it be His will for me to know anything, then I will know it; but if He willeth it not, then do I so also. *I will be nothing and dead*, that He may live and work in me what *He pleaseth*. I have cast myself wholly into Him that so I may be safe."<sup>9</sup>

It is doubtless owing to this attitude of deepest humility and self-abnegation that he was so absolutely free from all the unbalanced excitement of visionaries; and were it not for his strong sense of the sublime uses of the humblest business on earth, his knowledge of the latent powers in man, and perception of his original greatness, might have tended to disqualify him for the details of practical duty; but while asserting that "the soul is a sparkle out of the great omnipotency of God"<sup>10</sup> that "by the will God created heaven and earth, and such a mighty will is hidden also in the soul"<sup>11</sup> he never lost sight of the nothingness and impotency of man as he now is, until Christ is formed in him, and every imagination is brought into obedience to Christ. No exaltation of self, because of the abundance of revelations, was possible to one who so well understood that mortification of self-will and recipiency of grace is all that a human creature can do in "working out its own salvation." "The soul hath free will to go out and in, but it cannot generate itself in Christ; it must only go out of its own evil will, and enter into God's mercy."... "I lie in imbecility," he adds, "as a dying man, but the Most High raiseth me up in His breath, so that I go according to His wind."<sup>12</sup>

Some of the most learned of his fellow-countrymen sought him out for instruction on the mysteries of the natural as well as the spiritual world; and it is notorious that from his writings Sir Isaac Newton in England, and Hegel in Germany, drew what the French call "*les idees meres*," to which their own fame has been largely due; but Boehme himself lightly esteemed any knowledge that fell short of that which, as he expressed it, "opens to us the Paradisical gate in the inward center of our image, that the Paradisical light might shine to us in our minds," adding: "Seeing that Christ the Son of God hath generated us again to the Paradisical image, we should not be so remiss as to rely upon art and earthly reason; for so we find not Paradise and Christ, who must become man in us if we will ever see God: in our reason it is all but dead and blind."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 3rd Epistle, pars. 2 and 24.

<sup>10</sup> 3rd Apology, Text I., par. 1 12

<sup>11</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 8, par. 18

<sup>12</sup> 3rd Apology, Text IV., Point I., pars. 47 and 49

<sup>13</sup> *Incarnation*, Part I., chap. 4, pars. 6 and 8.



Yet never surely did a holy man so much exalt the uses of art and reason when rightly employed; one of his greatest peculiarities is the stress he lays on the value of all earthly pursuits so long as they do not *fill* and darken the mind. "Indeed, the divine wisdom standeth not in art and reason, but it showeth art the way, what it should do and how it should seek. Art is really the tool or instrument of God wherewith the divine wisdom worketh or laboureth; why should I despise it.".... "All profitable arts are revealed out of God's wisdom; not that they are that by which man cometh to God, but for the government of the outward life, and for the glorious manifestation of divine wisdom and omnipotence."<sup>14</sup>

"Man must labour and trade, for therefore he is created into the outer world, that he should manifest God's wonders with his skill and trading. All trades, businesses, and conditions are God's ordinance; every one worketh the wonders of God."<sup>15</sup>

How different is *this* aspect of *worldly* pursuits from that which pretends to contemn all interests and occupations of present life in order to throw into strong relief the glories of a future state! As if trying to denaturalise man was the best method for spiritual evolution! The result of this mistaken effort meets us at every turn, a spiritual falsetto being too often adopted when the old Adam has not been so much mortified as ignored; and the recoil from such unwholesome tension too often proves that heavenly-mindedness is not the usual effect of disdain of earthly good. Our old mystic held "the old ass," as he quaintly terms the natural man, in wiser estimation, and insists on its uses with regard to the new man, which is to be formed in it as gold is formed in the rough ore of its matrix.

The persecution that he underwent after Gregory Richter had denounced him from the pulpit resulted in his being severely condemned for heresy, though on no one point could his judges find him guilty, but vaguely passed sentence on his writings upon "hearsay censure." He was forbidden to write any more, and to this order, with characteristic meekness, he submitted for six or seven years, quietly carrying on his shoemaker's craft meanwhile, till at last the dictates of his invisible guide, and the urgency of friends, led him to disregard the prohibition. Between the years 1618 and 1624 he wrote in quick succession the rest of his works<sup>16</sup>, each, as it seems, opening more deeply and impressing more earnestly the mysteries and lessons which he had been taught.

In his 3rd Epistle, he gives a wonderful account of the "instigation of the Spirit," under which in nine months he wrote three of his most profound books.

The disturbance raised in Gorlitz by his persecution obliged him to leave it for the sake of peace. He went to Dresden, where he resided until his death — after a short illness— in 1624. His last words were: "Now I go hence into Paradise."

<sup>14</sup> 3rd Apology, Text IV., pars. 73 and 77.

<sup>15</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 17, par. 11.

<sup>16</sup> He wrote 31 in all.

We are told that he was a small man of low stature, and the written account of his features in no way contradicts the impression given by his pictured likeness, of harsh and homely outlines illumined by a singular look of settled peace and intense inward activity.

Boehme has many wonderful truths to tell us, and a solution to offer of many mysteries deemed inscrutable by most divines; but the most priceless truth and the most un failing pass-key to a treasury of spiritual knowledge which he presses upon us, in his every book, with ever new fervency, is the necessity of continued dying to self, and keeping the soul plunged in humility, patience, and love. A hard lesson practically, but how simple and easy to understand are the terms in which he gives it! "Thou wilt ask what is the new *Regeneration*? Or how is that done in man? Hear and see; stop not thy mind, let not thy mind be filled by the spirit of this world with its might and pomp. Take thy mind and break through the spirit of this world quite: incline thy mind into the kind love of God: make thy purpose earnest and strong to break through the pleasure of this world with thy mind and not to regard it."<sup>17</sup>

"Seek you nothing else but the Word and Heart of God: you need not break your mind with hard thoughts, for with such high fancies and conceits you will not find the Ground: do but only incline your mind and thoughts, with your whole reason, into the love and mercy of God, so that you be born out of the Word and Heart of God in the centre of your life, so that His light shine in the light of your life, that you be one with him."<sup>18</sup>

And now, having so far learned who and what Boehme was from his own evidence as well as from the report of contemporary biographers, I think we can understand the accuracy of his prediction in the preface to his "*Aurora*." "Now, if Mr. Wiseling, which worketh with his wit in the fierce quality, gets this book"<sup>19</sup> "into his hand, he will oppose it, as there is always stirring and opposition between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of hell."

Yes, but as the King of Heaven is Omnipotent, all who resist His rule must yield at last: at last all conquering love will extirpate the venom of scorn, and prevail even on Mr. Wiseling to know "the meekness of wisdom," and all its resulting blessedness. "In the time of the lily," said Boehme, "my writings will be much sought after." Some little buds of that lily may be descried among us already.

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<sup>17</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 16, par; 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 3, par. 30.

<sup>19</sup> any of his books

## JACOB BOEHME'S WRITINGS

"What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." The turn of enquiry thus described by Francis Bacon is a marked characteristic of the present day. However ready and conclusive the answer may be, it is unheeded if it requires patient and prolonged attention; because it is not satisfaction of the mind that is sought for by questioners so much as utterance of doubt. Uncertainty as to every point, which our forefathers held to be fixed articles of belief, is the favourite attitude of modern intellects. In this sea of doubt a large majority luxuriate, just as the habitually irresolute enjoy complaining of perplexities which, they say, admit of no possible solution. To the impatient mind total uncertainty gives a fallacious sense of freedom, and to the irresolute mind perplexity as to every line of action supplies excuse for sloth. The quickened thought of modern times necessarily unsettles a large class of intellects "that delight in giddiness and account it a bondage to fix a belief;" and to such as these it would be vain to speak of Boehme. But they in every age are followers, not leaders, in human progress. Of a very different order are those which are now both ready and able to lead, if only they could convince themselves what is not untruth. Too well aware of the vastness of spiritual science, to expect a brief and summary clearing up of its hitherto inscrutable mysteries, all they attempt to define is the amount of error that has over-laid authorised dogma; and for them the process is often a long and bitter conflict, as every struggle to advance against current habits of thought must be. And the saddest part of the struggle is that it has to be made against modes of belief which are esteemed too holy to call in question, by people whose very goodness makes any lack of wisdom more injurious than it could otherwise be. The narrow-minded pietist unconsciously drives stronger brained men and women into scepticism, by simplest means effecting complex results: for instance, the future world is spoken of — the devout bigot reverts to the almost obsolete idea of everlasting fire and brimstone torments external to the sinner, of divine vengeance. There is the quiet smile or outspoken sarcasm in reply, such a speaker being obviously unprepared for argument; and these inflaming the zeal and blinding the judgment of the other by anger, prompt the accusation that the truth of God's Word is doubted, that the hard heart of unbelief has to be touched by more earnest admonition. Probably the heart in question is not at all hard, nor may any unbelief have been felt except as to the accuracy of this conception of the fate of impenitent sinners; but it is clear that if anyone is so unwise as to make this idea of it a test of Christian faith, he or she greatly lowers the claim of that faith upon any reasonable being; for, finding these material torments regarded as an integral part of revealed truth, naturally leads to suspecting that all religious doctrine is equally the outcome of superstition, and is too often followed by disbelief in any future that need be feared. The frequency of suicide gives terrific evidence of such disbelief. Even in our nurseries we might learn that a threat which does not intimidate emboldens a

wrongdoer; so does much of what has been called sound doctrine. Men are told of God's never-ending punishment of sin — of torments intense and illimitable, but such alarms seldom take the least effect on cultivated minds. Thinkers cannot believe while conscious of so much mixture of good in people deservedly called bad, and of the many extenuating peculiarities of fate which promote evil, that a God who pities as a father does his children, will seize on the soul as soon as it is hurried from mortal wrappings, and place it beyond remedy. I say they cannot, and I know they do not.

Again, it is impossible for thoughtful people to avoid seeing that those will never be deterred from sin by threats of imposed penalties, who are taught that God promises on certain conditions to deliver from the consequences of sin. To the last they will assure themselves that He is so merciful that He will surely forgive and save, understanding by forgiveness an arbitrary decision of will, and by salvation escape from suffering.

Now, it is for those to whom popular Christianity offers grave offence that Boehme's teaching will be what Franz Baader said it was, "the only means of deliverance from the prevailing destructive knowledge or want of knowledge," for, to use the words of a brave contemporary, "the truth requires to be proclaimed aloud that modern Christianity, as generally received, does not represent the teaching of Christ, and is not fit to be charged with the task of teaching the world a suitable and satisfactory morality." This inability of professional guides to reconcile Christian dogma to profoundly searching intellects need not surprise us, seeing that they bind themselves by oath to follow prescribed lines of thought rather than the spirit of truth wheresoever that goeth, and take their credentials from external authority; but the fact remains, the scoff and triumph of unbelievers.

Jacob Boehme, a medium for the Holy Spirit nearly three centuries ago, will carry us farther towards central truths than any later seer, and will harmonise many a conflicting aspect of truth; widely as its rays of light may diverge in their outermost issue, in closer proximity to the centre they will be found nearly related.

"For whom," asked the late Mr. Christopher Walton, "are Boehme's writings useful, and what is their intent? The writer would answer if he knew of any honest enquiring minds, in a Christian country, that after a careful study of the Holy Scriptures, and much pondering upon the great mystery of things all around and within them, especially upon the seeming incompatibleness of the bloody cruelty, misery and shocking injustice which are daily and with impunity perpetrated, and likewise recounted in the Old Testament itself, with the nature and character of the Deity as described in the Christian revelation as an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, All-wise Being who is all love and goodness to His creatures; — if there are, as doubtless there are, many such who thus stand in a state of doubt and uncertainty respecting the Holy Scriptures, and the working wisdom of Divine love, then it may be truly said that to such is the word of this revelation sent."

For as William Law says, "There is not any philosophical question that can be put, nor advice nor direction that can be asked in regard to God, or Nature, or Christianity, but what Boehme has over and over spoke to, and that in the plainest terms." A saying that needs this qualification — The plainest terms in which subjects of such mystery can be spoken of. As his translator, John Sparrow, quaintly reminds us in his Introduction to Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum* — "Mysteries cannot be expressed in easy words; some things most excellent cannot be uttered by any words<sup>20</sup>, therefore 'tis happy some other hard things may be uttered<sup>21</sup> though by hard words, better than none at all."

"The chief cause," says Dionysius Freher, Boehme's great interpreter, "of all these suspicions which we many of us cast upon this chosen vessel of God, Jacob Boehme, is that we can so hardly elevate our thoughts above the sphere of this temporal principle and the forms and course of things that are therein, and always think that our apprehension of things in their present condition is a true measuring line, fit to measure the same things exactly as they were before they came into this fragmentary state."<sup>22</sup>

Before specifying the peculiar knowledge to be gained from his teaching, I will cite the testimony of some of Boehme's most distinguished students, and then his own, as to the worth and the source of his revelations.

Edward Taylor, writing about the year 1678 an answer to one of the 170 Theosophic Questions proposed by Boehme, said: — "Whereas men have dark, confused notions of God, like those of Athens dedicating their altars to the unknown God; of Him, therefore, whom men ignorantly worship do J. Boehme's writings give a clear, certain, demonstrable, and distinct knowledge, and of all things and worlds; also of all creatures, from the most holy, angelical Princes of Eternity to the most despicable excrescence of time."

J. G. Gichtel, advising a friend in the year 1698, said: — "I have searched through many mystics in my time, but found in none of these what, with great labour, prayer, striving and wrestling through many years, I have found in this enlightened shoemaker; and I can never sufficiently thank God for His grace who thereby enlightened me in many perplexities, and solved such desperate dilemmas as met me in the strife with the dragon. And I may with good ground affirm, that if there is in Scripture anything obscure, magical, or mystical, Boehme solves it all; and I wish with all my heart that you may find your peace therein."<sup>23</sup>

Speaking of him in the first year of the present century, Poiret said: — "J. Boehme is the only one, at least whose writings we have until his time, to whom God has discovered the basis of Nature, in spiritual as well as in corporeal things, and who,

<sup>20</sup> Romans viii. v. 26

<sup>21</sup> 2 Cor. xii. v. 4

<sup>22</sup> D. Freher on Deity and Eternal Nature.

<sup>23</sup> Theosophica Practica, vol. 1, letter 88.

with a central penetration in theological and supernatural matters, has also known from their origin the true principles of philosophy in metaphysics as well as in true physics."

Writing to a friend in 1792, L. Claud de St. Martin told him "I am no longer young, being near my fiftieth year; and at this advanced age I have begun to learn the little German I know, solely to read this incomparable author.".. "I frankly acknowledge that I am not worthy to untie the shoestrings of that wonderful man, whom I look upon as the greatest light that has appeared on the earth since Him who is the light Himself."... "I exhort you, if you have time, to dive into this abyss of knowledge and profound truths."... "In Boehme I find a solidity that cannot be shaken; a depth, an elevation and a nourishment so full and so unfailing, that I confess I should think it time lost to seek elsewhere."<sup>24</sup>

Speaking of Schelling's works, Schopenhauer, still more recently said, "It is almost only a revived make up of Jacob Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum*, to which its every sentiment and every expression leads one to recur. But why in Schelling are the same images, forms, and phrases unbearable and absurd, which in Jacob Boehme I read with admiration and emotion? Because in Boehme I recognise the perception of Eternal truth which expresses itself in these images, though it might have done so with equal propriety in many others. But Schelling takes from him what only he could take; holds the husk for the fruit, or at least does not know how to separate it from the fruit."<sup>25</sup>

D. Freher, of whom it is recorded that he "read all Boehme's books in the original more than ten times through, though not without the greatest disgust imaginable in the beginning, gave this testimony among many others of greater length: "As to Boehme, it is with me, and I am sure with many others also, beyond all doubt and question that he verily had a true and deep understanding, not in his reason, but in his central spirit, of the manner and process of the whole creation; nay, that he really and fundamentally understood even the way and method of the necromancy itself, not in practice as the devil's agents do, but in the round and depth thereof, wherein they are blind and ignorant."<sup>26</sup>

And only a few years ago Mr. E. Paxton Hood in his Essay on "Boehme, the Evangelical Hegel," sums up his peculiar value thus: "To those who would know how much is to be said to the reason and the understanding to strengthen and confirm the faith, to keep the frail spirit of the thoughtful man from reeling from its steadfastness, or plunging into an ocean or night of despair, the works of Boehme are full to overflowing of light and strength."

<sup>24</sup> Letters 2 and 8 of St. Martin to Kirchberger.

<sup>25</sup> A. Schopenhauer's Handschriftlich Nachlass, page 261.

<sup>26</sup> C. Walton's Memorial of W. Law, page 465.

Evidence equally strong might be adduced from other writers, such, for instance, as Oetinger and Hamberger, both German exponents of his teaching, but what has been given already will suffice to convince anyone who intends to study his works, that there must be very solid ground for such exceptional value being attributed to them. I well know the incredulity with which modern students hear or read such praise of writings which have been before the world for more than two centuries and have yet been little read: the natural assumption is that if they were really all their admirers say, they must have taken higher rank in literary estimation.

This, however true as regards books of more external interest, is never true of those which claim concentrated attention for a world to which the majority, even of students, remain indifferent, until introduced to it by Death — that inner world where the spirit acts with spirits — into which few of us care to look till driven by pain or grief from the louder and coarser excitements of outer interests. And it needs but little observation of English character to convince us that to average men and women such writings as Boehme's must be at first distasteful.<sup>27</sup>

Some, like the late Mr. Vaughan, may take up a volume of his as an historic curiosity, and pass judgment upon it with lively decision, quite unconscious of having failed to perceive its scope. In his *Hours with the Mystics*, the only point which that excellent man made good when professing to deal with Boehme's writings, is that to criticise them without right comprehension of their contents is to ensure self exposure. Since that book was published, twenty-eight years ago, time and enlarged intelligence have modified literary fashions, and the incoming tide of interest in occult studies has placed him far higher in the esteem of learned men than people in the first half of this century would have expected, but at no period could his books be read without arousing the instinctive antagonisms between prophet and priest, and the dislike of those who rely on doctrines that have been long fixed, and which they therefore regard as authoritative and final, for people who accept direct instruction from the unseen world, and look for ever-widening views of truth. Add to this invincible suspicion of the unfixed in religious matters, resentment as inevitable under the censures of the innovator!

When in the late Mr. C. Walton's Memorial of W. Law, we read that Boehme was "a discoverer of the false anti-Christian Church from its first rise in Cain, through every age of the world, to its present state in all and every sect of the present divided Christendom"<sup>28</sup>, enough is said to account for clerical feeling about him. Each division of Christendom's Church may bewail what is anti-Christian in others, but to see so clearly mirrored the special errors and self-delusions of every sect, inclusive of one's own, and to find those besetting evils denounced with all the force of justice — this is what few can stand without making a counter-charge of fanaticism to invalidate his verdict. And this has been so successfully made, that condemning

<sup>27</sup> When English readers can call a book mystical they have usually sealed it, virtually, for themselves and for all whom they can influence, as unreadable.

<sup>28</sup> page 86

Boehme as a very "mischievous writer," without opening one of his books, has been as usual as it is convenient for the purpose of discrediting them. So it was in his lifetime. "The citizens here about me knew nothing of my writing." ... "It was proclaimed among them for heresy, which notwithstanding they never read, neither was it examined ever as it was meet."<sup>29</sup>

The invariable complaint as to the obscurity of style — on which account so many excuse themselves from heeding what is only too plain on themes distasteful to self-love — will hardly be raised as an objection by anyone who has just ideas of the teaching he had to deliver. It was such as his own mind had been in no way prepared for, beyond an intense longing for Divine grace, and total passivity under its influence. "I speak," he says, "not of and from myself, but from that which the Spirit showeth, which no man can resist."<sup>30</sup> "I declare in the presence of God, as I shall answer it before His judgment, where all things shall appear, and every one shall give an account of his deeds, that I myself know not how it comes to pass with me, save only that I have a fiery incitement, or strong driving and instigation in my will. I know not also what I shall write, for when I write the Spirit dictates to me in great and wonderful knowledge."... "I am, verily, a simple man, and have neither learned, nor after this manner sought after, this high mystery, nor knew I anything of it: I only sought the heart of love in Jesus Christ, and when I had obtained that with great joy of my soul, then was this treasure of natural and Divine knowledge opened and given unto me."<sup>31</sup>

Also, as W. Law observes, "What he saw and conceived was quite new and strange, never seen or spoken of before, and, therefore, if he was to put it down in writing, words must be used to signify that which they had never done before."<sup>32</sup> And as his translator John Sparrow says, there is this advantage in phraseology so unusual and uncouth, "that those excellent notions which he layeth down might not be slipped over as men do common current English, but that the strangeness of the words may make them a little stay and consider what the meaning of them may be."<sup>33</sup>

He is surely right as to that; readers too often believe them-selves in possession of an author's meaning only because every word used is intelligible. But how could language, however clear, make such themes as Boehme's immediately intelligible to any mind? He gives a summary of a few of them thus, in answer to his accuser, Tilken. "Learn first to understand the Centre of the Eternal Nature, and how to distinguish the clear or bright Deity from Nature; and learn how the Deity revealeth itself through Nature, and learn what God's Wisdom is, how it is the out-spoken

<sup>29</sup> Epistle 3, par. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Epistle 3, par.38.

<sup>31</sup> A Warning from J. Boehme, pars. 14 and 16.

<sup>32</sup> Law's Letters.

<sup>33</sup> Preface to J. B.'s *Three Principles*.



substance of the Deity, and what the Divine Life is, and then what Nature Life is."..."Also what Paradise and Heaven are, what Evil and Good."<sup>34</sup>

Truly so soon as we see the least glint of light in the depths of knowledge he opens, we assent to his old translator's quaint confession, "All that I apprehend not is not nonsense, though I may think so."

A graver objection to the worth of Boehme's revelations is, that the fact of being a medium in no way guarantees the validity of the message thus transmitted to us. A clear perception of this, which we owe to the experience of Spiritists<sup>35</sup> might have saved past generations from many a fever of fanaticism, due indeed to inspiration, but not that of the Spirit of Truth; now the credentials of this messenger are not only his deep humility and freedom from all self-assertion, but the perfect harmony of his teaching with that of Holy Writ. Not that it is restricted to what we learn from our Bible, but that it is never in opposition, and greatly elucidates parts of it, which without his further revelation has been, and ever must be, a stumbling-stone to every reader whose faith depends mainly upon a reasonable understanding of Scripture. These elucidations of his shall be briefly noticed farther on.

Moreover, we find evidence of his veracity as heaven-sent, in the forcible simpleness of his style; his words fit the windings of human nature in its innermost resorts as perfectly as old Bible words; and before we have time to scrutinise the justice of his verdict, both heart and head feel its accuracy, and flinch from it or accept it, as the case may be.

"As a chosen servant of God," said W. Law, "J. Boehme may be placed among those who had received the highest measures of light, wisdom, and knowledge from above. He has no right to be placed among the inspired penmen of the New Testament; he was no messenger from God of anything new in religion, but the mystery of all that was old and true in religion and Nature was opened in him. This is the peculiarity of his character, by which he stands fully distinguished from all the prophets, apostles, and extraordinary messengers of God. They were sent on occasional messages, or to make such alterations in the ceremony of religion as pleased God; but this man came on no particular errand, he had nothing to alter or add either in the form or doctrine of religion. He had no new truths of religion to propose, but all that lay in religion and Nature as a mystery unsearchable, was in its deepest ground opened to this instrument of God."<sup>36</sup>

He was himself quite aware both of the nature of the communications made through him, and of their exceptional value. After describing the process of his own enlightenment, he added: "I exhort and entreat you, for the eternal salvation sake, to heed and mind well the Pearl that God favoureth us with, for there will come a time

<sup>34</sup> Apology 2, part 1, par. 34.

<sup>35</sup> however much we may disapprove of their practice

<sup>36</sup> Animadversions upon Dr. Trapp's Reply, vol. 6 of W. Law's Works, p. 32

that it shall be sought after and greatly accepted of."... "Look upon it aright, and pray God the Most High, that He would be pleased to open the door of knowledge, without which no man will understand my writings, for they surpass the astral reason."<sup>37</sup>

And again, speaking of the time of the end, when "Babel burneth up in the anger of God,"... "at that time my writing shall be very serviceable."<sup>38</sup>

Let his use of the pronoun *we* be noticed. Thus he explained it: — "I give you to understand that in these writings the author useth sometimes to speak of himself *we* and sometimes *I*. Now understand by the word *we*, the spirit<sup>39</sup> in two persons, and in the word *I*, the author understands himself."<sup>40</sup>

"My revelation reacheth even into the three kingdoms like an angelical knowledge; but not in my reason or apprehension, or in perfection like an angel, but in part, and so long only as the spirit tarrieth in me. Further I know it not. When he parteth from me I know nothing but the elementary and earthly things of this world."<sup>41</sup>

But this he wrote in his earliest book. At a later date what knowledge had come to him by "the impulse and motion of God," was sufficiently assimilated for transmission through his own understanding in some degree; yet at no period did he arrogate to himself any knowledge of transcendental truth. He speaks of it as "What God knew in him." A profound suggestion this of the relation that all divine knowledge bears to the human intellect. It was by virtue of this relation that he justified what the critics of his day, as well as ours, have censured for being a presumptuous search into themes too high for human thought.

"Mockers and despisers who would say it doth not become me to climb so high into the Deity, and to dive so deeply thereinto. To all of them I give this for an answer, that I am not climbed up into the Deity, neither is it possible for such a mean man as I am to do it, but the Deity is climbed up into me, and from its love are these things revealed unto me."<sup>42</sup> "The Holy Ghost in the soul is creaturely, viz., the propriety or portion of the soul; therefore it searcheth even unto the Deity, and also into Nature for it hath its source and descent from the Being of the whole Deity."<sup>43</sup>

He in his turn reproaches ministers of the Gospel with their unprogressiveness in the knowledge of spiritual facts, and complains of the insufficiency of authorised theology to satisfy the deepest needs of the soul. "If," he says, "a man would satisfy the human mind so that it may give itself up into the Eternal rest, then a man must show him the root of the tree out of which spirit and flesh hath its original; a man

<sup>37</sup> Letter 16, par. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Letter 26, par. 16.

<sup>39</sup> being spoken in the plural

<sup>40</sup> Letter 3, par. 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 7, pars. 17 to 20.

<sup>42</sup> *Aurora* 18, pars. 8 and 10.

<sup>43</sup> Preface to *Aurora*, par. 22.

must show and open to him the centre of the Eternal, as also of the beginning Nature, that he may apprehend the earthly and also the heavenly mystery. And then is the Eternal beginning and the Eternal end totally one, wherein the spirit of the soul layeth itself into rest, for it seeth the wheel totally."<sup>44</sup>

If the depth of that rest was known, and the continuous delightful activity of gain to the mind which that rest admits one to, even in the midst of the confusing discords of modern thought, access to that rest would be sought for as life's chief good. But, like the all-satisfying rewards of fairy-tale heroes, it can only be approached by toil, self-abnegation, and child-like docility; without these it will never be won.

It remains to specify the nature of some of those revelations with which Boehme offers to satisfy the mind which "doth not leave off searching till it comes to the innermost ground. But if it reach not the ground, it sinketh down in the ground, and cannot apprehend it, and then cometh doubting, unbelief, and contempt into the mind."<sup>45</sup> To how many are these come for want of any help towards reaching the innermost ground!

Perhaps the greatest of all truths to be won from his pages is that all evil, sin, and misery, while contrary to and in every sense repugnant to the love of God, are nevertheless consonant with arrested evolution of the Eternal Nature of God in Man; for he proves that there is a Nature in the Eternal life, and that, apart from that Nature, i.e., the interaction of the Seven Spirits of God<sup>46</sup>, the abyssal Deity could not be known nor any creaturely life exist.<sup>47</sup>

It would take a small volume to explain this central truth, and the student must work it out from Boehme's own words, bearing in mind the undeniable truth that if "we live and move and have our being in God," there can be nothing in us or in our world which did not primarily originate in Divine Nature; but this very word Nature, a *becoming*, indicates first the absence of absolute unalterable finality, and the door by which contraries might enter; what is coming to be may, on the lower plane of creaturely life, degenerate or fall short of due evolution. The power of Evil, with all its subtlety and skill, is, and has been, and ever will be, a dismaying fact to account for in a world brought into existence by an Omniscient, Infinite Love and Wisdom; but if once we apprehend Boehme's doctrine of the difference of God unmanifest, apart from Creation, and manifested by His Eternal Nature, i.e., the ceaseless action of the Seven Spirits of God, it becomes intelligible that all which obstructs their original harmony of action in Nature and Creature will produce evil, which is not done by God, the only Good, and yet is done by misuse of forces derived from Him; that "falling short of the glory of God"<sup>48</sup> is in the highest sense an arrest of evolution; the

<sup>44</sup> *Considerations of E. Stiefel's Threefold Life*, par. 2

<sup>45</sup> *Threefold Life*, par. 60, chap. 4.

<sup>46</sup> *forms to Nature* in his translated phraseology

<sup>47</sup> See his treatise on *The Incarnation*, Part I., Chap. 13, par. 68.

<sup>48</sup> which I am convinced is an equivalent term for perfected action of the six forms of Eternal Nature in the seventh — the heavenly substantiality

creature destined to find bliss by manifesting the infinite virtues and glories of Abyssal Deity, seeking it in self, works for other and lower objects; the fallen angels for self-exaltation; human beings to gratify desires which debased what they once were, to mortal life as we know it.

Now, ideas such as these call for considerable modification of all that were previously held as regards creation. Theology has used us to thinking of this as a work performed by Divine Fiat, irrespective of the will of the creature; and we talk of the formation of all the worlds and their various inhabitants, as if they were made and set in motion by the immediate will of the One Omnipotent God. "Men lead us on," Boehme says, "in vain images of the essential will, as if the only God did will this or that; whereas Himself is the sole will to the being of Nature and Creature, and the whole Creation lieth only and alone in the formation of His expressed word and will, *and the severation of the only will in the expression.*"<sup>49</sup>

An idea he utters with blunter force in his profoundly instructive treatise on "*The Election of Grace*," — "Never dispute about the will of God. We ourselves are God's will to evil and good: which of them soever is manifested in us, we are that, whether it be Hell or Heaven."<sup>50</sup>

He makes us understand that every Spirit forms its own body by its own will and desire, that one being separates itself from the will and life and creative word of another, in countless gradations of existence derived from the one source of all being to the lowest form of creaturely life. And that thus all things are made by the Word of God, in the transmitted potentialities of life; that thus the desire of God, to manifest the unsearchable infinitude of Deific powers and glories, brought into being all that exists, and is still bringing forth. "Thus now, unto this very day, all things are yet in the fiat or creating, and the Creation hath no end until the judgment of God."<sup>51</sup>

This identification of the will of the Word of God with the will of the creature in the soul of man, is perhaps the most difficult part of his teaching to explain; and his own words must be cited in the attempt. But no amount of quotation can give an adequate glimpse of the light which streams from his works on *Election*, and on *Theosopia*, when long and patiently studied.

"The living Word of God, which is God Himself...speaketh itself through Nature forth into a Spirit of the World, as a soul of the Creation."<sup>52</sup>

"Every power has an emanation according to the right of Nature in the speaking Word."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Mysterium Magnum.*, chap. 60, par. 41.

<sup>50</sup> Chap. 8, par. 288. A saying which it is very important to guard by the addition, "Will of God's *Eternal Nature in us.*"

<sup>51</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 21, par. 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Election*, chap. 5, par. 47.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 4, par. 45.

"The Word of God, viz., the Speaking Word, was in all properties in *Spiritu Mundi*, and in the *Ens* or being of the Earth, stirring up out of the Spirit of the World; and spoke or breathed forth a life into every being; viz., the Fiat, or creating power, which is the desire of the Word."<sup>54</sup>

"Everything's centre as a piece of the outspoken Word re-outspeaketh itself, and compriseth or frameth itself into separability after the kind and manner of the Divine speaking, and so now if in this outspokening there were no free will, then the speaking would have a law, and would be under compulsion or subjection, and no desire or longing delight might exist. And then the speaking were finite, which it is not. But it is a breathing of the Abyss."<sup>55</sup>

And so "every centre maketh its own out-breathing, Nature, and Substance, out of itself, and yet all originateth out of the Eternal One."<sup>56</sup>

Now, it is only thus that "in divisibility God willeth good and evil"<sup>57</sup> But "without Nature and Creature He is the greatest meekness and humility, wherein is no way, footsteps or prints possibly either of any will to good or evil inclination; for there is neither good nor evil before Him. He is Himself the Eternal only Good."<sup>58</sup>

But, as we find in Scripture, "with the holy thou art holy, and with the perverse thou art perverse."... "For in the thrones of the holy angels God is manifest in His love, and in the thrones of the devils He is manifest in His wrath, viz., according to the darkness and torment; and yet there is but one only God, and not two. According to the tormentative Nature He willeth torment, and according to the love He willeth love; as a burning fire desireth hard brimstone like itself, and the light desireth only an open place where it may shine. It taketh nothing away, but giveth itself for the joy of life; it suffereth itself to be taken; it hath no other will in itself, but to give forth itself and work."<sup>59</sup>

I venture to affirm that these great truths firmly grasped, of clear distinction between God in total and in partial manifestation, and of man's freedom to generate the first tormenting forms of Divine Nature, or their full circle of blissful harmony, would relieve us of the darkest suspicions that weigh more or less on every thoughtful mind, and would give us a key to many mysteries which have utterly baffled human intelligence hitherto. The everyday wonder which meets us on all sides — if once reflection goes beyond the surface — is that life is just what we make it in the inner world, and consequently largely modified in external life by our own self-admitted fatalities.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, pars. 88 and 89.

<sup>55</sup> On the Knowledge of All Things, pars. 11 and 12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, par. 19.

<sup>57</sup> *Election*, chap. 6, par. 81.

<sup>58</sup> *Election*, chap, i, par. 57.

<sup>59</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 60, par. 46.

From the Bible we learn how peculiarly man's existence was a desire of the Supreme mind: "Let us make man in our image." And Boehme explains, as I believe no one else ever has, why and how the reformation of regenerate man must exactly correspond with the origin of the first Adam, and how wholly worthless is any more superficial reformation as regards Eternal life.

I must be pardoned if on this point also I adduce his own testimony.

"The life of man," he says<sup>60</sup>, "is a form of the Divine will, and is come from the inbreathing into the created image of man"<sup>61</sup>, but that "life's will hath imaged itself with the outward representation of the mortal nature.".... "The inward Divine ground of the goodwill and substance extinguished, that is as to the creature, became worthless, for the will of the life brake itself off therefrom and went out of the unity into the multiplicity."<sup>62</sup> "It turned itself from the speaking of the Word into a peculiar self-willing, and speaking in good and evil, that is, into its own lust and contrived imagination; then the first good will in the creature to the re-expressing did perish, and now he must enter again into the first speaking Word, and speak with God, or he is eternally without God."<sup>63</sup>

"In which re-outspeaking the new *Regeneration* of the human life and will is understood. For the human life was in the beginning of man in the Word of God, and by the inbreathing of the Word into the human body was manifested and came into sensibility, perceptibility and willing. Where, then, the willing hath broken itself off from the Word wherein the life was without creature, and hath brought itself into a self-separability and visibility, and perceptibility of the five senses. In which sensibility it now runneth, and seeketh the seat of God therein, but findeth only a measureableness and natural and creaturely formedness; wherein now it striveth about its own centre. For the own will hath brought itself into an own centre and broken itself off from the whole, and, as to the total, is as it were dead."<sup>64</sup>

Now the great secret which Boehme incessantly presses upon our belief is, that to attain this lost power of being the mouthpiece of God, "man must seek and call upon the Holy Spirit in himself; for in himself is the place where God dwelleth in His heaven, and taketh in the soul's will with its desire."<sup>65</sup>

"The right way into the Eternal life is in man; he hath introduced the soul's will into the outward world, and that"<sup>66</sup> he must introduce into the inward world."<sup>67</sup> And this

<sup>60</sup> *Theosopia*, chap. 2, par. 2

<sup>61</sup> i.e., what the world-soul had built up by derived agencies in gradual evolution, the breath of God animated

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pars. 2, 6, and 7.

<sup>63</sup> Epistle 7, par. 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Testaments*, chap. 1, par. 8. The context, too long for quotation, is most valuable for learning on this recondite ground.

<sup>65</sup> *Considerations on E. Stiefel's Threefold Life*, par. 116 and onward.

<sup>66</sup> the soul's will

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, par. 134.

presupposes mortification of the will that lusts for outward good. Without this death to the will of corrupt humanity the new birth cannot be. If the Spirit "dieth to its selfhood and breaketh its will, then a new twig springeth forth out of the same, but not according to the first will, but according to the Eternal will; for if a thing entereth into its Nothing, then it falleth again to the Creator, who maketh that thing as it was known in the Eternal will before it was created to be a creature."<sup>68</sup>

(But with all the spoils of experience, and all the powers of raising other fallen souls added to it.)

"When a man yields himself wholly to God, then his will falls again into the unsearchable will of God, out of which he came in the beginning,"... "for if the creature willeth no more than what God willeth through it, then it is dead to itself, and standeth again in the first image, viz. — in that wherein God formed it into a life. For what is the life of a creature? Nothing else but a spark of the will of God, which creature now standeth still to the will of God,"... "then nothing can torment it [any]more; its willing is its own life, and whatsoever willeth in and with God, that is one life with God. "<sup>69</sup>

And so the soul "falls again into the Word wherein it stood in the Eternal speaking."<sup>70</sup>

Thus Boehme harmonises the paradoxical sayings of St. Paul, that man is to "work out his own salvation," and "that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The great and anxious work that man has to accomplish is the breaking of his own will. "A true Christian forceth against the selfful lusts of selfhood, and willeth continually so to do; and yet is many times hindered by selfhood; he breaketh selfhood as a vessel wherein he lieth captive."<sup>71</sup> "If the soulish abyssal will yieldeth, applieth, or uniteth itself to the Spirit of Christ in the inward ground, then Christ taketh hold of it, and draweth it up into Himself, and therein the ability existeth that it can do this."<sup>72</sup>

It is only thus that man becomes "an instrument in the voice of God, upon which only the will spirit of God doth strike to its honour and deeds of wonder;" for so he is "born from within, out of the speaking voice of God in God's will spirit."<sup>73</sup>

"It is not said that they can take the grace, but that they should sink down into the grace, that grace may give itself to them, for man's ability to take it is lost; self-will is rent off from God, it must wholly sink down into God, and leave off willing, that God may receive it again into his grace."<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 15, par. 46.

<sup>69</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 66, pars. 64 and 65.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 60, par. 34.

<sup>71</sup> *Sig. Re.*, chap. 15, par. 51.

<sup>72</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, par. 160.

<sup>73</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 15, pars. 20 and 22.

<sup>74</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 69, par. 18. See also, *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 9, pars. 26, 27.

Even to the soul most deeply stained with sin this ability remains. "He cannot convert himself, yet his soul has might and power from its very original, out of the eternal root of the Abyss, to throw himself into the Abyss, into the ground wherein God generates and speaks his Word. In which abyss of the creature the free gift of the bestowed grace lies in all men, and sooner inclineth itself towards the soul, than the soul doth this towards this deep grace."

"If any will say it cannot demerse itself into the Abyss, he speaks as one that understands nothing of the mysteries of God, concerning what a soul is, and what an angel is, and will needs break off the twig from the tree wherein the twig standeth. The soul is spoken out of the Abyss into a creature; who will break or interrupt the right of Eternity, so that the Eternal will of the soul, which is come into a creature out of the One only Eternal will, should not dare to demerse itself with that same will of the creature into its mother again, out of which it proceeded? Into the light which is extinguished in it, it cannot demerse itself in its own ability; but into the cause of the light, wherein there is neither Evil nor Good, it can demerse itself; for itself is the ground. Now, therefore, if it demerse itself and fall down from its own imagination in itself, on to the Abyss, then it is there already. And in this Abyss lies its Pearl."<sup>75</sup>

This is not only one of the most practically important, but one of the clearest depths of Boehme's teaching, or I should not venture to enter upon it so largely. As a rule, Boehme alone can expound his own words. The Quietists practically understood this advice as to sinking down; no one will ever try it, I believe, in total surrender of every grasping wish, and every anxious desire, without knowing that in the ground of the soul, man has access to the peace of God.

According to Boehme, the soul in its likeness to the Triune Deity must generate the light, and through the light, "the Spirit which becometh generated out of the soul's fire, out of God's meekness, and substance, that is also the Holy Spirit; it dwelleth in the Divine property, and taketh its seeing out of the Divine property."<sup>76</sup> "Man in respect of his external comprehensible or finite body standeth only in a flitting figurative shadow or resemblance, and with his spiritual body he is the true essential Word of the Divine property, in which God speaketh and begetteth his Word, and there the Divine Science doth distribute, impart, impress, form and beget itself to an image of God."<sup>77</sup>

This last assertion may, at first reading, seem almost profane in its boldness. In his pages it has no such appearance, because he so unfailingly and reverently distinguishes between man as he is, without this new birth, and with it, claiming for regenerate man — when come to full stature in Christ — no more than did the Apostles, when Peter wrote of his fellow-Christians as being "partakers of the Divine Nature," and Paul, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

<sup>75</sup> *Election*, chap. u, pars. 139 to 146.

<sup>76</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 7, par. 27.

<sup>77</sup> Epistle 6, par. 41. See *Way from Darkness to True Illumination*, page 264.



Even as regards regenerate man, Boehme is most precise in guarding against the common error of fanatics. "The creature," he said in his 3rd Apology<sup>78</sup> — "is not God; it remaineth eternally under God, but God blazeth through it with His light and shining, and that very light, the soul, viz., the man, retaineth so long for its own as the will remaineth in God's light."

Fully recognising the original greatness of man, thanking God that his mind is indeed a beam of His omnipotence, glory, and skilfulness,... "a figure of the great name of God"<sup>79</sup> — he yet never exalts the human soul apart from its mediumistic office, regarding it solely as a basis for Divine action, created for the manifestation of God, and — failing in this — a monster — an abortion. Hence his urgency of counsel to annihilate the selfhood, to bring himself "into the One, viz., into God's will,"... "and leave himself wholly in God's mercy, and bring all his learnings into this one only thing, that he in his teachings and learnings will not do or speak anything but what God willeth through him; and thus all opinions and conceits do die in him, and the soul's life falleth into the only living Word, which hath manifested itself again in the humanity."<sup>80</sup>

So entirely does he recognise that man's only power is reciprocity of Divine influx, that whereas other teachers speak of what we know, he affirms that all true spiritual knowledge is what God knows in us. "God's spirit," he says, "must become the knowing in us."<sup>81</sup> And again, "I know not myself, but God's spirit knoweth itself in me; He allures me therewith to Himself, and when he departeth then I know nothing."<sup>82</sup>

It is remarkable that this, one of his capital doctrines, in no way infringes upon the prerogative of free will, or upon the claims of everyday duty, as regards cultivating our talents, to the uttermost of our ability, for service, for serving to God's purposes — a distinction St. Martin has well pointed out, since the instrument cannot actively serve the agent.

For those who question the free will of man, Boehme has the ever-recurring argument<sup>83</sup> that as a direct emanation from the source of all being, he must have it. He tells us that the mind of man is anterior to every source of the properties of Nature, and therefore to every quality due to temperament or astral influence: "for the fire-soul is a root proceeded out of the Divine omnipotence, and therefore it hath free will, and nothing can deprive it thereof; it may conceive either in the fire or light."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> 1st point, 4th text, par. 6

<sup>79</sup> *Prayer for Midday*, par. 126

<sup>80</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 36, par. 50.

<sup>81</sup> Apology 2, part 1, par. 54.

<sup>82</sup> Apology 1, part 2, par. 587.

<sup>83</sup> conclusive as he deemed it

<sup>84</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 26, par. 7.

"The centre of the mind is come out of Eternity, out of God's omnipotence; it can bring itself into what it will and whither it will."<sup>85</sup>

And so far from counselling to any ascetic withdrawal from the occupations of this present life, he regards a diligent development of every faculty, of all skill and art as a main object of man's existence. "God hath given to man to seek and to reveal or manifest the wonders of God in this world's substance to his, viz., man's own joy, delight, and longing pleasure, that God might be praised, known, and acknowledged in all works, substances, and things."<sup>86</sup>

"Man is, therefore, become created in this world as a wise ruler or manager thereof, that he should open all wonders, which were from Eternity,"... "and according to his willing bring them into forms, figures, and images, all to his joy and glory."<sup>87</sup>

"The deeper a man is learned concerning God, the deeper he seeketh, and seeth into God's deeds of wonder in Art; for all profitable arts are revealed out of God's Wisdom; not that they are that by which man cometh to God, but for the government of the outward life, and for the glorious manifestation of the Divine Wisdom and Omnipotence."<sup>88</sup>

It is this complete grasp of the scope of human life from the inmost centre of being to outmost circumference of existence, which gives to Boehme's teaching the aspect of an inexhaustible survey. With one sentence — this, for example, "God himself is the Being of all beings, and we are as gods in him"<sup>89</sup> — he makes us feel that the capacities of man are as infinite as his destiny. Yet never must the qualification be lost sight of that man does not necessarily reveal Him who "is called God only according to the light, viz., in the powers of the light;" but he must reveal either that holy one of God or the wrath of God, i.e., the anguishing forms of eternal nature unatoned.

Any attempt to give an idea of the circle of light opened to the student of Boehme is embarrassed by perceiving the commensurate darkness of mystery thus made visible by the abundance of revelations within that circle. I hesitate to prolong the attempt, and yet something must be said about the Wisdom so often referred to by him. For many years of unaided study this remains an insoluble and obstructive enigma. The reader finds Virgin Sophia spoken of in a way that forbids every thought of allegoric meaning. It is under this designation that he reveals the Maternal Principle in Deity, sometimes calling it the "Corporeity of the Holy Ternary, the delight and playfellow of the most High;" the "Eternal Mother, the great *Mysterium Magnum*," through whom "the Eternal Word breathed itself forth into skill or

<sup>85</sup> *True Resignation*, chap. 3, par. 20.

<sup>86</sup> *Apology 3*, text 4, par. 88.

<sup>87</sup> 3rd part of *Incarnation*, chap. 6, par. 31. See also on this subject *Three Principles*, chap. 20, par. 10, and *Threefold Life*, chap. 17, par. 12.

<sup>88</sup> *Apology 3*, text 4, par. 77. See also *Incarnation*, part 3, chap. 5, pars. 31 and 32.

<sup>89</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 6, par. 4

knowledge, viz., into infinity of multiplicity."<sup>90</sup>; elsewhere "the Substantial Power of the great Love of God," and "the outflown Word" in contradistinction to the speaking Word.

Into this most profound mystery I dare not enter further; the unpublished writings of Mr. T. Lake Harris, and the beautiful "*Morgenroethe*" of the Rev. J. Pulsford, have a little broken to the public mind this unfamiliar doctrine. In dim foreboding or remembrance it has never probably been long absent from subconscious human thought. Jane Lead had been anticipated regarding her "Great Goddess and Queen of all Worlds" by W. Postel in the 16th century, who taught "*that the Word had become man, but that when it made itself woman then the world would be saved.*" A belief which some of our contemporaries warmly advocate at the present time.

This belief in Divine Corporeity tallies with one of those marvellously fruitful revelations which every unprejudiced student will find to be so numerous in Boehme's writings; his admission of substance as a *sine qua non* of true spiritual life. "There is a nature and substance in the outward world; so also in the inward spiritual world there is a nature and a substance which is spiritual, from which the outward world is breathed forth."<sup>91</sup>

The grossness of matter has discredited our ideas of substance, and we are used to think of it as very far below spirit. He teaches that it is only inferior, as a manifestation is inferior to the power manifested — that it bears to spirit precisely the same relation that body does to life.

"No spirit," he says, "can bring anything to pass without essence."<sup>92</sup> "Without substance no working can be."<sup>93</sup> And his account of man's loss in the Fall is, "Our substance vanished and shut up in death, was signified by the dry Rod of Aaron, which substance grew,"... "where God's sub-stance became man, in whom the holy fire could burn; for the divine *Ens* which vanished in Adam, which grew again in such kindling, was the food of this love fire... and that same love burning was the new life of the *Regeneration*."<sup>94</sup>

"For Christ had also a soul and spirit out of Adam, and the precious dear Word of the Deity, together with God's Spirit, awakened and raised up again in Christ's flesh the dead substantiality, viz., the body which in Adam was dead."<sup>95</sup>

And he insists very forcibly on substance as well as spirit having been brought into human nature at the *Incarnation* of the Word. "Not spirit without substance, but the substance of the spirit environed with God's Wisdom, Christ's flesh, which filleth the

<sup>90</sup> *Knowledge of All Things*, par. 21

<sup>91</sup> *Regeneration*, chap. 2, par. 31.

<sup>92</sup> *Baptism*, chap. 1, par. 16. *Wesen* in the original, which means substance also.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 2, par. 11.

<sup>94</sup> *Testaments*, chap. 2, par. 31.

<sup>95</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 6, par. 13.

light world in every place; which the Word that became man brought along with it into Mary."<sup>96</sup>

Of which he notices the necessity elsewhere thus: — "Now where the Word is, there is also the Virgin or Wisdom of God, for the Word is in the Wisdom, and the one is not without the other, or else the Eternity would be divided."<sup>97</sup>

"But when I speak of the Virgin of the Wisdom of God I mean not a thing that is circumscribed in a place, but I mean the whole deep of the Deity without end and number."<sup>98</sup>

Without attempting to touch upon the as yet unexplored mystery of the — so to speak — chemical action of the heavenly body and blood entering the corporeal solidarity of our race — and that much lies there within reach of spiritual discernment I am well convinced, — the rectifying efficacy of this divine *Incarnation* is made more intelligible to us by Boehme's teaching as to the formative effect of *all* imaginations. That "Every imagination maketh substantiality"<sup>99</sup> is one of his key notes. "Where there is no substance there is no creating; whereas yet a creaturely spirit is no palpable substance, but it must draw a substance into itself through its imagination, else it would not subsist"<sup>100</sup>

"A spirit out of nature is a magic fire source, and is desirous of substance, the desire maketh substance and bringeth that substance into its imagination, that is the magic fire's corporeity, whence the spirit is called a creature."<sup>101</sup>

"The soul in Adam is gone forth with its imagination into earthliness, away from true substantiality," and since then "the soul hath no image or body which remaineth eternally, unless it be through Christ regenerated out of its first substantiality."<sup>102</sup>

Therefore "we must introduce our imagination and desire into him, that our tinder of the faded image in him may begin to glimmer or glow in the Spirit and power of Christ."<sup>103</sup>

Of all Boehme's doctrines this perhaps is the most needful to modern divinity, i.e., that *Regeneration* does not consist in a new spirit alone, but in a new creature, an everlasting body; that this new-born creature is not itself divine, but that God dwells in it substantially — that it must remain hidden under corrupt flesh and blood till "Christ is formed in us," — Christ identified as to that body with the Lord Christ in whom Jesus, i.e., all the fulness of the Godhead, dwelt bodily; Christ the anointed humanity, Jesus the Divine life anointing it with the holy oil which Adam's corrupt

<sup>96</sup> *Incarnation*, Part 2, chap. 9, par. 31.

<sup>97</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 6, par. 78.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 5, par. 56.

<sup>99</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 10, par. 31

<sup>100</sup> *Incarnation*, Part 1, chap. 5, par. 88.

<sup>101</sup> *Apology 1*, Part 2, par. 186.

<sup>102</sup> *Apology 1*, part 2, pars. 373 and 265.

<sup>103</sup> *Apology 3*, text 2, par. 49.

imagination, lusting after earthly things, had dried up. It is difficult to turn away from the rich treasures which crowd upon one's memory when trying to select the most desirable specimens of Boehme's gifts to mankind. W. Law did not overstate truth when he said that by him "the true ground of every doctrine and article of Christian faith and practice is opened in such a ravishing, amazing depth and clearness of truth and conviction as had never been seen or thought of in any age of the Church."... "His works being an opening of the Spirit of God working in him are quite out of the common path of man's reasoning wisdom, and proceed no more according to it, than the living plant breathes forth its virtues according to such rules of skill as an artist must use to set up a painted dead figure of it. But as the Spirit of God worked in the creation of all things, so the same Spirit worked and opened in the depth and ground of his created soul an inward sensibility to it."

As testimony from a totally different point of view let the opinion of a contemporary be weighed — one whose talents and peculiar opportunities alike qualified him for a just estimate. Writing in the *Athenaeum* within the last fifteen years<sup>104</sup> — Mr. C. W. Heckethorn said: "Boehme's metaphysical system — the most perfect and only true one — still awaits a qualified commentator.. In Boehme is to be found not only the true ground of all theology, but also that of all physical science. He demonstrated with a fulness, accuracy, completeness, and certainty that leave nothing to be desired, the innermost ground of Deity and Nature; and confining myself to the letter, I can from my own knowledge assert, that in Boehme's writings is to be found the true and clear demonstration of every physical fact that has been discovered since his day. Thus the science of electricity, which was not yet in existence when he wrote, is there anticipated; and not only does he describe all the more known phenomena of that force, but he even gives us the origin, generation, and birth of electricity itself. Again, positive evidence can be adduced that Newton derived all his knowledge of gravitation and its laws from Boehme"... "Every new scientific discovery goes to prove his profound and intuitive insight into the most secret workings of Nature; and if scientific men, instead of sharing the prejudice arising from Boehme's system would place themselves on the vantage ground it affords, they would at once find themselves on an eminence whence they could behold all the arcana of Nature. Boehme's system, in fact, shows us the inside of things, while modern physical science is content with looking at the outside. Boehme traces back every outward manifestation or development to its one central root — to that central energy which as yet is only suspected; every link in the chain of his demonstration is perfect, and there is not one link wanting. He carries us from the outbirths of the circumference along the radius to the centre or point, and beyond that even to the Zero, Nothing, with mathematical precision."

Nevertheless, had Boehme read these words it is certain that he would have challenged the truth of the expression, *Boehme's system*. He repeatedly reminds his readers that he had none; that when he described "the true ground and depth

<sup>104</sup> I have not any note of the date with my cutting from it

concerning what God is, and how all things are framed in God's being,"... he only "gave way to his impulse and will," and adds, "I am but a very little spark of light." "This work comes not from Reason, but from the impulse of the Spirit. Only be thou careful to get into thy spirit the Holy Ghost which issueth forth from God, and He will lead thee into all truth."<sup>105</sup>

That this direct dependence upon a teacher, unfettered by ecclesiastical canons, would virtually exclude his books from the public, Boehme well knew, and if now and then he allows himself a caustic remark on this subject we cannot be surprised. Authorities had driven him from his home, after energetic persecutions, solely because he proclaimed the lessons of a superior Instructor. Speaking of the "wiselings of outward reason" in his *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 12, par. 22, he says, "They have understanding already in the eyes of their Reason, and they cannot miss; they can judge all things; what the Spirit of God revealeth that must be a heresy unto them, albeit they do not understand it." And in his preface to the *177 Theosophic Questions*, "Mr. Wiseling will dare to account it a sin to question so very high things, seeing himself cannot understand them." His summary in the opening of the *Aurora* of what "Mr. Critic, which worketh with his wit in the fierce quality, will say when he gets this book into his hand" is an accurately true account of just what is said by both the Mr. Wiselings and Mr. Critics of our own time. But claiming no superior wisdom of his own, he is careful to explain how he won all the knowledge he transmits.

"Not through my understanding, but in my resignation in Christ: from Christ's Spirit have I received the knowledge — the great mystery."<sup>106</sup>

"Searching is not the chief or most especial means to know or apprehend the Mystery, but to be born of God is the right invention"<sup>107</sup> — and faithfully he warns us of what really prevents Divine light from penetrating to our minds. "Men go about to seek God in their own will and skill: men would find God in their own will, and He is not therein; for He dwelleth only in that will which resigneth itself up with all its reason and skill to Him. To such an one He giveth real living knowledge and power to understand His being. Therefore we shall be dumb, dark, and historical to everyone that is not born of God."... "He that will not seek thereby to be a new man born in God, and wholly and unfeignedly apply himself thereto, let him let my writings alone and leave them uncensured. I have written nothing for such a seeker; also, he will not be able wholly to understand our meaning, though he exerciseth much about it, unless he entereth into the resignation in Christ, and there he may obtain and apprehend the Spirit of the Universal; and we will warn the curious critic, speculator,

<sup>105</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 2, par. 80; chap. 3, pars. 1 and 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Apology* 1, part 2, par. 301.

<sup>107</sup> *Forty Questions*, 1, par. 254

and rational artist, that he amuse not himself; he effecteth nothing in this way except he himself entereth thereinto."<sup>108</sup>

And in one of his prefaces he tells us that he shuts and locks up his book with a strong bolt or bar, from the understanding of those who cavil at his writings in a proud, haughty way. What this bolt is we discover in the following sentence of W. Law's: — "Above every writer in the world he has made all that is found in the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of nature, to be one continual demonstration that dying to self, to be born again of Christ, is the one only possible salvation for the sons of fallen Adam." This is really the insuperable difficulty which his writings present to all, which intellect is powerless to overcome. Before that central truth there is, as Boehme says, "a strong lock and bar that must be first unlocked, and that no man can do; for the Holy Ghost is the only key to do it withal. Therefore, if thou wilt have an open gate into the Deity, then thou must stir and walk in God's love."<sup>109</sup>

"And we admonish the loving reader to immerse himself in Divine humility into God and his fellow branch or brother, and so he may read and conceive our received deep sense and apprehension, and be brought from all error into the true rest wherein all things rest in the Word and power of God."<sup>110</sup>

How deep a rest they only know who have reached it; but the immersion into profound humility is very difficult to those who have been used to teach with authority; as Freher expresses it when touching upon the unwillingness of "some of the learned" to read and consider what Boehme offers; "they account themselves so full with their present wisdom and knowledge, that they have no room to desire any other, especially that which cannot be attained without casting away the high esteem of that which they have laid up as a treasure to themselves already; and so every little difficulty of uncouth words or phrases and expressions, which they cannot presently see to agree with their former opinions, makes them loath to be troubled about that which they think themselves to have more and better knowledge of beforehand. Neither can they in reason be blamed, save that they block up their own way to inestimable treasures which they know not of, and others not so learned attain. "From the beginning of the world," said W. Law writing to Dr. Sherlock, "nothing extraordinary in the way of instruction ever came from God, but met its chief opposition from that which was the reigning wisdom of the time."

But now, for such students as can free themselves from slavery to any "reigning wisdom," and seek it where no ecclesiastical finger-posts point out merit, it only remains to cite a few practical hints for the best mode of approach to Boehme's treasure. With his translator, John Sparrow, I can say, "I also, who have much and studiously traced his writings over, have found them difficult, but far exceeding in recompense the utmost pains that I could possibly bestow on them; I find also that

<sup>108</sup> A Warning from J. Boehme, pars. 4 and 7.

<sup>109</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 13, par. 31.

<sup>110</sup> Preface to *Election of Grace*, par. 17.

the understanding of them cometh by degrees, and frequent loving conversation in all the parts and pieces he has written."<sup>111</sup>

When W. Law sent two volumes of Boehme's works to his friend, the Rev. Mr. Neve, he wrote, "The time will come when such supposed mysteries in J. B. will no more lessen your opinion of that fountain of light which was opened in him, than the spots which are said to be discovered on the sun do make you suspect it not to be a body of light. Read these volumes through, without staying at that which you do not comprehend, and you will all along see both why you should continue reading, and why you must be content to learn very gradually, and also whence it is that the greatest and most concerning truths are such a mystery to us."

But he best guides us himself as to such studies when he says, "If you have a desire and delight to read my writings, read them diligently, and especially apply yourselves to the Centre of all Beings, and then the *Three Principles* will be plain and easy to you, and I know, and am assured, that if you apprehend the Centre in the Spirit it will afford you such joy as far surpasseth the joy of the whole world, for the precious stone of the wise men lieth therein, which giveth the certainty and real ground of all things; it freeth man from all trouble and perplexive thoughts in the controversies of religion, and it openeth unto him the highest mystery that is in him."<sup>112</sup>

And again in his preface to the *Clavis*: "When a man reads such writings and yet cannot understand them, he must not presently throw them away, and think it impossible to understand them; no, but he must turn his mind to God, beseeching Him for grace and understanding, read again, and then he shall see more and more in them, till at length he is drawn by the power of God into the very depth itself, and so comes into the supernatural ground, viz., into the Eternal Unity of God, where he shall hear unspeakable words of God, which shall bring him back and outward again by the Divine Effluence to the very grossest and meanest matter of the earth, and then back and inwards to God again."<sup>113</sup>

Shall a teacher, from whom Sir Isaac Newton learned secrets of physical nature, and Hegel a whole transformation of German philosophy, remain unstudied by all but a few sequestered thinkers in Great Britain? Are we so befooled by precedent, have the narcotics of "*received opinion*" made our many searching intellects drowsy in "*the easie ways of ancient mistakings?*" It will not always be so.

Freher was surely a true prophet when he said, "I am assured with Boehme that this knowledge and understanding shall be raised up out of the dust and darkness, in the due time of God, and shall not be further so hidden, unknown, and unintelligible to the children of men as it hath been to the generality thereof since the beginning of the world"<sup>114</sup>; when another generation shall be upon the earth, they that then live

<sup>111</sup> Preface to *Aurora*.

<sup>112</sup> A Warning from J. Boehme, par. 20.

<sup>113</sup> *Clavis*, par. 8.

<sup>114</sup> he refers to man's knowledge of 'Divine mysteries'



shall again bless and praise God that He hath unlocked His secret treasures, and poured out His spirit of understanding upon them that know Him, and are deeply rooted in true love and divine humility." Now, Freher's contemporaneous generation has long passed away; and many secret treasures of spiritual knowledge have been unlocked since he wrote — is it from want of charity and humility that Boehme's are still unopened? It may be so; "mysteries are revealed to the meek."

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## ON THE WORLD-SOUL

With regard to this subject I consider myself to be merely in the position of a carrier. Asked to try and explain that which I do but dimly apprehend, I go to my favourite warehouse for spiritual truths, and putting together a few of those which I deem most valuable, I bring them to light with a very clear address — "To those only who care for the toil of searching for obscure truth."

My freight will be worse than rubbish to any other kind of reader — irritating, because when language fails to convey definite ideas, one of two facts is certain; either words have been misused, or the reader's mind is not able to grasp the thought or information offered; and it is not usual to accept this last conclusion. To those who, glancing at my pack of uncouth words, call them nonsense, I can only say that reproach may cut both ways; such people have no sense of their value. Those, again, who think it rash, presumptuous, or profane to dive into such an abyss of necessary ignorance in quest of some gleam of light, I would entreat to leave it unexamined: for to many minds such inquiry is hurtful rather than useless, because if no curiosity is awake, the attempt to gratify it must appear in a very high degree absurd. But it is not fair to sacrifice the interests of the few to the tastes or prejudices of the many; and there are those among us to whom the mystery of creation and all its tremendous problems of evil and pain are a source of deep unrest; who cannot accept the solution offered by theology, because in truth this is more of an evasion than a clearing up; and who say they cannot leave untouched the fretting knots of doubt, while they wait in faith and patience till "the veil that is spread over all nations" is lifted. How should they wait a Heavenly Father's good time for relieving doubt and perplexity who are so dismayed by the seeming mercilessness of fate in our present world that they question the existence of such a Father?

This state of mind, and all its varying shades of despondency or "agnosticism," is too well known to need explanation: it is for the wants of a mind in such states that I bring to the most likely market these burdens dug out with no small effort from Boehme's mine. But for him I might have been as unsettled and unhappy, — finding ordinary theological teaching, in Bible phraseology, a "bed shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it," and plagued at heart by the discords so frequently made by history and experience in the deep underlying consciousness of an ever-present God.

In the following extracts I propose to give, as briefly as may be, Boehme's account of the origin of opposing wills in the life that derives from one God, and cannot exist out of that Infinitude of Being however much they conflict and this will necessitate a glance at his interpretation of the cause of sin and evil in any shape. Then his

frequent mention of the soul or spirit of the world<sup>115</sup> will fall into place. If these different aspects of the world-soul do not suggest some valuable germs of thought I shall be disappointed. My package but contains samples; readers who appreciate these will find much more help in the context, and I shall be greatly surprised if those who will give a little persevering study to Boehme's books, passing over all that lacks any meaning at first, and absorbing passively all they can understand, do not very soon become aware that they have found access to the roots of many a mystery that "the law behind the law" in nature and spirit is here to be discovered.

It has long been an accepted belief — resting on the first chapter of Genesis — that the stars were called into existence before the creation of man. My assumption, for it is nothing more reliable, is that our world-soul was one of the earlier emanations of the Most High God; but of a later date than the "throne angels," one of whom was the first rebel, the first dupe of pride — "Lucifer, Son of the Morning"<sup>116</sup> — and that according to the law of Spirits it produced as the executive of the creative Word this visible world, of which man afterwards became inhabitant. That this world-soul was corrupted by the evil magnetism of the soul of another orb, Mr. T. Lake Harris told us some years ago. At the end of my extracts from Boehme I shall add his report of this and the other world-souls of which he became cognizant in a trance of many months' duration; and venturing to add that being quite beyond our ken or previous guess does not make the facts asserted impossible or ridiculous, though the king of a tropical country who was first told of snow and solid ice found them so, — I pass on to my business of portage.

"In God all beings are but one being, viz., an eternal One or unity, the eternal only good, which eternal One without severalty were not manifest to itself. Therefore the same hath breathed forth itself out of itself that a plurality and distinct variety might arise, which variety or severalty hath induced itself into a peculiar will and properties, the properties into desires, and the desires into beings."<sup>117</sup>

"The visible world with its hosts and creatures is nothing but the outflown word which hath introduced itself into properties, where in the properties an own self-will is existed. And with the receptibility of the willing is the creaturely life existed."<sup>118</sup>

"And yet if there must exist a receptibility, then there must be an own desire to the perceptibility of itself; viz.: a self-will which is not, nor willeth like unto the one only will; for the one only will willeth nothing else but the one only good which itself is; it willeth no other than itself in the likeness. But the outflown will willeth the unlikeness, that it may be distinguished from the likeness, and be its own somewhat."<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> for he uses the words indiscriminately when speaking of the microcosm

<sup>116</sup> for I am old-fashioned enough to believe in a spiritual adversary of our God

<sup>117</sup> Epistle 6, pars. 8, 9.

<sup>118</sup> *Theoscopium*, chap. 3, pars. 22, 23.

<sup>119</sup> Third Theosophic Question, pars. 9, 10.

Here we must turn to his exposition of "How *Sin* is Sin." "God dwelleth in All, and there is nothing that comprehendeth Him, unless it be one with Him; and if it departeth out of that One, then doth it depart out from God, into itself, and is somewhat else besides God; and that divideth or separateth itself. And hence the law doth exist, that it must go again out of itself into that One, or else be separated from that One. Thus it may be known what *sin* is, or how it is *sin*, viz., the human will which separateth itself from God into its own selfness, and awakeneth its own self and burneth in its own source."<sup>120</sup>

Now for the understanding of this passage one need only remember that discord can be made by sounding musical notes not in harmony and yet within the octave: the self cannot leave the All of God, but in contracting its self-ful "somewhat" it severs part of that all from the rest, and dissonance results. The comparison may suggest the thought that occasional discords increase musical harmony: even so; in the resolving of those discords a well-trained ear finds most subtle delight. But if those discords were to ache on the sense of hearing for a long time together, the effect would be painfully different. The discords in the human soul last so long that we need vast stretches of eternity for their return to harmony, and for these souls' release from anguish and unrest. Nevertheless, I dare believe that ultimate extensions of good will be educed by the Master's hand from the seemingly eternal misery of sin, and one sentence in the page next to that I quote from last supplies a hint full of meaning for those who can follow it out:

"Therefore there must a new will grow out of this opposite will, that so it may give up itself again into that one only union, and the contrary opposite will must be broken and slain,.... and so the will that is thus departed"<sup>121</sup> "dwelleth in God,... and is then known to be a new birth, for it re-assumes all again into itself, in that One, but not with its own self desire, but with its own love which is united with and in God, so that God is all in all, and his will is the will of all things, for one only will subsisteth in God."<sup>122</sup>

And that, too, is St. Paul's account of the final issue of man's earthly tragedy. Now will not all that is re-assumed be of inestimable value? A simile may elucidate facts, but never satisfy in lieu of a reason, and it may be asked, how can any properties derived from perfect good cause evil? A question that cannot be evaded; and though to answer it fully, as Boehme can and does answer it, would be impossible here, I must give in fewest words the best idea I can of his solution of the enigma.

He tells us of the seven Spirits of God, of the seven forces ceaselessly interacting in eternal nature, which form the base of every life. To name these is not to explain but to puzzle; and in the slight variety of his account of two or three of them one finds

<sup>120</sup> Third of the *Six Theosophical Points*, pars. 42, 43.

<sup>121</sup> from self

<sup>122</sup> Third of the *Six Theosophical Points*," pars. 50, 52.

additional perplexity; yet these, astringency, mobility, anguish<sup>123</sup>, fire — struck up from the violence of the contest; — and then love, — equivalent in his system to light — sound and substantiality are the roughly indicated names he gives to the seven activities of the Eternal Spirit.<sup>124</sup>

Now on the due evolution of these, all good depends, the first three being the root of the perfect blissfulness rising from the last three; but if the fire caused by the struggle of the first three does not develop light and its consequences, then evil begins, for — "The four first forms in themselves are the wrath and the anger of God in the eternal nature; and they are in themselves nothing else but such a source or property as standeth in the darkness, and is not material, but an originality of the Spirit, without which there would be nothing. For the four forms are the cause of all things, as you may perceive that every life hath poison, yea, the poison itself is the life."<sup>125</sup> It will be easily understood what sort of anguish and of unsuccessful strength must result from a fierce hunger for getting and keeping — due to dominant astringency, or from a bitter, restless striving for advance — when the second form rules, or to intense susceptibility to the influence of such contending impulse, when love has not softened and enlightened, or the true "intellective understanding" which Boehme ascribes to the action of the sixth form— sound — been opened; nor the rest or perfected bliss of heavenly substantiality been attained. Necessarily such conflict would kindle heat in that awful abyss of fire which is the soul; and the will of man,— the immortal part which was anterior to time — roused more or less by every provocative from within or without— must make unharmonised natures what every day shows us they are; nay! proves in some degree within each of us. Here then we get the meaning of the saying — "All whatsoever it is that liveth and moveth, is in God, and God himself is all, and all whatsoever is formed or framed, is formed out of Him, be it either out of love or out of wrath."<sup>126</sup>

With more clearness than is usual to him, Boehme states the paradox, and answers it in the same book.<sup>127</sup>

"Seeing God is everywhere, and is himself all, how cometh it then that there is in this world such cold and heat, such biting and striking among all creatures, and that there is nothing else almost but mere fierceness or wrath in this world? The cause is that the first four forms of nature are one at enmity against the other without the light, and yet they are the causes of life."

There is hardly a single work of his in which this origin of evil is not harped upon, so that anyone who possesses either of his books can fill up this imperfect outline by reference to it; and I may proceed to the main topic of this paper.

<sup>123</sup> consequent on the effort of these two first to escape from each other

<sup>124</sup> And we must remember that the uncouth and insufficient designation of a seer of such agents as these, proves nothing against their actual existence.

<sup>125</sup> *Threefold Life of Man*, chap. 2, par. 44.

<sup>126</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 15, par. 145.

<sup>127</sup> chap. 9, pars. 78, 79.

"The living Word of God, which is God himself.. .speaketh itself through nature forth into a Spirit of the world in *Spiritu Mundi*, as a Soul of the Creation. And in the speaking forth or expression is again the distinction or severation into the fiery astral root in *Spiritu Mundi*."... "The Spirit of the World is now the Life of the Outward World."<sup>128</sup>

"*In Spiritu Mundi*, many evil workings spring forth which appear contrary to God; also, that one creature hurts, worries, and slays another; also that wars, pestilence, thunder, and hail happen. All this lies in the Spirit of the World, and arises from the first three properties, wherein they break and frame themselves in their opposite will. For God can give or afford nothing but that which is good, for he is alone the only good, and never changes into any evil at all, neither can he, for he would then cease to be a God. But in the word of his revelation or manifestation, wherein the forms, qualities, or dispositions arise, viz., wherein nature and creature arises, there exists the working or framing into evil and good."<sup>129</sup>

I must here parenthetically observe how great a strain upon faith is removed by this explanation of evil. Every thoughtful child sees the contradictions of external nature to what he is taught of an all-loving Creator. He hears of destruction from storms and earthquakes, and is told that these are sent in mercy for the chastisement of sinful man, or for the exercise of submissive faith, and that idea he can assimilate in some measure, his mother even having inflicted corrective trials now and then; but he sees the cruelty of animals tormenting and devouring each other — cats with mice for example — and asks, "Why did the good God cause this? " "It was not so from the beginning; it is a consequence of the fall of Adam," is generally the pious rejoinder; which as soon as he is able to think a little longer upon the point he must feel to be a put off: what connection can there be in mercy or in justice between the sin of mankind and the sufferings of irresponsible beasts? Now in all Boehme tells of the world-soul the connecting cause is found. To him also it was the key to those wonders of vindictive wrath in the historic books of our Old Testament, which scandalize so many of its benevolent sceptical critics in our day.<sup>130</sup>

"The other life"<sup>131</sup> "is an inceptive beginning efflux of the separator of all powers, and is called the soul of the outward world, which life in the outflown properties is become creaturely, and is a life of all creatures of the visible world wherewith the separator or Creator of this visible world imageth itself and maketh a similitude according to the spiritual world."<sup>132</sup>

"The stars and elements are a substance of the *Spiritus Mundi*."<sup>133</sup>

<sup>128</sup> *Treatise on Election*, chap. 5, pars. 47, 52.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 6, par. 63.

<sup>130</sup> See *Three Principles*, chap. 1 8, par. 29, and chap. 20, pars. 20, 24.

<sup>131</sup> the temporal life contrasted with the eternal life in this passage

<sup>132</sup> *Theoscopium*, chap. 3, par. 30.

<sup>133</sup> *Treatise on Election*, chap. 8, par. 4.

"The earth is a hunger as to the Spirit of the world, for it is sprung forth and divided from it."<sup>134</sup>

"Moses says God made man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the living breath, and then man became a living soul. But we are here to understand that God did not in a personal and creaturely manner stand by like a man and take a lump or clod of earth and make a body of it; no, it was not so. But the Word of God was in all properties in *Spiritu Mundi* and in the *Ens*, or being of the earth, stirring up from the spirit of the world, and spoke or breathed forth a life into every essence."<sup>135</sup>

"Our first parents, with their spirit, are gone out of the heavenly paradise into the Spirit of this world, where then the Spirit of this world instantly captivated their body and made it earthly."<sup>136</sup>

"The Spirit of the World had captivated Adam and introduced its substantiality into his imagination."<sup>137</sup>

"Adam with his mind was not in God, but in the Spirit of this world, and he became feeble as to the Kingdom of God, and so fell down and slept. And then God, by the Spirit of this world, through the Fiat, built or formed out of him the woman of this world."<sup>138</sup> "In his sleep the Spirit of this world clothed him with flesh and blood, and figured him into a beast, as we now see by very woeful experience."<sup>139</sup>

"Adam must carry the untoward gross body that the Spirit of the world hath put upon him."<sup>140</sup>

"God the Lord, through the Spirit of this world, made them coats of the skins of beasts, and put those on them, that they might see that according to this outward world they were beasts."<sup>141</sup>

"As this world breaketh and passeth away, so also all flesh which is generated out of the Spirit of this world must break and pass away."<sup>142</sup>

"As soon as Adam was overcome by the Spirit of this world, then he fell into sleep, viz., into the outward magia, which signifieth or resembleth death, for the outward kingdom hath beginning and end, and must break off from the inward; that is its death."<sup>143</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, chap. 5, par. 54.

<sup>135</sup> Treatise on *Election*, chap. 5, pars. 87, 88.

<sup>136</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 22, par. 16.

<sup>137</sup> First Apologie, part 2, par. 577.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, chap. 17, par. 54.

<sup>139</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 17, par 55.

<sup>140</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 25, par. 31.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, chap. 20, par. 6.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, chap. 19, par. 7.

<sup>143</sup> First Apologie, par. 215.

"All whatsoever we think, do, and purpose in the outward man, that the Spirit of this world doth in us men, for the body is nothing else but the instrument thereof, wherewith it performeth its work."<sup>144</sup>

The same dislike which exists with regard to belief in planetary influence on the fate of human beings will undoubtedly be felt for this idea of a great Spirit ruling in material nature. It is an empire within that of the Supreme Ruler which is claimed and as such it is eagerly denied, both because it runs counter to preconceived notions, and because godly jealousy takes alarm. And though other gods than the God are recognised throughout the Bible, as for example "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement," and "Worship him, all ye gods," devout people will unhesitatingly maintain that the gods spoken of thus are only idols of wood and stone.

"The wise heathen," says Boehme, "have understood that subject and have honoured them"<sup>145</sup> "for gods, yet they missed the true ground of the inwardness; but among the Christians it is altogether silent or dumb except to some few, to whom God hath manifested or revealed it."<sup>146</sup>

Surely this anxiety to prove the non-existence of other spiritual potentates in the universe arises from an estimate far too low of man's superiority of origin and ultimate destiny!

The second birth of *Regeneration* restores his latent powers in possibility; and when these are fully developed neither the stars, nor elements, nor Spirit of this world will be able any longer to rule over him; for "we are children of the omnipotency of God, and inherit His goods in the omnipotency."<sup>147</sup>

It is a little singular that the fate-forming influence of unseen powers should be ignored as being incompatible with free-will, when the power of parents to mould their children's fate is so unquestioned. Yet by free-will we do not understand a will free from bias or obstruction, but one which is free, within the narrow limits of temporal fetters, to choose between the good and evil left open to choice; that decision in a restricted scope leading to unlimited consequences of self-formation either for good or ill.

"The Spirit of this world hath so very much longed after man and hath drawn him to it, that it might show forth its wonders in him, that man should produce all arts and languages in it"<sup>148</sup>.... "We declare unto you that the Spirit of this world is created with such an inclination; and that it hath a natural will to reveal itself and all its mysteries, as we see before our eyes, by what it hath built or brought forth, how it hath erected

<sup>144</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 25, par. 1.

<sup>145</sup> throne angels

<sup>146</sup> Sixth Theosophic Question, par. 18.

<sup>147</sup> Sixth of the *Forty Questions*, par. 28.

<sup>148</sup> the Spirit of this world



a dominion and kingdom upon earth. Do but look upon the doings of man from the highest to the lowest; the Spirit of this world hath thus built the whole order of them and God hath permitted it."<sup>149</sup>

Yes, for in every case the terrible truth holds good that — "Whereinto a Spirit introduces its longing imagination, the essence and property of that it receives in the great mystery of all Beings....'The Will-Spirit is free, it is the eternal original, let it do what it will."<sup>150</sup>

But out of the great mystery of all Beings, One has entered into the soul of the human race, whose longing imagination is to save it from all bondage, and meanwhile the multiplicity of self-ful wills are in their unhappy servitude correcting and limiting the hurtful agencies of each other.

"The Heart of God with His desiring standeth towards us with His imagining."<sup>151</sup>

A digression must here be made with regard to the soul of man. When Boehme speaks of it without qualification, he always refers to the "fire Spirit, the true essential soul," of which he affirms over and over again, "it hath had no beginning: also it will have no end."<sup>152</sup>

But of another that had beginning and must end he tells us the World-Soul was the deputed originator: — "The outward created life from or out of this world, viz., from the sun, stars, and elements, which God, with or by the Spirit of the great world, breathed into Adam's nostrils, wherein then he became also an outward soul."<sup>153</sup>

It is this "outward soul," so far as I can learn, that is sustained by the World-Soul on its lower plane, precisely as the true soul of man lives in and by the Supreme Being; and I should suppose from analogy that at dissolution, or at any subsequent period when the spirit of man is released from the magnetic attraction of animal life, the animal soul became one with the World-Soul.

Before this merging of the individual in the universal, there is no doubt a possibility of gaining access to the forces of this "Cosmic Spirit," and subordinating them to the purposes of man. Mr. Sinnett's friend, Koot Hoomi, refers to this power when he speaks of a process yet unknown to the people of the West for "strengthening and refining those mysterious links of sympathy between intelligent men — the temporarily isolated fragments of the universal soul, and the Cosmic Soul itself; bringing them into full rapport."<sup>154</sup> And by such full rapport I suppose most of the miracles of Oriental adepts are performed. I neither question the power nor its results, but while maintaining that this is not the highest exercise of human powers, I

<sup>149</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 9, pars. 7, 8, and 9.

<sup>150</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 16, pars. 25, 26.

<sup>151</sup> *Incarnation*, part 3, chap. 7, par. 20.

<sup>152</sup> *Treatise on the Incarnation*, part i, chap. 3, pars. 52, 54.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, part 3, chap. 5, pars. 74, 75.

<sup>154</sup> *Occult World*, p. 145.

see that these last have so much fallen into abeyance that to the majority of minds this cooperation with the Cosmic Spirit would appear the highest, and its danger would not appear. Until it is understood how much the mediumship of man is coveted by that great Spirit of the world, its ability first to fascinate and then to subdue to a lower range of power or less abiding results would never be suspected; for while we are in mortal bodies every unseen spiritual agent has a sort of prestige: we cannot see its limits, and our own are constantly felt.

Yet it is no empty boast to say that the soul of man is potentially incomparably superior to the spirit of this outer world; it was made in the likeness of God; it has ability to be made one with Him to whom is given all power and all dominion both in Heaven and earth; it is to be instrumental for opening the infinite wonders of Divine wisdom, which as much exceed those of the mundane soul as eternity surpasses time. And it is this sense of latent power, coupled with faith in the promises of God, repeated from century to century, which leads many people to shun access to the ambiguous agents of the mundane soul, in seances for instance, lest a lower attraction should divert them from the higher, and various and conflicting testimony of finite spirits drown the still small voice of the spirit nearest of all who speaks to us from the centre of our being.

I am quite conscious of the offence that will be given to many whose faith I most sincerely respect by the notion of anything less than the direct action of the God of all Gods in creation, and in all subsequent human agencies. To such people the idea of a "Cosmic Spirit" acting as vice-regent in the outer world will be shocking; a similar shock is given to the devout ignorance of an uneducated person if one says that thunder results from such and such well understood processes of nature, or that the cause of a rainbow is explained by the laws of refraction of light. Impossible; thunder is the voice of God; is it not said so in Job, chap, xl, 9? and in Genesis that God would set his bow in the cloud? In vain one speaks to such readers of secondary agents; they may listen and keep silence, but will think your views profane, — and be "of the same opinion still."

On minds better instructed I would fain press the consideration that intermediate powers in no wise diminish the supreme majesty and infinite power of the One from whom all existences derive; and that the action of subordinate wills being wholly dependent on the measure of life and ability taken up from the all-permeating efflux of Eternal Nature, it may be truly affirmed, though it sounds paradoxical, that all that happens in creation is done by Divine forces, but not all according to the will of God; which only Boehme can adequately explain, therefore he must be quoted from again: — "We know that God is a Spirit, and His eternal will is magical, that is desirous; He always maketh substance out of nothing, and that in a two-fold source, viz., according to the fire and light. Out of the fire cometh fierce wrath, climbing up pride, willing not to unite itself with the light, but a fierce, wrathful, eager, earnest will, according to which He is not called God, but a fierce, wrathful, consuming fire. This fire becometh also not manifest in the pure Deity, for the light hath swallowed up the

fire into itself, and giveth to the fire its love, its substantiality, its water, so that in God's substance there is only love, joy, and a pleasant habitation, and no fire known. But the fire is only a cause of the desirous will and of the love, as also of the light and of the majesty, else there would be no substance: as it hath been expounded in the former writings."<sup>155</sup>

It is only thus that we are enabled to understand many a discrepancy in the Bible between the emphatic announcements of Divine mercy and exceeding pitifulness, — the unconditional "God is Love," and commands and transactions which outrage every instinctive sense of pity. These disagreements are usually passed over as what are beyond the scope of human judgment. To the faithful the submissive inquiry, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is a sufficient quietus; but now that faith ebbs apace is it not well to remove from the scoffer's range any difficulty for which we can apprehend a possible mode of reconciling reason to faith? Comprehension is quite another phase of knowledge; and on this subject unprejudiced study has hardly begun.

Extracts from Mr. T. Lake Harris's "Arcana of Christianity," should be prefaced by the reminder that they were communicated in a state of trance; and are not the result of cogitation or derived opinions. This fact may give them more or less weight, according to the tendencies of the reader. Ten years ago I confess to having looked upon these books as a stupendous instance of unbridled fancy: but much study of very different writers, and principally of Boehme, during all these ten years, has brought to light so many wonderful agreements with, and confirmations of, the statements they contain, that I read in them now to learn and not to judge.

"Every sun has a solar spirit..Every planetary orb of the terrestrial sort a terrestrial spirit. The spirit of every orb is diffused into, and lives throughout, its mineral, animal, and human kingdoms, and is an immortal entity, a living, indivisible, and instinctively conscious existence, but is without human personality, and so abstractedly conscious of pleasure or pain, but without power to determine its own sensations, insphered in every solar, aromal, or terrestrial planetary world, is an appropriate World-Soul, living in the life of all its distinct creations, and permeating alike its atmospheres, its waters, its material crust, and its electro-igneous centre. These World-Souls comprise the first family of God, and their number is as that of the stars..They are absorptive organs for the Divine Spirit; and pervading each its own world, and living in all its parts, they distribute throughout matter the Divine vitality ..I was given to understand that the World-Soul of one planet had become inverted from light to darkness, in consequence of the abandonment of its race to moral evil; that the external body of that orb had long since been dissipated; but that the psychical form of the planet still adhered together, and was the abyss spoken of in ancient days..The lost Spirits from that orb were the first tempters and deceivers of

<sup>155</sup> On the *Incarnation*, part i, chap. 11, pars. 44 to 48.

our human race..The World-Soul of our orb is exceedingly afflicted, and suffers in all the inversions of Divine order upon our globe,"<sup>156</sup>

"The World-Souls of the universe exist in pairs, male and female. They maintain a vast impersonal consciousness throughout the electrical natural spheres of the orbs to which they respectively pertain. The World-Soul of our own orb is feminine and its masculine counterpart is that of the planet Mars, through which it is supported in its fearful struggles at the present time."<sup>157</sup> "The nature and the direction of the affinities of the World-Souls determine, to a large extent, the industrial and social harmonies of the human races. The grouping of the planets, in psychical relations growing out of these affinities, determines the genesis of ideas in individuals."... "When the World-Soul is deranged or disturbed the disturbance and disadjustment of human society is inevitable, as it is through the World-Soul of each orb that the Divine harmonies are distributed."<sup>158</sup>

"The associations of the World-Soul determine the typical varieties of animals; and new races and varieties of races will appear among us as the result of the disenfranchisement of our own World-Soul from the slavery of the hells. The origin of subversive instead of harmonic types of lower life, quadrupeda and reptilia, together with the unsolved problem of the first cause of the state of universal antagonism which marked the ancient pre-Adamic periods of our own world's development, was in the magnetisation of the World-Soul of this orb, through the means of the inverted World-Soul of that corrupted planet which has ceased to exist..<sup>159</sup>

"It may be objected that this view is false because Creation belongs alone to the One Divine Spirit, and that all the wonders of nature are attributable to Him. There is here, however, no reality but simply appearance of difficulty; subversive creations are *through* the hells, but not from the hells, as a first cause. The ultimate form which a creation will assume depends upon the channels through which the creative influx shall descend in its approach to the plane of ultimates. If that influx, which is invariably Divine, is through mediums which have become perverted, an organic perversion is the extreme result."<sup>160</sup>

I wish to draw special attention to this saying about the magnetisation of the World-Soul, because I think it points to a hitherto unworked vein of knowledge. The everyday marvels of magnetism, animal magnetism as it is called, will give us, I believe, something of a key to the mystery of evil. To all who think, I conclude it is a mystery; most of all, one would suppose, to people who regard the idea of a spiritual tempter as an outworn superstition. But if there is no powerful adversary behind the scenes, urging, prompting, and alluring to evil practices, how are we to explain conduct which opposes every instinct of self-interest? If human weakness accounts for much crime,

<sup>156</sup> *Arcana of Christianity*, part i, vol. i, p. 101.

<sup>157</sup> *Arcana of Christianity*, the Apocalypse, chap. 2, par. 98.

<sup>158</sup> *Arcana of Christianity*, part 1, vol. 1, p. 103.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 107.

it leaves much more that is laborious and self-restraining unaccounted for: the delusions of vain women, of world-worshipping men, have more the effect of cruel bondage than of self-indulgence. Now if we examine the curious process by which a magnetiser induces in his patient every feeling which he wills to establish, and the completeness of consequent sensation in that patient, I fancy we may begin to understand how it is that men and women believe they will find happiness in an evil course, and success in habits which must land them in ruin.

In the sixth chapter of the first part of Boehme's "*Treatise on the Incarnation*," from the first to the sixth paragraph there is a wonderful description, if I understand it aright, of the process of biologising a mind reduced to a perfectly passive state in the case of Adam. I hope those who can refer to this will do so. No quotation in part will do justice to his meaning, but this much I must cite: after saying that Adam "lay as dead but was not dead, but the Spirit stood still," it is said that "all whatsoever the starry heaven bringeth forth stood magically in the mind as a looking-glass on which the Spirit of this world gazeth;" and, "when the earthliness wrestled with Adam, and that he imagined thereinto he became instantly infected thereby."

Now the earth with its animals, birds, fishes, etc., — outcome, as I suppose, of the delegated powers of *Spiritu Mundi* — had according to Mr. Harris, been infected by the mighty Spirit of a superior orb, and man coming to this world was open both to a direct and indirect magnetic influence adverse to that of the Holy One; for he drew his animal soul from the World-Soul, and this was already in partial subjection to the dethroned angel whom man was created to supplant— and if the teachings of some wise seers does not mislead — in the long reaches of eternity to restore, at the time of which St. Paul spoke, when God shall be all in all; when as Hahn naively observes, evil cannot remain in anything or any being.

"The poor soul is poisoned through a false imagination, and through its own compression of its desire to come to be such a hungry fire-source, which is only a shutting in of the true life."<sup>161</sup>

"Now the Spirit of this world is by the devil's kindling and poison, which he hath darted thereinto, become perished"<sup>162</sup> "163

Are not these expressions as apposite to a man or woman whose wrath or malice drives on to murder as to a magnetised subject who is told he cannot move, or that the cold is intolerable while standing in the heat of a crowded room? There is the same "compression of the desire" on a fixed imagination, the same "shutting in of the true life." And so long as the delusion is not one that subjugates our own will and imagination we can look on amazed and feel the truth of those Bible words, "he that committeth sin is the servant of sin;" and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is

<sup>161</sup> Boehme on the *Testaments*, chap. 2, par. 4.

<sup>162</sup> i.e., corrupt

<sup>163</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 11, par. 2.

liberty;" but when we receive into ourselves the devil's poison how confident we are of our view of facts being correct; and so is the victim of a controlling magnetiser, till "the hard compression of the false magnetic desire is broken in sunder, and opened in that manner as a man strikes up fire."<sup>164</sup>

Now Boehme further tells us with reiterated emphasis that the kingdom of phantasy is the peculiar appanage of the fallen angel of light; that "Lucifer hath willed to domineer in the might and properties of the central, fire, viz., in the changing and phantasy."<sup>165</sup>

If anyone who reads this has the good fortune to possess his treatise on the "*Election of Grace*," let it be referred to for most curious information as to what he means by this kingdom of phantasy; in chap. 4, par. 100, to the end of the chapter, the fullest account of this will be found. In chap. 6, par. 31, he says: — "The kingdom of phantasy grasped after Adam, and would be manifested in the image of God."

This no doubt was the triumph aimed at by the envious rebel; to rivet the imagination of man by any means was enough for his purpose, for — "Every imagination modeleth only its like in itself and manifesteth itself in the similitude."<sup>166</sup>

But — "The Spirit of God goeth with the willing into the soul, it desireth the soul; it setteth its magia towards the soul; the soul need only to open the door."<sup>167</sup>

The brief mention of the World-Soul by two other writers will complete my consignment. Madame Blavatsky says: "The Astral Light, or *Anima Mundi*, is dual and bi-sexual.... It is the life-principle of every creature, and furnishes the astral soul, the fluidic *perisprit* to men, animals, fowls of the air, and everything living."<sup>168</sup>

"The *Anima Mundi* proper was considered"<sup>169</sup>, "as composed of a fine igneous and ethereal nature spread throughout the universe, in short — ether."<sup>170</sup>

Eliphaz Levi describes it thus: — "A natural and divine agent, bodily and spiritual; a plastic, universal medium; a common receptacle of the vibrations of movement, and the images of form; a fluid and a force that one might call in a certain sense the imagination of nature. By means of this power all nervous systems secretly communicate with one another; from it arise sympathy and antipathy, from it dreams, and by it the phenomena of second sight and supernatural visions are produced."

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<sup>164</sup> Treatise on the *Testaments*, chap. 3, pars. 7, 8.

<sup>165</sup> Fifth Theosophic Question, par. 6.

<sup>166</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 4, par. 9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, part 3, chap. 5, par. 8.

<sup>168</sup> *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 1, p. 301.

<sup>169</sup> by ancient philosophers of whom she was speaking

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 317.

## LOOKING GLASSES

"Now I know very well that I shall not only in part be, as it were, dumb or obscure to the desirous reader, but also tedious, and he will be somewhat troubled at me."<sup>171</sup>

Undoubtedly I shall be tedious too, if from no other cause than that of frequently interpolating quoted words, but as my object in writing this is to put into intelligible shape the instructions I have gathered from teachers little read, it would be as foolish to apologise for quoting them so often as to express regret that pearls were threaded upon a string. The string is of no use or value, apart from drawing those pearls together into combined beauty. So of these attempts of my mind, which has been honoured with this use by the Giver of all good; and I am not going to neglect my own proper mission, however humble, in order to assume that which belongs to minds of higher calibre and more originality, therefore perhaps less free to seek out, and admire, and set in order treasure which has already been laid open to those who could seek and find, but do not. Because no one comes forward to remind contemporaries of all the wealth buried in the writings of Boehme and Swedenborg, offering proofs and samples, it is my misfortune, not my choice, to be driven again and again, by my ardent desire that this should be done, to try and elucidate subjects quite too large for my grasp. If anyone with adequate intellectual force would deal with them — presupposing equal familiarity with those writings — how it would rejoice me! For I am convinced that if Boehme and Swedenborg held that place in our Universities which they ought; if they were studied as Plato and Aristotle have been studied, Atheism and Materialism would be regarded by all intelligent people as the gross blunder of ill-informed minds. That must inevitably result from an unprejudiced study of the works of these two great seers; distinguished above all other teachers for having united intensity of love for God with knowledge inexhaustibly profound. Their writings are pervaded with a love equal to all the most ardent pietists can feel or desire to feel, and in those writings the most searching intellect<sup>172</sup> will find itself led on from one depth to another, till it rests from all the wearying uncertainties of modern thought, and begins to see that the permitted embodiment of the human race in its present fallible condition is compatible with Omniscient Love, and that all the woe and sin which now appear unconquerable will be made to evolve a yet larger purpose of Divine mercy in ages to come.

It is Boehme alone who can satisfactorily answer the taunt implied in a sentence such as this that happened to meet my eye in a recent number of the *World's Advance Thought*. Its drift is one of the commonest jibes against Christian faith, and is uttered on all sides as unanswerable; as indeed it is by theologians.

<sup>171</sup> Boehme's' *Three Principles*, chap. 5, par. 12.

<sup>172</sup> if but cognisant of its previous ignorance, and teachable

"Omnipotence applied to God must be a misnomer, or everything in which power is inherent is a part of God."

Briefly to intimate how Boehme solves this paradox, one may paraphrase that saying thus: "White is a misnomer for what we call whiteness, since it includes every colour."

Instead of accepting the help these wonderful mediums transmitted to us, by dint of labelling one with the title of fanatic, and on the strength of that title neglecting what he wrote; and adding an ism to the name of Swedenborg, and turning his vast science into the narrowness of a religious sect; we have disparaged both, and effected what the enemy of souls must strongly desire, the consecration and maintenance of darkness.

It is real grief to find thoughtful people poring, year after year, over a number of modern views of evolution, while Swedenborg's "Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom," and Boehme's "Sixth Epistle," which meet every requirement for harmonising difficulties on that subject, remain unstudied. When, after reading infusions of Darwin in recent literature, I open either of those works, I find my despair at human perverseness taking expression in the outcry of Solomon, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"<sup>173</sup>

In the Visions of "M. A."<sup>174</sup> this passage occurs: "I want to ask whether those scenes are real — real, I mean, in the same sense as scenes in our world?"

"In precisely the same sense. The scenes of the world of spirit, and the surroundings of the spirit in any sphere of its existence, are just as real as are the scenes and surroundings of your earths. Each is impressed upon your own spirit; each is the result of your own state. They would not be real to you in your present state; they were real to you in spirit as you visited them, just as these scenes are not real to us."

And again referring to another, the seer asked, "Can you give me any message about that vision?" and the answer was, "*It was not a vision but experience.*" These last words I have italicised as what most impressed me in that wonderful record. They set me thinking, very impertinently a meta-physician might have said, had he known my thoughts, for the first was that a direct assertion like this, coming from the source it did, was worth more than all the intricate theories of Kant regarding objective and subjective perceptions, which according to the jesting old story, he complained, "no one was able to understand, except Fichte, and he misunderstood."

Do I then presume to understand the rationale of this simpler doctrine, that every spirit forms its own realities — not its phenomenal perceptions, its own delusive views of things only — but its surrounding facts, real as well as objective to itself? By

<sup>173</sup> Prov. xvii, 16.

<sup>174</sup> Oxon



no means; but putting together this statement of it, and several hitherto dark sayings of Boehme's — which for years have baffled my efforts to understand — I think I see a glint of a great law, valid in every world, which finds its best elucidation in the structure of looking-glasses; and by this word Boehme designates it. The requisite for every looking-glass is arrest of light at a certain distance from its source; audits office the giving back of objects which stand above or before it; on its smoothness and purity depends the accuracy of their outlines. Now as limitation is thus essential to consciousness, it is in that sense that he says, "The spirit is the life, the looking-glass is the manifestation or revelation of the life, else the spirit would not know itself."<sup>175</sup> And having in the next chapter to that in which these words occur given most profound insight as to the relations of the Wisdom, i.e., "the passive essence of divine operation "to Deific will, he continues: "The will in the looking-glass of the Wisdom discovereth itself, and so it imagineth out of the Abyss into itself, and maketh to itself in the Imagination a ground in itself, and impregnateth itself with the imagination out of the wisdom."... "for, the will becometh impregnated with the glimpse of the looking-glass."<sup>176</sup>

Parenthetically I must here observe that it is such passages as these, and many others susceptible of the same inference, which led Martensen and some English students to the hasty conclusion that Boehme's teaching involves a belief of the Supreme Creator first becoming self-conscious in His creations. If they would add on that plane of self-manifestation, I could entirely agree with them; but to suppose God to be only completed by and in the creaturely life seems to me quite foreign to Boehme's thought, so much so as to have prevented him from guarding his expressions from misprinting in many passages — virtually excluded from his doctrine by others — such as these: "God is in Himself the Abyss, viz., the first world, of which no creature knoweth anything at all, for it standeth solely and alone with spirit and body in the Byss or ground. Thus also God Himself in the Abyss would not be manifest in Himself, but His Wisdom is from eternity become his ground or Byss."<sup>177</sup> Now the Wisdom is antecedent to the creation of our universe. Even if careful study of all Boehme wrote had not led me to the same conclusion, Freher's verdict on this point would be final with me; for he, who had read all his books ten times through, sums up the question thus: "If there is in the first world before and without Nature no perception, knowledge, etc., then there is also not only no Wisdom, but no God in no sense and manner;" and after examining arguments for accusing Boehme of "defining God as potentiality alone, which requires the aid of nature before it gain life, reality, and power of its own"<sup>178</sup> Freher says: "This explication, I grant, is plausible if looked upon from without superficially, for Boehme's own words do plainly say all these things; and if there were but that one

<sup>175</sup> Treatise on the *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 1, par. 43.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 2, pars. 5 and 7.

<sup>177</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 3, pars. 24 and 25.

<sup>178</sup> I use Martensen's words for the indictment

and true distinction observed between the eternal generation without nature, and the eternal manifestation in and through nature, nothing more could be desired."

It is because God does, in Boehme's phraseology, "only find Himself in man" on this earthly plane of Divine action, that until human nature is purified enough for His image to emerge from its troubled, turbid depths, the earth cannot be covered with the glory of the Lord. "The first Adam was contrived, or imagined, out of the light's essence, and substantiality,"<sup>179</sup> Boehme says, and the restoration of that image is only to be effected by the same process.

We now find our souls darkened, and to escape from that darkness which solar light cannot relieve for more than a hundred years at the longest, we must will to regain light. "A will is no substance, but the will's imagination maketh substance." That is the awful law of nature. "The mind is the wellspring where the one only will can create out of it evil and good, which is done through imagination or through representation of a thing that is evil or good. And so is the property of that thing become of the same property in the life. The life's property catcheth or receiveth the property of the thing represented, and kindleth itself therewith in itself "... "all according to the represented substance: whatsoever the imagination caught, that it introduceth into the mind."<sup>180</sup>

Here we have, only at greater length and in fuller light, a reiteration of the fact that in man also "the will becometh impregnated with the glimpse of the looking-glass" i.e., with suggestive enticements to any subject on which the human mind can turn its attention. For as man was destined to be the "looking-glass of the Deity," so is all in this world a looking-glass for man, relatively speaking, a passive which can reflect upon his will every image which his desire — imagining — can impress upon it.

The enchantments we may work upon ourselves by this law of our nature, are often quite as gratuitous as the shapes and faces which a sick person's eye can trace out for pastime in every object before it, in wall paper, folds of curtain, or hang of clothing thrown aside; in forming these we have no accomplice, and the slightest movement breaks the illusion. But the great sorcerer has legionary servants who can only see into our life through the mind of man, and well they know how to occupy that magic glass with a phantasmagoria to the tastes of each.

We each form our own looking-glass, it is true, and see everything there of inner or outer world, as it is seen by no other eye, for every object mirrored there reflects something which self has added or deducted from images of surrounding life. Nevertheless, it is constantly liable to cross lights, and to being tinted by other colours than our own "soulish fire." And with every change of these, and every new refraction of the light of truth, "the image in the spirit becometh altered, all according

<sup>179</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 12, par. 26.

<sup>180</sup> *Third Point*, chap. 4, pars. 7 and 8.

to what is contained in the will which the soul hath framed or contrived ...viz., according to the imagination."<sup>181</sup>

When Franz Baader says, "Every will brings its own seeing and with this its pleasure and its craft," one's first thought is that the seeing is an arrangement of that will's cunning, made to secure its pleasure. Indirectly it is so, but not consciously. We often say with impatient surprise, "I cannot make him or her see so and so!" — glaringly evident to the speaker. In very many cases no human power could alter the mental perception of another; because the constant interaction of the reflex images in the mirror of the mind, and the spirit which has immassed them there, precludes the sight of actual facts as involuntarily as the breath of a person shut up in a small glass house would obscure the passage of light and obstruct the captive's vision.

We are all prisoners within the magic circle of our own unconscious spells. The will has created images that suit its desire, and the images have corroborated the will.

The momentary fury of irritation which will flare up in a narrow or despotic mind when its prejudices are controverted is solely due to this. No one likes to have his own special looking-glass shaken, or its plane confused by images foreign to those usually there. Hence the instinctive reserve of Englishmen: their fixity of opinion makes them impatient of every subversive thought. Nor can any imported ideas alter the proportions of our own. How often do we come from an audience with the inner thoughts of another — say, of a very conceited, very proud, or very melancholy friend — feeling as if we had been in contact with a mind partially deranged! Conceit has been in such comical disagreement with outside verdicts, pride so bewildering blind, and dejection so wholly out of keeping with the cause alleged, and yet so intense and immovable. We wonder; but if our secret chambers of imagery had been inspected probably there would be quite as much to startle on some other line; and I think we should all guard more carefully against foolish wishes and vain or angry thoughts, if we knew how surely, when habitually allowed, they "compact themselves into the substance of the phantasy."<sup>182</sup> Whoever has long entertained one of these befooling fixed ideas must know not only their tormenting force but their fascination: for as Swedenborg so profoundly observed, "The objects flowed from the representations and not the representations from the objects."<sup>183</sup> The slave of habit feels the truth of that, and still remains a slave.

It is in perceiving how very much we all make the world we see that deepest disquiet arises as to the reality of anything. Amiel felt this when writing in his *Journal Intime*<sup>184</sup>: "We produce our own spiritual world, our monsters, our chimeras, and our angels; that which ferments within us we make objective. All is a marvel for the poet, all divine for the saint; all is great for the hero; all mean, ugly, and bad for the base

<sup>181</sup> Seventh of *Forty Questions*, pars. 18 and 19.

<sup>182</sup> *Election*, chap. 5, par. 25.

<sup>183</sup> *Spiritual Diary*, vol. 3, par. 3672.

<sup>184</sup> vol. 1, p. 67

and sordid soul. The bad man creates a Pandemonium around him; the artist an Olympus; the elect a Paradise, which only each can see. We are all visionaries, and what we see in things is our own souls."

Undeniable; but it is the appropriation of what in the abstract really is and not — chimeras excepted! — what does not exist. All those states of being are real in the soul, and with each we can so identify ourselves that we shall be cognisant of no others. This is the tremendous prerogative of man: his will, desire, and imagination bring into animate existence all that corresponds to their quest and, by intensifying their magic influence, blind him to any other. This has been neatly exemplified in a recent publication:

"The other evening I looked up and saw over me a black sky. I supposed that the stars were hid. But I was standing under an electric light. When I had walked on and looked up again, the stars came out. There is a man who is living under the light of his one science and it is honest white light. But in it he loses sight of the whole heavens. He needs to go further on in his life to widen the circle of his experience.... He needs to step out from under his own blinding light in order that he may gain faith's larger vision."<sup>185</sup>

We do all step out from under one light to another as time goes on; yet each generally blinds us in some degree; and our visions change as from time to time our looking-glasses become clearer or more dim and more warped by distorting modes of thought. Necessarily, too, imagination hungers for new delights; and phantasies — a more ephemeral brood by far — shift from year to year. We all prove in turn that "the universe is an infinite series of planes; each of which is a false bottom; and when we think our feet are planted now at last on adamant, the slide is drawn out from under us."<sup>186</sup> How sharply and suddenly sometimes! and what a heart-sickening process it is!

Sooner or later every looking-glass, which reflects this world's image only, must break, and of the time inevitable when this befalls Boehme has such words that he must be quoted again: "Outward Reason supposeth when the outward eyes seeth a thing, that is all, there is no other seeing more; indeed, it is bad enough when the poor soul borroweth the outward looking-glass, and must make shift to help itself only with that; but where will its seeing be when the outward looking-glass breaketh; wherewith will it then see?... It can see no other where. Therefore it often cometh to pass that when the poor captive soul descrieth itself in the inward root, and thinketh what will follow when the outward looking-glass breaketh, that it is horribly terrified and casteth the body into anguish and doubting. For it can nowhere discover where

<sup>185</sup> Newman Smyth's *Christian Faith and Forces*.

<sup>186</sup> Emerson's *The Preacher*.

its eternal rest should be; but it findeth that it is in itself in mere unquietness, more-over in darkness; and hath the outward looking-glass only as it were borrowed."<sup>187</sup>

He calls it borrowed because it was not that for which man was born; he was imagined by God into existence in the world of Light, and brought himself by his own imaginations into a nature which — until eternal light is generated in its soulish fire — is wrath and darkness. Nor can the soul of man embody itself in any lasting substance till it brings its desire into light and wills to be reborn.

"In which world now it uniteth itself and giveth up itself, from the same it getteth substance in its imagination,"<sup>188</sup> and "out of the light the right or true substantiality exists, for it is a fulfilling or satiating of the will."<sup>189</sup>

I wish every reader of this paper could have access to the context of the words just quoted from Boehme's Six Points. It is too long to give here, but at par. 38 a solution is offered to the all-concerning problem, how with debased desires and a perverted will is any soul to lift itself to higher imaginings? and that must not be omitted. It can "often not know itself; it becometh oftentimes overwhelmed with the fierce wrath of evil and malignity; so that it is as if it were quite perished; and it were also perished if the 'Looking-glass of the Deity' did not stand presented to it, wherein the spirit of the poor captive soul may draw breath and recover itself, and generate therein again. For, in the looking-glass of the light world standeth the *Incarnation* of Jesus Christ presented to the soul's spirit; and the Word that becometh man, standeth in the sound, and is stirring; the soul's spirit CAN therein draw breath or recover itself and anew generate itself, else it were often past help."

It is here that the wisdom of the Father of Spirits comes into very striking contrast with the unwisdom of His child — in the modern thinker who declares an historic Christ to be too limited a conception for operative influence on the whole race. For when our philosophers cease to deny the possibility of Divine *Incarnation*<sup>190</sup>, they still question the probability of such an event on these two counts; first, that under such narrow limits of time and place a creaturely manifestation of God must be inefficacious, and, secondly, superfluous, because, teaching being the main thing for amendment of a fallen race, a higher standard of ethics was all that was needed for its uplift. It is their assumption; but no teaching and no abstract ideal of virtue has ever told on human imagination with any constraining force. The life of the Saviour did — His enemies themselves being witnesses. It does still, as everyone knows who has become a "new creature," who has won a spiritual life which has joy, hope, and ambition quite independent of all that death ends. In the chaotic confusions of a self-pleasing heart, the shadows of happiness which flutter past, and the ever-broken and ever-renewed images of pleasure that occupy for a while and sooner or later

<sup>187</sup> Fifth Point, chap. 7, pars. 21, 22, 23.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, par. 29

<sup>189</sup> First of *Forty Questions*, par. 278

<sup>190</sup> Eastern Theosophy having lamed that cavil

mortify — all produce weariness, often ending in despair. In such states a soul truly does not know itself; at one time it feels somewhat good, at another hard as iron, almost diabolical; and to give it an imagination of what it ought to be and could be, and must be if it is to find rest, is a boon of unspeakable worth. Because an ideal of this sort is as essential to rebirth as some little point is for fluids to crystallise around if they are to form themselves into right angles. From Jacob's days and onwards, an image which strongly seizes on the imagination always causes an attempt in some measure to reproduce it, as surely as an echo gives back sound and still water the outlines of a figure raised above it. Till Jesus came to mankind in the flesh there was no picture of Divine love and tenderness in the human imagination. He brought that, as well as the undivided tinctures of fire and light, into the soul of our race. Who will dare to say that these two saving gifts were, as regards Time, simultaneously bestowed? When we talk of tincturing material things we often refer to a very slow process, and I suppose that the human soul began to be thus tinctured when Eve received the promise of victorious seed. When the Christ came<sup>191</sup> we must believe that the transmuting process had gone far enough for the basis of regenerative life to be evolved: the substance bought by the Holy One was then ready for the light of the risen sun of righteousness to quicken into organic existence. This light permeating one's life from within, as it ever does, intensified the prenatal throes of eternal life, and in that anguish man was born again. Suffering is inevitable, if supreme bliss is to be known, for there must be a solution of all an evil will has framed into the "substance of its phantasy "before the image of God, Christ in us, can begin to renew itself in the soul. With his usual accuracy of similitudes, Boehme represents this when saying that a soul which imagines according to the dark world's property "loseth God's looking-glass: it becometh filled with dark, fierce wrath; as a man mixeth water with earth, and then the sun cannot shine in it, and that very water loseth the sun's looking-glass, and the water must again sink down from the earth, else it never becometh a looking-glass of the sun any more, but is captivated in the fierce, wrathful earth. Thus it goeth also with the human life; while it imagineth after or according to God's Spirit, so it conceiveth or receiveth God's power and light, and apprehendeth God; but when it imagineth after or according to earthliness and the dark world's property, then it receiveth the essence of the earthliness and dark world, and filleth itself with the same. And then is the life's looking-glass shut up in darkness, and loseth the looking-glass of the Deity, and must be born anew."<sup>192</sup>

Now when the crisis of true conversion comes — be it slow or sudden — a leaping-up of spiritual light seems to shatter the compressed rubbish of our vain desires, and to purify the soul's vision from the foul dust of earthly-mindedness; but the will to convert must precede contrition, and the will to forsake sin is not always at our command; hence the mercy of a body, the soul's outward looking-glass; on this the weakest will can exercise some control; it can forbid itself both word and deed, and so doing, little by little it gathers strength, and the imagination is purified; and as its

<sup>191</sup> in *"His creature,"* says Boehme, *"He is a man "*

<sup>192</sup> Fourth Point, chap. 6, pars. 25, 26, 27.

turbid products subside, the example of the Holy One of God can shine in it once more. Then we begin to be able to fix thought upon that example by "such a strong importunate imagination of faith"<sup>193</sup> that the soul "bringeth its magnetic hunger into God's love; the soul then attracteth Divine substance, namely, the essential wisdom of God."<sup>194</sup>

That I may make more clear the difference in effect between this process and that of any amount of philosophical thought or ethical belief, I will cite the other greatest seer on record, who, never having read any of Boehme's works, exactly agrees with him in many vital points.

"The love which is of the will cannot be raised in the same manner as the wisdom which is of the understanding. The love which is of the will is raised only by shunning evil as sin, and then by all the goods of charity, which are uses, which the man therefore accomplishes from the Lord. Therefore if the love which is of the will is not raised at the same time, the wisdom which is of the understanding, however it may have ascended, still relapses to its love."<sup>195</sup>

This is precisely what happens to those deluded pietists whose religion is notional and not a life; and I fear we must one and all know, that our devoutest feelings have wings, used often as swiftly and suddenly as those of birds quitting a branch, and our mundane feelings all the close persistency of earth-worms, which never leave their line of action. Human nature is now averted from God, cleaving to the dust. "In God's holiness it cannot take hold; for the will was sent off from that; therefore there must now be a similitude wherein the imagination of the human nature may take hold."<sup>196</sup> Now Jesus Christ is that similitude.



<sup>193</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 23, par. 32

<sup>194</sup> *Microcosmus*, par. 6.

<sup>195</sup> Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom*, par. 259.

<sup>196</sup> Boehme's *Treatise on Baptism*, chap. 2, par. 33.

## THE IMAGE

"The right true human essence lieth not in the outward man, it lieth within, for it was given to Adam in an image. But it is shut up and lieth in death, and cannot qualify or operate; and hath also no moving in itself, unless it becometh stirring in the power of the Deity."<sup>197</sup>

If it may be assumed that ideas generate spiritual existence in higher spheres than this now occupied by mankind, and that, in this, congeries of spirits are attracted by mental figures which serve as a rallying point for their specific modes of operation, we are supplied with a theory that may well explain the deterioration so often observed in people whose leading ideas have undergone a radical change, and the worst change of all, total discredit after having been long held sacred: this has, I believe, been noticed in all countries where Christian doctrines have dislodged the hereditary belief of Mussulmans and Hindoos before their morals had been revolutionised: a process that must require more lengths of time than fervent missionaries like to believe. Too often a baptised convert is a more unmendable rogue than he was before the little light of conscience he had was disturbed and the claims to his obedience undoubted. When trying to extricate the essentials of religious faith from tangles of gross superstition, it is hardly possible to leave the first uninjured in average human beings; but the ill effect of subverting old forms of belief, old habits of imagination and tricks of thought, is not at all confined to religious life. Sir A. Helps says, in one of his books, that "when the ideas of a people are overcome, the nation is virtually conquered and will soon die out"<sup>198</sup>. In later times the dying out of uncivilised peoples wherever Europeans and European ideas have established themselves, may be due to this in great measure; and not only to newly-imported vices.

It may seem a fancy, but I deem it to be a fact, that among ourselves declining health begins in not a few cases with the removal of old mental land-marks: for loss of confidence wherever it fails is a loss of vitalising energy. But why? Because "a city divided against itself cannot stand." If caprice invalidates lasting affection, how much more must concentration of will be lost when frequent misgivings disturb the ground of former assurance? But how should this affect bodily health? Surely by scattering spiritual associates from whom confirmation of faith and combined forces of will are unconsciously gained, as long as certain forms of thought are fixed and dominant. Swedenborg affirms that if the spirits who make up man's life were suddenly withdrawn, he would drop down dead: that they often gradually withdraw we may well believe, as by his showing, they are changed according to the changes of man's

<sup>197</sup> Fifth Point, chap. 8, pars. 2 and 3.

<sup>198</sup> his remarks bore upon the effect of Spanish conquest in America, among the many tribes who first resisted, and gradually become extinct, by no other modes of extermination



ruling affections. These statements helped me to see a use, not perceived before I met with them, in the fixed ideas of weak and narrow minds; for they may serve their turn well enough: should we try to enlarge them, how often the fate of the fabled dog and the shadow might befall! an inadequate notion foregone, only a blank is made; what the mind had a firm grasp of, on Time's frail bridge is dropped; what shone fair in a larger reflection of Truth is beyond its feeble apprehension. Again, puerile details of religious observance may have higher use than we could suppose, while leaving out of thought their efficacy on the unseen side of worship: until we have learned — the last thing modern thinkers care to learn, — that the human mind has no solitary action, that it is in every attitude a leader for subordinate spirits, we shall never duly estimate the importance of all our habits in both inner and outer life.

It is now time to report what has been my best reward for searching in Boehme's depths for the causative relation of form to spirit. Only those who have tried to make a clear pathway of thought to his meaning when he wrote of the image can appreciate the worth of my find. While trying to trace out the bearing of his axiom, "the figure has caused the spirit," the dense obscurity surrounding his use of the word image began a little to disperse. It remains to be seen if I can lessen it in other minds. appeal to any docile reader of his books for assent as to the impossibility of understanding what he meant when referring to the image; in nine passages out of ten they seem to me even more baffling than those which bear upon "the Wisdom."

But at last I have been enabled to see that for us they are more practically important. As no one will read this essay who is not a very determined student in Boehme's school I feel at liberty to treat the subject with some thoroughness.

I think everyone must recognise the curious inadvertence with which, when reading books hard to understand, the mind passes over sayings which answer to nothing already within its scope of vision; it is natural; flippancy in passing judgment after such imperfect study is often natural, too; I fell into both these errors a few years ago, when saying in print<sup>199</sup> "Why Martensen judged it suitable to speak of the Virgin Sophia as *The Idea* when *All* ideas of the Abyssal God, prior to nature and creature, are said by Boehme to have been reflected in her, as in a passive mirror of the divine mind, I cannot understand." Though this mode of speech is exceptional in all he wrote, to confess here my mistake rids me of a little burden of shame. Nothing can be clearer than these words of his "which spirit the Idea, Jesus, an efflux from the Divine Unity came to relieve"<sup>200</sup>, and of course the inseparableness of the Word from The Wisdom is here implied, when Jesus is called an efflux from the Deity — the invariable definition of Virgin Sophia; but I had not noticed the sentence when criticising a writer who had. Remembering this, it is with diffidence that I offer the little I apprehend of the relation of the Idea to the image.

<sup>199</sup> *Light and Life*, September, 1886, p. 22

<sup>200</sup> Twelfth Theosophic Question, par. 25

A passage in "Nature's Finer Forces" will best explain my conjecture. When describing the origin of the sun, moon, and planets, Rama Prasad says, first that Prana, the *life coil*, is the shade of Manu, the atmosphere enlightened by the Logos. As the body in sunlight casts a shadow, "the suns are given birth to in this shade by the impression of macrocosmic ideas into this shade; these suns, the centres of Prana, become in their turn the positive starting points of further developments. The mantis, throwing their shades by the intervention of the planets, give birth to the moons,"<sup>201</sup> so that according to him, the shadow of some object that intercepts light, becomes the first original of the transmitted light which proceeds instrumentally from itself.

Rather a new idea, is it not, to most of us, that the shadow of one orb lays the foundation of another? Yet it had been implied as to other foundations by other teachers long before. After saying that "the soul was not substantial but essential, and was apprehended where the fire originated," Boehme adds, "but the shadow of itself hath fashioned itself into a figured image in the desirous will of God."<sup>202</sup> In his literal translation of the first chapter of Genesis, Fabre D'Olivet gives this reading of verses 26 and 27: "And he said, the Gods, declaring his will, we will make Adam in the shadow of us....And He did frame out, He, the God, the self-sameness of Adam<sup>203</sup> in the shadow of His own. In the shadow of Him, the Being of Beings, He created him."

By the help of Rama Prasad's words, quoted above, I can better conceive of the image to which Boehme attributes so much efficacy in the *Regeneration* of the soul. Dwelling in the light from which all light derives, may not the Sun of righteousness, "the first-born of every creature," have cast a shadow, which was the formative figure of the first Adam? is the image, the shadow, the Idea? To most readers this will seem too fanciful to be worth writing down, but what Boehme repeatedly asserts equally offends both reason and common-sense; this, that in every human soul an image is propagated, which, when substantiated by regenerate life, becomes "the true temple of the Holy Spirit, yea, even God in His manifestation and revelation of Himself."<sup>204</sup> When trying a few years ago to find a place for this incoherent thought, a passage in Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* struck me as possibly referring to the same unintelligible fact; it is curiously in agreement with Boehme's report, though given in such different terms. "Here we have the Word of the second Jehova and His face"<sup>205</sup> "forming both but one, and yet being two; a mystery which seemed to us unsolvable before we had studied the doctrine of the Mazdean *ferouers*, and learnt that the *ferouer* was the spiritual potency, at once image, face, and guardian of the soul, which finally assimilates the ferouer."<sup>206</sup> On the next page we read,

<sup>201</sup> p. 79

<sup>202</sup> Of the Image of the Turba, par. 4.

<sup>203</sup> universal man

<sup>204</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, par. 240.

<sup>205</sup> presence, as the Protestants translate it

<sup>206</sup> *Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 479.

"The *ferouer* is the spiritual counterpart." Now when the image in the soul comes to life, the soul is represented by Boehme as regaining the "wife of his youth," spoken of in Mai. 2, 14, the divine womanhood of Adam's androgynous perfection, until his treachery to her disqualified him for the heavenly consort and left him only fitted for an Eve.

It is indispensable here to give Boehme's own words and with this much of preface; he frequently speaks of heavenly substantiality as if he only meant that in the abstract, though no one used to his writings can fail to see that by those words an organised corporeal vehicle for the indwelling spirit of God is often signified, "Seeing that the soul in the beginning of its creation was clothed and adorned with this heavenly substantiality, and it was the soul's right inward body, and that the soul in Adam is gone forth with its imagination from this substantiality, whence that substantiality is become again shut up in death, viz., in the still nothing, and the soul is entered with its imagination into the earthly kingdom, and nevertheless the first image which became shut up without the life, yet hangeth to the soul, but without its apprehension or understanding; therefore now when the light of the soul becometh kindled again, and the heavenly substantiality, out of God's majesty, receiveth the life, viz., the light in the soul, then the dead substantiality becometh living in the light's power, and becometh with the now new introduced substantiality, one spiritual body, for it is of one only essence; and here death riseth up in Christ, here God and the inward man becometh one person. Understand it aright, this new light-life is Christ."<sup>207</sup> And thus is Christ formed in us. This image "hanging to the soul" is the effaced, too generally the inoperative image of God; our birthright ever since the treader down of the serpent — the hydra-headed serpent of self-love — was promised; the image which can give to our soul's magically creative fire, the fuel that produces Heaven's light, and from the meekness of that light comes the water of eternal life which alone can make immortal bodies.

"Because it was a departure from the regular academic rules, I am afraid they will want to make learned Reason its judge."<sup>208</sup>

"Take pity of your life, and of your fair, heavenly image. Ye are God's children; be not the devil's."<sup>209</sup>

Commenting on Genesis iii, 15, Boehme says: "In that inspoken word the poor soul obtained breath and life again; and that inspoken voice was in the human life as a figure of the true reflex image."<sup>210</sup>

All that has been discovered about voice figures gives a significance to these words, which will not, I hope, be overlooked.

<sup>207</sup> First Apology, part 2, pars. 373 to 376.

<sup>208</sup> Gichtel's Letters.

<sup>209</sup> 17th of *Forty Questions*, par. 28.

<sup>210</sup> *Election*, chap. 7, par. 46.

It is impossible, I think, to escape the conclusion that our souls have perceptions of which the mind can take no cognisance. "I must say," Plotinus wrote, "that the whole of our soul does not enter the body, but that something of it perpetually abides in the intelligible world, and a part in the world of sense.... We do not know what happens to either part of the soul until it reaches the whole of the soul."<sup>211</sup>

Assuredly any quickening of desire for man's long-lost glory, from seeing its faded image, does not come within range of present consciousness. But how many physical processes persist within us unperceived: is it likely when so many vital transactions in a flesh and blood body are inscrutable that those of our spiritual life should be less secret?

Blinded as we are by the specious powers of reason, we are slow to imagine that anything of importance can happen in our inner world unknown to what we call ourselves; as little can we believe that a number of subordinate spirits act in that hidden sphere, building up the existence which we suppose is all our own. Such ideas are scouted as unreasonable: they are so, but that does not prove them to be untrue; our rational senses being as limited on their own plane as those of the body are on another. Even science accepts as momentarily certain, what its most learned professors ridiculed as absurdly unreasonable twenty years ago.

Boehme teaches that on every level of creation, nature, as a derivative of eternal nature, has similar laws of action, however diverse the factors by which those laws are carried out. Now, as we know that in surface life a plan or outline serves in the construction of every material work, it seems possible that the formation of the spiritual body goes on according to a pre-existent design; and that for the recovery of true human creatures this image of it is engendered in every child of man as naturally as other instincts of the race. Inherited aptitudes, as we know, may long remain dormant or overborne by stronger impulses, yet without becoming extinct, so with the Heavenly image while animal passions and worldly cupidities predominate, it must remain lifeless, as Boehme admits, "in truth with most it is so," for "Man now lieth shut up after his fall, in a gross, deformed, dead, bestial image; he is not like an angel.... His paradisaical image is in him as if it were not, and it is also not manifest."<sup>212</sup>

Any tolerably advanced student in Boehme's neglected school will not need to be told how this image is first brought to life and then to its full evolution in heavenly substance; but a brief recapitulation of his account of this process may be welcome to others, the more so as it is identical with what he teaches about the organisation of man — as a creature.

The idea of the deific mind in that beginning was seen in the wisdom; it was impressed on the human mind after the severance of the divine and human nature in

<sup>211</sup> *Descent of the Soul*, part 8.

<sup>212</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 8, par. 47.

man; and henceforward born in all mankind. If that image rouses the will to desire its fulfilment, the will involves its concentration of desire in that image. Hence what Boehme calls the astringent form of nature, contracting; next resistance to that restraint — mobility; the conflict of those antagonistic forces causing ceaseless unrest till the fire of life breaks out<sup>213</sup>, and this gives life to the meek munificence of light with its resulting vibrations of sound, which doubtless aid in forming the substance of that perfect creature that, when fully evolved, manifests the purpose of God in the previously revealed image. This summary is what one might call Boehme's account of creation by the seven forms of eternal nature in the abstract: by a very other line of instruction, not excluding, but involving with practical counsels this bare outline, does he teach how "the first Adamical image of God may again appear; and become seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling."<sup>214</sup>

Instruction not to be epitomised in an ephemeral page for the hasty glance of an unconcerned reader. His epistles are accessible in reprints for but a few shillings, and in the first of these, all that may not be cast before a careless public is impressively opened to an attentive mind. The dangerous and ignorant doctrine of salvation by imputed merits, by any efficacy of the blood of Christ external to the soul, is powerfully impugned in this epistle; and without any obscurity comparatively speaking, it proves that "out of man's willing must God's spirit become generated; it must itself become God in the willing spirit, or else it attaineth not divine substantiality."<sup>215</sup>

Applying this to the inanimate image in the human soul, we can understand that unless the will of man desires its restoration to life it cannot become a living, breathing creature, and how truly it was said by J. Pierrpoint Greaves, that "the creative process is neutralised by contradictory emotions."

For the animal soul and its astral associates creaturely evolution is secured by nature — an organism good for a term of years, usually; or as our friends, the modern Theosophists say, for many recurrent periods of time. But time has beginning and end; the human soul neither; and being a fire spark out of God's might, no effect of man's will can be only negative; it is inalienably at his own disposal, to surrender to good or evil; and by yielding habitually to evil, he forges his own fetters. Even when not earnestly aiming at goodness he is incurring future results which no wise thinker could leave unconsidered. For by the habitual bent of his will and desires now, he forms his future external appearance. Let him think to it. "The image in the spirit becometh altered all according to what it contained in the will which the soul hath framed or contrived."<sup>216</sup>

<sup>213</sup> the involved spark of soulish life, i.e., will

<sup>214</sup> Epistle 1, end of par. 16.

<sup>215</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 10

<sup>216</sup> Seventh of Fourth Questions, par. 19.

Who would willingly enter the world of spirits, where disguise is impossible, disfigured, monstered by diseased imaginations and loathsome grovelling tastes? Such souls "will have lost the right and true image; what the daily lust and delight hath been, such will their image be."<sup>217</sup>

Shameful, not human, appearance will not be the heaviest part of the penalty. Bodily form, as we all know, conditionates consciousness. In vain should we bring a dog, or cat, or ape, into a fine library or lovely garden, hoping to rejoice them; with their bodies they cannot even perceive what would delight a creature more perfectly organised. God is Love, but his omnipotence could not make degraded animalised human beings sensible of angelic joys. It is not God, but man who, when leading an animal life shuts himself out of Heaven, for "Thy holy body must be regenerated if man's spirit would see God; otherwise he cannot see him except he be born again in the water of the holy element in the spirit of God"<sup>218</sup> that his disappeared body may be made alive; else he hath no sense or sight in the holy life of God.<sup>219</sup>

This is what is gained by assimilative union with the "noble image," heavenly consciousness. This the "figure that causeth the spirit " that can be one with the Christ. One more quotation from Boehme will explain the relation of the image to the soul more decisively, perhaps, than any other that could be selected. "The soul hath the seven properties of the inward spiritual world according to nature; but the soul's spirit is without properties, for it standeth without or beyond nature, in the unity of God, and yet becometh manifest through the soulish fiery nature, in the stillness, for it is the true real express or reflex image of God, viz., an idea, in which God Himself worketh and dwelleth; so far as the soul bringeth its desire into God, and giveth itself up to the will of God. But if not, then is this idea, viz., the soul's spirit, dumb and workless; and standeth only as an image in a looking-glass, which disappears and hath no substance, as befell Adam in the fall."<sup>220</sup>

It should be noticed here that Boehme's use of the words "the soul's spirit "in this passage implies what he has elsewhere fully demonstrated — that of the three souls which co-exist in man's nature only the first "out of the Eternity " outlasts Time. Both the animal soul and the astral soul have necessarily their spirit and their proceeding breath, or they could have no bodily organs; but the original soul, "the child of Omnipotency," is the only one in which the image of God can be revealed by that soul's spirit. Students of Boehme will find this a very needful difference to keep clearly in view, as without it his various use of the terms soul and spirit leads to much confusion of thought.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid, question 30, par. 61.

<sup>218</sup> who hath manifested himself in Christ with this same water source

<sup>219</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 2, par. 21.

<sup>220</sup> Explanation of Tables of *Three Principles*. Microcosmos, par. 5.3

## RESURRECTION BODIES

In reply to "E. S. W.," as to what sources of information I possess regarding these, my answer is that from the Bible I gain the knowledge of faith, and that I have been saved from this being reasoned away by such knowledge of understanding as I am able to gather from Boehme. For other minds this might have no weight; to me it has been a revelation which brought rest to many perplexing thoughts. Someday I hope to deal with the subject at greater length, but that will necessitate many quotations from the *Philosophus Centralis*: too many, I doubt, for the patience of readers of Light. This in briefest summary is what I understand from his intimations. That at the time of the general resurrection, all earthly fixities of state will be dissolved and every force set free. That the laws of spiritual affinity will then be irresistible and every magnet will draw its own natural adherents. Of all creaturely formations Boehme said: "The magnetical attraction is the beginning of nature,"<sup>221</sup> — the same creative law will rule when to the spiritual body a body in ultimates is restored. Not, of course, by the revivification of corrupt corporeity, but by the return of undying powers previously involved in its perishable matter. These, according to his report, are from the quintessential part of the earth from which the bodies of our race were evolved. At this point I must drop the clue of his teaching, from inability to justify my own deductions from it, without copious reference to the original text. What I suppose it to contain is this — that in our bodies — by their nutriment both before and after birth, we unconsciously assume, and supply, naturing conditions to the comatosed spirits of a past Eon fallen into a darkness even more profound than our own<sup>222</sup>, and that these form in every human body a constituency which is disbanded at death. Some of these as temporal spirits beginning in time may end when the body is returned to earth, but those which had an earlier origin, having taken influence for good or for bad from the central spirit of man, have a future before them; escape from the baser ingredients of mortal flesh and blood certainly: but between the time of dissolution and the time of magnetic attraction to their old leader, even Boehme gives not the faintest hint of what that future is. Only on one certainty he insists: "All things enter again into that whence they proceeded."<sup>223</sup>

"Everything entereth with its *Ens* into that whence it takes its original."<sup>224</sup>

It is interesting to know that "the ancient Egyptians believed that the life atoms of the mummy did, notwithstanding the embalmment, keep on for three thousand years to throw off invisible mites, which at the end of this time would again come together for

<sup>221</sup> *Election*, chap. 2, par. 41.

<sup>222</sup> as to spiritual light and life

<sup>223</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 15, par. 42.

<sup>224</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 22, end of par. 7.

a one-ment into a new body, for the man in whose service they had formerly been."<sup>225</sup>

St. Martin has a mysterious saying to which my thought reverts when musing upon those discharged servants of the human will. "It is," he says. "in the earth that the substance is prepared which serves for a basis and a first step to the reintegration, or to the new birth of all beings in the universe."<sup>226</sup> Further, our thought cannot follow, any more than it can on some other lines of occult history which we believe in none the less. These outgone spirits, which build the perishable body they afterwards forsake, are not the only constituents of that which is reformed at the general Resurrection: Boehme shows that man has in his measure a creative work: himself the re-out speaker of the Word, by whose breath all things come into existence, by the breath of his mouth, the unconscious fiat of his will, man also produces spiritual entities which are not ephemeral. Dr. Franz Hartmann puts this fact before his readers very clearly: "Man is a centre from which continually thought is evolved and crystallises in forms in the world of souls. His thoughts are things that have life, form, and tenacity; real entities, solid and more enduring than the forms of the physical plane."<sup>227</sup>

They differentiate and organise powers previously indefinite by the magic of an attractive focus; so at least have I read the riddle of "the figure causeth the spirit." For these, as the out-births of our own spiritual nature, we are responsible, and whether we believe this or not it is these that will return to their source, when all disguises and all artificial separating restraints fail in the terrible light of that day which will make the whole past of every human being a vividly present now. Analogy is not valid as argument, yet to my mind the received belief among Christians that redeemed souls will form the mystical body of Christ, not to speak of Swedenborg's Grand Man, formed of myriads of generations of human beings, goes far towards justifying the belief that each of these, when perfected, will be in like manner an organised host of spirits trained and made subject to the central spirit from which they took their direction. Though Van Helmont does not connect his ideas on this point with bodies reforming at the Resurrection, they so well express what Boehme's dark sayings have led me to believe, that I shall give here two quotations from his "Paradoxes " as an interesting enlargement of thoughts suggested already:

"And because these out-going spiritual ideal beings are not mere spirits, but spiritual bodies and bodily spirits, as being born of the whole man, who consists of the soulish body and spirit, and that all these spirits have their original, out of and from the central spirit of man, viz., out of the heart, and are sent abroad as his messengers; must not, therefore, these messengers perform that which they were duly sent about, and go thither, whither the central spirit or will of man designs and aims them; and in like manner return by revolution to man again? And must not

<sup>225</sup> Philangi Dasa's *Swedenborg the Buddhist*, p. 61.

<sup>226</sup> I cannot find chapter and page reference for this, but the words are his.

<sup>227</sup> Dr. Hartmann's *Magic*, p. 139.



therefore the works of man follow him which he hath done in this lifetime, whether they be good or evil? Especially seeing<sup>228</sup> that new spiritual bodies go forth continually from man, which belong to him and contribute to the whole man, for to make out his full measure until that member which he supplies in Adam or Christ do attain to that perfection which suits with such a head, that so a perfect member may be joined to a perfect body, and a perfect body united to a perfect head?

"Must not also finally those spirits<sup>229</sup>, and every least atom, after they have wrought out their revolution, return to man again and unite themselves with his central spirit, and so all these spirits being united with the central spirit, make up the whole man?"<sup>230</sup> "And forasmuch as the voice and word of man are his offspring and children, viz., his outflown spirits and angels which continually, from the beginning of his life until his death, go out from him and make up the whole man.... and all his out-births are spiritual, endless, everlasting being, as well as he himself is; how is it then possible that ever they should be separated from man, or that they should lose themselves or perish in the great world, which is man's mother, any more than a man is able to lose himself?"<sup>231</sup>

What one would like to know is how they are employed in the great world during their temporary separation from man. Upon that mystery neither Boehme nor Van Helmont offer any gleam of light.

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<sup>228</sup> as was mentioned before

<sup>229</sup> as a great and well-ordered army under their captain general or *Adonai Zebaoth*

<sup>230</sup> On the Microcosm, p. 8.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

## ETERNAL BODIES

"Understand us aright what we mean; we speak the precious and sublime truth, as we know and understand it. The new man is not only a spirit: he is even flesh and blood, as the gold in the stone is not only spirit: it hath a body, but not such a one as the rude drossy stone is."<sup>232</sup>

Mr. Lockerby seems inadvertently to have blended ideas gathered from Boehme and Mr. T. Lake Harris. Such words as "primates," "atomic forms," and "arch-natural" at once remind one of the Arcana of our great contemporary seer. They are not to be found in the writings of Boehme<sup>233</sup>. Neither can I recall in them any mention of a magnetic body, though he says emphatically that "the magnetical attraction is the beginning of nature."<sup>234</sup>

But in claiming for him specialty of teaching as to the elaboration of an arch-natural body in the human frame, Mr. Lockerby is wholly right, and I thank him for drawing attention to that most important point, and gladly seize the opportunity for trying to make it a little clearer than it can be while embedded in very obscure context. According to Boehme the necessity of *Regeneration* bears upon substance; not a new state of mind or feeling, but the heavenly body which the first Adam lost and which only the second — Christ in us — can restore. A new soul we cannot have; it is an organism suited to the soul's divine life that every child of man needs and cannot have without the "new creature "of the second birth. This he urges with importunate iteration, and he startles readers unused to his books by attributing to this new creature flesh and blood; here for instance, "seeing God hath created man in a substance, to be therein eternally, viz., in flesh and blood; therefore of necessity, to that willing which giveth itself up into the Eternal, must such flesh and blood be put on; as it was, when God created it in Paradise in the Eternal. Whereby then we clearly know that God hath not created us in such flesh and blood, as we now bear upon us, but in such flesh and blood"<sup>235</sup> "as to the willing, in the new birth, is put on."<sup>236</sup>

Unlike some of our modern seers, he could not flatter mankind with the hope of any other bodily existence behind the veil proving permanent, however real, pleasant, and lasting it may seem. He knew better. Listen to his earnest warnings as to this.

"Thou art so weak in the outward life that thou canst not prevent thy constellation or Astrum, thou must go into the corruption or breaking of thy body, when the

<sup>232</sup> Boehme's *Treatise on the Incarnation*, part i, chap. 14, pars. 21 and 22.

<sup>233</sup> his only use of *arch* in a qualifying sense is arch shepherd

<sup>234</sup> *Election of Grace*, chap. 2, par. 41.

<sup>235</sup> those last words in his largest capitals

<sup>236</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 6, pars. 15 and 16.

constellation leaveth thee. And there thou seest undeniably what thou art, viz., dust of the earth.... Thou livest to the configuration "<sup>237</sup> "and elements, they rule and drive thee according to their property; they give thee employment and art; and when their *seculum* time or season is run about, that thy constellation under which thou wert conceived and born to this world, is finished, then they let thee fall away. And then thy body falleth home to the four elements, and thy spirit which leadeth thee, to the mystery... thus must thou moulder away and become earth and a nothing, all but the spirit, which is proceeded out of the Eternal, which God introduced into the Limns: therein consider what thou art, even a handful of earth, and a source or quality-house or tormentive workhouse of the stars and elements."<sup>238</sup>

Boehme never denies that after dissolution of its outward body, the human soul may still live on in the astral body, a short or a long time according to the periods of the stars ruling over its mundane existence; but he affirms that sooner or later this body must perish as the elemental body did before it, and leave the soul which has not attained to the new birth, or even to the "little thread of faith in the new *Regeneration*, which holdeth the Saviour fast by that thread, though very weak, and setteth its imagination or desire further into the heart of God,"<sup>239</sup> — "raw and naked," "without government " — in short, a will devoid of all executive power, a hunger forever famishing and insatiable.

Among all teachers<sup>240</sup> he is unique in revealing to us the process of *Regeneration*, or rather attempting to do so. I use the word attempt with reference to the understanding of those who read him, for all the ideas he transmits on this theme are precise and consistent, invariably agreeing in purport though expressed in ever-varying modes of speech. It is not possible to give any adequate précis of these ideas, neither is this the place for them, but this much must be said: Mr. Lockerby's expression as to "placing ourselves *en rapport* with the Divine Man for Him to clothe with His body by causing the new creative law, evolved by Him, to operate from soul to body," is a long way distant from the account *Philosophus Centralis* gives of the indispensables for "the soul attaining the Eternal Flesh again." It reads like an accepted inference from pages in the *Arcana of Christianity*; for to judge by his writings Mr. T. L. Harris has never been intromitted to the same depths of regenerative experience, and in his school one finds no recognition of the tremendous spiritual throes which are known to so many in the crisis often called conversion; many, I mean, of those who can give any date to a process of which, I am persuaded, not all in whom the new creature is forming are distinctly conscious.

It may be that the opening of internal respiration, on which he lays such stress, is as necessarily preceded by "a death unto sin," as what we call the new birth. This is the

<sup>237</sup> of the stars

<sup>238</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 6, pars. 33 to 38.

<sup>239</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 19, par. 42

<sup>240</sup> I was going to say human teachers, but remembered how earnestly he protests that what he taught was revealed to him; that he was a medium for "that which the spirit showeth, which no man can resist"

"new creative law of the Divine Man," and inexorably binding; a prolonged dying of the false and evil will of what Boehme terms our "assumed selfhood;" and a constant mastery of the "gross phantastical sulphur" of our material bodies. These hold captive the imprisoned supernal light that forms an imperishable body in the water of eternal life. For the full emergence of this light not only must self-will die to its rights, but contrition must break open its prison; and who can produce that at pleasure! Surely not our own polluted hearts, too much used to their firstborn darkness to feel or even believe how thick that darkness is! And therefore in one of his prayers Boehme cries out "O great Holy God, I pray Thee set open my inwardness to me, that I may rightly know what I am; unshut, I pray Thee, in me what became enclosed, and shut up in Adam."

For Boehme and Mr. Mohini Chatterji are in full agreement as to the nature of the true human spirit. "*Regeneration*," says this last, "is to be accomplished by Christos, the incarnated wisdom, the true human spirit,"<sup>241</sup> — and Boehme says, "The most inward ground in man is Christus; not according to the nature of man, but according to the Divine property in the heavenly substance, which he hath generated anew."<sup>242</sup> Hence we can understand the two following clauses of his little creed about *Regeneration*, formed, he assures us, "not from supposition or opinion, but from our own true knowledge in the enlightening given us from God. First, that the new regenerate man which lieth hidden in the old as the gold in the stone, hath a heavenly tincture, and hath divine heavenly flesh and blood on it: and that the spirit of that flesh is no strange spirit, but its own, generated out of its own essence.....Sixthly, that the possibility of the new birth is in all men, else God were divided, and not in one place as He is in another."<sup>243</sup>

One who had evidently gone through the great crisis of *Regeneration* in a very other way than mere rapport with the Regenerator, describes it as "a re-organisation, a tangible luminous reality with every sense we have, but of a new essence. It is a whole constitutional change, not a change of state only; "and he adds, "If the deepest ground is to be broken up, the deepest and darkest and bitterest sufferings must be suffered. The very soul's constitution is to be rended, — how can we expect the work to be got over without the deepest feelings of anguish."<sup>244</sup> But such anguish is not known in anything like this degree to a great many sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; — to many it is. Can it be that there has been in another prior existence what is equivalent to new birth? I cannot think it: the only alternative theory for my mind is that in these devout lives, unconscious of any of the pangs of rebirth, there is something that answers to impregnation of higher life, and that death to the flesh body may be literally the first bringing forth to embryonic perfection of the new creature so gradually and insensibly formed; possibly experiences that follow upon death.

<sup>241</sup> Fragments of Man's Forgotten History, p. 42

<sup>242</sup> Treatise on *Election*, chap. 7, par. 98.

<sup>243</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 14, pars. 51, 52 and 59.

<sup>244</sup> Unpublished MS. of J. Pierrepoint Greaves.

As to the arch-natural body being transmitted to children when it exists in both parents, I doubt if Boehme would admit that such an inheritance is possible — favorable tendencies, but not the new creature. For "every angel and soul which will live in God's light and power must die to the selfhood of the fire's dominion in the desire"<sup>245</sup> — and the selfhood of the fire's dominion in the origin of earthly life. Every child brings it to manifestation here; and as St. Paul said, it is "first the natural, and after that the spiritual," because, though the one so little agrees with the other, in the natural body the soul has ability to form the heavenly — Boehme repeatedly asserts — as gold is formed in the matrix of its rough quartz. Mr. T. L. Harris gives a similar report of the luminous body being formed within the opaque, in one of his unpublished pamphlets; and in another, with a realism of his own, tells his disciple to "take care of the cell-germs of the present form, because the new-natural grows from cell-germs evoked out of the present ones."<sup>246</sup>

As regards the arch-natural in the flesh enabling people to have "uncontrolled range of arch-natural senses," and to "see and handle spiritual forms," I should think it unlikely, but do not presume to have an opinion. Evidently, the inner senses — of the astral body as I suppose — have been very much quickened within the last century; and the inhabitants of an adjacent plane of being seem increasingly desirous to make us aware of their existence. Whether it is that the nerve body is better developed in our present generation, or whether the great judgment of spirits in 1757, reported by Swedenborg, did, as he averred, rid the regions contiguous to our earth of a dense crowd of spirits who obstructed higher astral influences, able to reach us ever since that great clearance, we cannot of course decide; but this is certain, that a new consciousness of unseen agents spreads amongst us more and more in spite of all denial, regret, and ridicule. It often leads me to think of Boehme's prediction that at the time of the end "the gates of all *Three Principles* shall stand open." Are they not opening gradually now? So strange a mixture of the worst and the best spirit influences seems to be pressing upon us, like a mixed multitude trying to get into an enclosure at every least opening. Such eager seeking for access to the soul of man is quite intelligible so far as the rabble of astral spirits go, because from regenerate man they can learn more than the world-soul can teach<sup>247</sup>. But what for them can be the attraction of the mass of human beings? Is it not from eagerness to reveal some of their own peculiar knowledge? for "the stars," he says "have in them the causes of everything that is in this world: all that live and move is stirred up from their properties and brought to life."<sup>248</sup> And also "the outward instigation to manifest and reveal the mystery proceeded from the stars, for they would fain be freed from vanity, and they drive mightily in the magical children to manifestation." I Well may he add, "Therefore we must prove and examine the instigation whether it proceed from God's light, from God's Spirit, or from the dominion of the stars."

<sup>245</sup> Third Apology, text i, par. 60

<sup>246</sup> Wisdom in Council, p. 27.

<sup>247</sup> according to Boehme quite a degree lower in rank

<sup>248</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 7, par. 73.

It seems quite possible that as our astral senses quicken astral bodies may become evident, and their indwelling spirits audible associates; the great danger is that from our non-acquaintance with the true paradisaical body, we may mistake perishable astral glory for that in which the kingdom of Heaven may be seen — that only; and forming our soul's magical substance by this erroneous imagination find them at last divested even of this, and without eternal flesh and blood.

To Mr. Lockerby's last question, "Can we follow Boehme in the spiritual law?" nothing short of his answer can honestly be given. "Searching is not the chief or most special means to know or apprehend the mystery, but to be born or regenerated in God."<sup>249</sup>

If I have not already claimed too long patience with his doctrines from seekers of Light, I hope to be allowed another day to report his account of the seven-fold stratification of men in a man; about which he speaks, in one of his books, with almost as much exactness as an Eastern adept.

That such a paper as this can be allowed in an English periodical may do something, I hope, to remove an aspersion coming from Mr. W. Q. Judge, in last month's number of the *Theosophist*. "How could European minds understand the statement that there may be an astral body and an astral shape also, each distinct from the other, when they have always known that body is a thing due to accretions from beef and beer?" We have got a little in advance of that!



<sup>249</sup> *Forty Questions*, question i, par. 254.

## FORM

"The beginning of every being is nothing else but an imagination of the outflow will of God, which hath brought itself into separability, formedness, and image likeness wherein lieth the whole creation."<sup>250</sup>

When I began to see the result of any fixed persuasion in our entourage of spirits, I never guessed where that seeing would lead me. But it happened to me as it does to a child playing on open ground when his ball rolls off into a pathless thicket close by; though he is pretty sure to miss the shortest way out, and now and then to lose his footing in rough and tangled obscurity, yet he saw the ball enter, and at all risks will follow to try and find where it went to. I saw that a fixed persuasion is a permanent attitude of mind, that every attitude is a form and amounts to the same thing as a figure on the visible plane; and then as remembrance of Boehme's saying, "The figure hath caused the spirit,"<sup>251</sup> — and Swedenborg's that "Influx is according to form,"<sup>252</sup> — flashed upon me, I suddenly perceived that some unvarying law of creative action was to be discovered on this ground. Plato's Ideas came to my mind, of course, and many a dark saying of Boehme's in which the use of the words idea or figure had been so without context in my mind previously, that passages in which they occurred had, for me, been a dead letter. If now I can suggest any interpretation of these worth having, or even any gleam of light upon them leading to fuller illumination, seeming presumption may be forgiven. The attempt is not made because I think myself equal to it, even in my best days, but because if I do not do what little I can now, I shall never be able to share with other seekers, finds — in my judgment — most precious; and it may be long before another student has had leisure and inclination for thirty years' quarrying in Boehme's works. This qualification is mine.

In par. 4 of his twelfth Theosophic Question he says: "The original of all things lieth in the idea."

In answer to his fifth Theosophic Question — all most instructive on this theme — par. 4, we read: "When God would have such an Idea in living creatures... then He moved and severed the central fire of the Eternal nature whereby the Idea is become manifest in the fire which is done through the breathing," and a few sentences before, "The central fire of the Eternal nature, wherein the substance of the creature standeth."<sup>253</sup>

<sup>250</sup> Treatise on Baptism, chap, i, par. 4.

<sup>251</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 10, par. 13

<sup>252</sup> *Conjugal Love*, par. 86

<sup>253</sup> How is substance to be accounted for therein? thus — all fire that is kindled enough to give forth shining light, produces first air from thence, and from air water distils; water is potential corporeity.

It should be remembered that in Boehme's language the "fire of God "and "the wrath of God "are equivalents for nature in our world, and the light that outshines from nature's fire is not wholly originated by nature, for "in the light are the powers of the not-natural life manifested,"<sup>254</sup> — but out of light, he tells us, no creature could be formed; for naturing there must be fire, that which is always consuming and producing simultaneously. We see, therefore, why the central life of the Eternal nature was moved in order that the ideas of the Divine mind should be manifested.

In many places in Boehme's writings, we shall find him insisting on the same laws of nature ruling on highest and lowest planes, and this among others, that as in the mind of man a form or model of what it desires to effect must precede every acting out of the will, so in the "Wisdom " of God, and so in the world-soul it has ever been. It is interesting to see how exactly Madame Blavatsky's account of the creation of man tallies with Boehme's as to this: "The Dhyān Chohan creates man in his own form; it is a spiritual ideation... that form is the ideal shadow of itself; and this is the man of the first race."<sup>255</sup>

"The first race was composed of astral shadows of the creative progenitors, having, of course, neither astral nor physical bodies of their own."<sup>256</sup> "The Father of Nature," Boehme wrote, "hath continually compacted the substantiality in the mystery"<sup>257</sup>, "where it hath formed itself, as it were, into an image, and yet hath been no image, but as a shadow of an image."<sup>258</sup>

My object is to show how that shadow of an image tends to creaturely existence, and in the attempt Boehme's track must be closely followed.

"The will is no substance, but the willing's imagination maketh substance."<sup>259</sup>

"The will maketh out of itself the form of a spirit, and the form maketh a substance according to the property of the spirit."<sup>260</sup>

"It figureth the willing into a form or shape, wherein we understand the centre of the spirit."<sup>261</sup>

Without Boehme's key to the last sentence what a totally unintelligible paradox that seems. One can hardly imagine words more senseless than "a shape wherein we understand the centre of the spirit," the centre of what we are used, in our ignorance, to think of as essentially independent of form! Yet with Boehme's key, we shall find in these words a most precise compendium of his revelations concerning the origin of all living creatures. To prove this a considerable digression is necessary. It is vain to

<sup>254</sup> *Election*, chap. 9, par. 45

<sup>255</sup> *Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 242.

<sup>256</sup> *Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 121.

<sup>257</sup> By mystery understand a chaos of potentialities

<sup>258</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 1, par. 54.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, part 2, chap. 2, par. 23.

<sup>260</sup> *Fourth Point of Six Great Points*, chap. 6, par. 10.

<sup>261</sup> *Apology*, vol. i, part 2, par. 493.



try to give Boehme's meaning with any evasion of the fact, that as soon as one level of understanding is reached another yet deeper is perceived. But on the other hand, if once clear intelligence is gained of any obscure part of his teaching, light will break out from that part more and more, and show such unforeseen agreement of assertions of his<sup>262</sup> with what little we know of the mysteries of nature, that conviction grows upon us of his having been used by a Divine teacher as a medium.

It is impossible, I think, to render his account of what the Wisdom is — in which, by the Word, all that was first created came into existence — with any words as clear as his own in the following passage: "The word is the speaking or breathing of the willing... The Wisdom is the outflown word... the substantial power of the great Love of God... a passive substance of Divine operation."<sup>263</sup> Now, if content with this as all we can learn of the Divine Originator, Boehme's frequent reference to the *Mysterium Magnum* will be a baffling patch of superfluous unintelligibility. Let us therefore heed his own definition of it in a small treatise, in which he seems to touch the most profound arcana accessible to man. In the fifth of his small book of Six Points he says that the Magia is "the original of nature... no other than a will, and that will is the *Mysterium Magnum*... the greatest hidden secret, for it is above nature and maketh nature according to the form of its will. It is the fountain of the Divine Wisdom, viz., a desire in the Number Three, what soever the will-spirit openeth in it, that it driveth into a substance through the harsh astringency which is the fiat, all according to the model of the will. As the will doth model it in the wisdom, so the desiring Magia receiveth it in." So we have to think of the *Mysterium Magnum* as the desirous activity of the Deific will to realise ideas in the passive efflux of Deity — the Wisdom. Invited by Boehme to believe in a close analogy between the Divine and human mind, we can think of the ideas in the Wisdom as answering to such as we entertain in thoughts: so soon as we will to bring these to actuality, the concentration of desire is the magic that effects our creaturely word. We utter or outbring acts; the word of God produced creatures. Now every definite purpose is, as such, a limitation of indefinite powers; as we say, it fastens the mind on a point. "If there be a speaking, then the power must first contract itself that it may breathe forth itself; and then it begetteth that comprehensive magnetic impression, viz., the something<sup>264</sup> wherein the fiat which attracteth the powers is understood."<sup>265</sup> Thus does the form or shape prove to be the centre of the spirit; the idea is the shape into which the will contracts itself with desire to bring that idea to ultimatum; and with that contraction of the will the evolution of a self-conscious and embodied spirit begins; for "not substantial, but figured spirits without corporising have been from eternity."<sup>266</sup> Spirit must form some kind of embodiment before its self-consciousness can begin. "Out of the substance the true intellective spirit primely proceedeth, which before the

<sup>262</sup> previously seeming to lack point

<sup>263</sup> Explanation of Table of *Three Principles*, par. 28 and 29.

<sup>264</sup> which is the beginning

<sup>265</sup> Four Tables of Divine Revelation.

<sup>266</sup> Nineteenth of *Forty Questions*, par. 10.

substance is only a will, and not manifest to itself; for the will doth therefore introduce itself into substance and essence that it might be manifest to itself."<sup>267</sup> "Out of the spiritual form the corporeal form is generated,"<sup>268</sup> — and as the spiritual form alters, so does its bodily exponent. " Being the first Adam had fixed his imagination in the earthliness, he is become earthly."<sup>269</sup>

The result for the race is a predominating sense of physical conditions. Boehme draws one of his most powerful arguments for securing *Regeneration* before death from the certainty that sooner or later life-sustaining forces, both elementary and astral, must fail for mortal bodies, and when the last dies the spirit's outward "looking-glass" is shattered and no possibility of an altering consciousness remains, only what the magical will reproduces from the past with hungry, insatiable desires. Unless the new creature of heavenly flesh and blood is in some degree of life, there can be no consciousness of any other good than what the poor soul has groped after here. "The soul hath no image or body which remaineth eternally, unless it be through Christ regenerated out of its first substantiality.. .. In the time of the earthly life it may alter its will, and then the fiat altereth the figure, but after the dying of the body it hath nothing more wherein it can alter its will."<sup>270</sup> "It is in this sense, as indispensable to conscious self-disposal, that Boehme calls the outward world of every inward life a looking-glass: "Every form maketh substance in its desire.... and hath its seeing in its own looking-glass. Its seeing is a darkness to the looking-glass of the other."<sup>271</sup> There are, we know, many planes of consciousness besides that of the body, and each one makes what he terms the "looking-glass of the imagination." "That is a looking-glass wherein the will beholdeth itself what it is, and in that beholding it becometh desirous of that substance which itself is, and the desiring is a drawing in." "The will draweth itself in the desiring and modelleth itself in the desiring for what it is. That very model is the looking-glass wherein the will seeth what it is, for it is a similitude of or according to the willing."<sup>272</sup>

Now, if the human will were long bent on one form of desire, these looking-glasses would not be the brittle, disappointing things they are. We complain of the treachery of hope; but there is a worse traitor in the camp, the perverted will which seeks happiness in every other direction before it turns to the only source of any lasting joy.

In *Lucifer* for October, 1891, there is an article on "Heat, Sound, and Consciousness," in which one sentence, "a study of heat as will power," might lead students of Boehme to recognise a mind on the right track in one of the most profound mines of hidden knowledge. By his own original line of thought, Mr. T. Williams comes to conclusions which very nearly coincide with some that the old seer had asserted centuries before. This, for instance, "Will is an energy whose

<sup>267</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 4, par. 9.

<sup>268</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. n, par. 17

<sup>269</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 10, par. 11.

<sup>270</sup> *Apology*, vol. 1, part 2, pars. 265 and 267.

<sup>271</sup> *Points*, vol. 2, par. 13.

<sup>272</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 1, pars. 36-40.

unique direction is always towards self-perception, so that the reflection on the material plane is that of work directed into its own centre. But this is the distinctive characteristic of the effect of gravity, which is therefore common to every atom composing our own globe, because it is the result of the impress of the nature of will<sup>273</sup> in all its agglomeration of partial activities.<sup>274</sup> Boehme with less brevity expresses the same truth thus: "Every will hath a seeking to do or to desire somewhat, and in that it beholdeth itself and seeth in itself, in the Eternity, what itself is: it maketh to itself the looking-glass of its like and there it beholdeth itself what itself is, and so finding nothing else but itself, it desireth itself."<sup>275</sup> "It brings itself into a Reception of itself, and compresses itself to something, and that something is nothing but a magnetical hunger, harshness like a hardness, whence even hardness, cold, and substance arise."<sup>276</sup> Of this self-exploring will Boehme says, "The Eternal unity hath breathed forth itself out of itself that a plurality and distinct variety might arise, which variety hath induced itself into a peculiar will and properties; the properties into desires, and the desires into beings."<sup>277</sup> It is that "peculiar" will which makes creaturely existence. The "magnetical impression is" thus "the beginning of nature," for "by the desire substance is sought, and in the substance the desire kindleth the fire,"<sup>278</sup> — and thus beings derive from desires, and desires from properties, — and properties? "The original of all things lieth in the Idea, in an eternal imaging."<sup>279</sup> In Boehme's revelations this is an ever-recurring statement, though variously worded: "All spirits are created out of the eternal mind."<sup>280</sup> "Whatsoever the eternal mind figures in the eternal wisdom of God and brings into an idea, that nature frames into a property."<sup>281</sup> And we may well ask what did he mean here by nature? So far as I have been able to follow him, he attributes to what Fabre d'Olivet describes as "the fathomless contingent potentiality of being,"<sup>282</sup> — a latent imagination stimulated to activity by the ideas thrown upon its depths; as outlines just seen may lead an artist to elaborate a perfect picture.

"Thus we understand the substance of all substances, that it is a magic substance, where a will can create itself into an essential life, and so pass into a birth, and in the great mystery awaken a source "... and thus also apprehend whence all things, evil and good, exist, viz., from the imagination in the great mystery, where a wonderful essential life generateth itself."<sup>283</sup>

It may well be asked why, when deeply learned Theosophists, such as Messrs. Subba Row, Mohini Chatterji, Rama Prasad, and Madame Blavatsky, have given our

<sup>273</sup> as an impulse to self-perception

<sup>274</sup> Lucifer, October, 1891, p. 102.

<sup>275</sup> First of *Forty Questions*, par. 22.

<sup>276</sup> Clavis, par. 70.

<sup>277</sup> Sixth Epistle, pars. 8 and 9.

<sup>278</sup> Third Point, par. 45

<sup>279</sup> Twelve Theosophic Questions, par. 4.

<sup>280</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 4, par. 31.

<sup>281</sup> Clavis, par. 58.

<sup>282</sup> Fabre d'Olivet's Translation of Genesis, 1, v. 2, in his *Cosmogonie de Moyse*

<sup>283</sup> *Earthly and Heavenly Mystery*, text 5, pars. 37 and 38.

Western world copious and precise teaching about cosmic formation and mighty primordial beings who effected it, with such masterly lucidity of style as to make it impossible to say that they wrote what cannot be understood, I should presume to approach those themes with obscure fragments of arcane knowledge, selected from Boehme's books and loaded with the uncouth verbiage of his day?

If knowledge was all I drew from them it would indeed be folly to do so. As to that, no one can feel more than I the greatness of our obligation to those modern instructors, for enlightenment and information not to be gained from any other source. But hard as it often is to understand Boehme, the teaching he gives to heart and conscience is never doubtful, and helps me far more than theirs, precious as it is to the intellect, because it always bears upon the spiritual fate of man, whether in the past, present or future; on the originating causes of his position now, and the tremendous alternatives which hang upon his choice here. However far he may seem to wander from these main lines, they underlie all he wrote. His many reiterations of the same occult truth, urged by intense desire to give the others what he knew to be of inestimable value, secure for patient readers impressions that can hardly fail to affect conduct: in these there is no obscurity, however clumsy the vehicle which conveys them — to the inner man. Theosophists adopt what was called of old the Wisdom Religion. No doubt it was a well-deserved title before "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," but when compared with His later revelations one great defect stamps them with insufficiency. Humility is not inculcated, and without that neither wisdom nor peace is possible for human beings. Recommendations of this virtue may be implicit in the literature of Eastern Theosophists, though of these no trace appears in English versions of it; nor does it seem possible that a religion excluding any idea of a Personal God<sup>284</sup> should admit humility to its list of duties. Of love to all, Buddhistic teaching is eloquently full, but as Gichtel said, "Humility is the throne of love"; unless that throne is firmly established, love is quickly deposed by every spasm of self-will. That the Divine Man Himself is meek and lowly was a discovery no human wisdom could have made; it was first declared by Him Who came in the fulness of time to be the Saviour of all men, even of Theosophists, who believe that they need no redeemer, and scout the offer of pardon as childish and irrational.

Apart from intellectual gain, I think Theosophy must become popular, when every bond is resisted; requiring neither submission nor obedience, it exactly suits the insubordinate temper of our day.

If it were honest to evade difficulties when professing to try to lessen them, I would not notice a sentence quoted just before this long digression, "The imagination in the great mystery," because it is only one sample of a most inexplicable part of Boehme's doctrine. Again and again he refers to imagination as that by which everything in the universe has been caused to exist. I help myself dimly to interpret this by what little is yet understood by hypnotic methods, of the injection of forms of

<sup>284</sup> i.e., one who responds to human conceptions of such a God

thought by one mind strongly imaging what it wills should effect the imagination, into that of another. To this process he attributes the fall of Adam into material conditions: after saying that the earth was corrupted by its former ruler, and that Adam was sent to restore it, Boehme goes on: — "God forbade him the false lust, which the devil stirred up through the *limus* of the earth, in Adam's outward body with his false imagination."<sup>285</sup>

"The devil opposed man in his enkindled envy, and insinuated his venomous imaginations into the human property.... Whence Adam's imagination and earnest hunger did arise that he would eat of the evil and good, and live in his own will."<sup>286</sup>

The expression, "insinuated his venomous imaginations," might have puzzled any philosophical reader some years ago before the famous hypnotic experiments in France gave a degree of notoriety and credit to their results never attained by the similar discoveries of Dr. Darling and Mr. Braid some forty years sooner, though, under the name of electrobiology, they had both fully proved the power of inducing states of sensation by the control of the operator's will. But now even scientific men are obliged to own that this is done, and strain their intelligence to find out how. They would scorn to learn of Boehme; yet he told centuries ago precisely what Oriental Theosophy had announced ages before, that all which seems to be is the work of imagination, the effect of Maya, "the veil that is spread over all nations." He assures us that "all things are arisen through the Divine imagination and do yet stand in such a birth." And he copiously declares the momentous fact that human spirits determine their fate by what they imagine<sup>287</sup> It need scarcely be added that the direction of such a magical power by a right will, is the only safe-guard against being infested by a stronger one, desiring, and therefore imagining, our sympathy on dangerous lines to which the weaker nature is seen to tend.

Nothing ever gave me such a lasting fear of leaving this life unpurified as Swedenborg's account of the cruelties practised by evil spirits on others, amenable to their diabolical arts from having been servants to sin while in the flesh. In his "Spiritual Diary" he records the process of torturing by hypnotism exactly as it has been done and observed on this side of death. Those among us who are wont to speak of hell and its despots as the dream of old-world superstition, would do well, I think, to reconsider their verdict by the light of modern science. What has perplexed me with regard to Adam and his dethroned enemy, is the doubt whether in that case the paralysis of true vision was effected by one great being subduing and then binding the mind of another, as one World-soul is supposed to influence another, or whether as usual, the single name indicates a race, which yields in detail to the seductions of adverse hosts. This, however, is of no practical interest: we know well enough that for every human being unseen promoters of sin abound. But it is far less commonly known that our own imaginations affect all that concerns us so strongly,

<sup>285</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 18, par. 18.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 17, pars. 36 and 39.

<sup>287</sup> observe that this is but an enlargement of the thesis, "the figure hath caused the spirit."

that giving, or having given, to us a different idea of what we are, will often cause radical change of character.

Probably the belief that he or she is a reprobate, hopelessly subject to bad habits, as firmly rivets their chain, as the remark<sup>288</sup> that one seems to be in a bad temper makes it difficult to feel otherwise for the next hour or more. This makes snubbing almost criminal, and to encourage people about themselves, as much as sincerity allows, a duty we owe to the public.

Christian scientists seem to have a juster sense of the immeasurable force of imagination than most of us entertain, only, as it appears to me, they antedate the time of its release from penal fetters. In the world of spirits, will, we are clearly taught, makes all the surroundings of the spirit, and as its state alters, so will every object in view: just as it now is in our minds; their eyes "See all around in gloom or glow, Hues of their own, fresh borrowed from the heart."

But in the mind and in the spirit-world all is homogeneous. Not so in the world we now occupy, for our bodies are here in their own element, our spirits are but "strangers and sojourners." The spider can weave its delicate web wherever it will in the light atmosphere in which it was born; falling into a basin of gum it would be as impossible for it thus to energise, as it is for a Christian scientist who denies the reality of pain, because it is unspiritual, to ignore the torment of toothache or sciatica — when felt.



<sup>288</sup> or annoyed consciousness

## BOEHME AND RAMA PRASAD

As there is a nature and substance in the outward world; so also in the inward spiritual world there is a nature and substance which is spiritual, from which the outward world is breathed forth and produced out of light and darkness, and created to have a beginning and time.<sup>289</sup> There is only one life, and this is not capable of being created, but is eminently capable of flowing into forms organically adapted to its reception — all things in the created Universe, in general and in particular, are such forms.<sup>290</sup>

No habitual student of Boehme's works could study Rama Prasad's work on *Nature's Finer Forces* without noticing the agreement of account given by both these writers of many recondite facts. With point of view quite different, and diction most unlike, each confirms the evidence of the other: but they give two sides of the same phenomena, Boehme the spiritual, Rama Prasad the supersensuous material. Take, for example, the often recurring mention of "the powers, virtues, and colours of the wisdom"<sup>291</sup>, by the old seer, and what we find about the varying colours of vibrations of ether<sup>292</sup> in pp. 42 and 57 of the modern book. Calling to mind Boehme's frequent assurance that everything in temporal nature has its analogue in eternal nature, close attention to such an admirable teacher as Rama Prasad should help to a clearer conception of the mysteries Teutonicus laboured so earnestly to expound. I think "desirous seekers" after truth must always be pleased when one mystic or seer endorses the report of another. For instance, Boehme teaches that a figure — a passive model — has invariably preceded the origination of creaturely life, whether emanating from divine or from spiritual beings, and these are the words of Rama Prasad: "It might be said that all formation on the face of our planet is the assuming by everything under the influence of solar ideas, of the shape of those ideas. The process is quite similar to the process of wet earth taking the impressions of anything that is pressed upon it." To those who have not seen this valuable book — almost given away at its very low price — this much of its tenor must be offered to make further comparison intelligible. The great Breath of Life acting upon undifferentiated cosmic matter, "divides itself into five states, having distinctive vibratory motions, and performing different functions." "Of the five sensations of men each of these ethers<sup>293</sup> gives birth to one, the evolution of these *tatwas*<sup>294</sup> is always a part of the evolution of a definite form." "Thus form can be perceived through every sense: the eyes can see form, the tongue can taste it, the skin can touch it, and so on. This may appear to be a novel assertion, but it must be remembered that virtue is not act. The

<sup>289</sup> *Regeneration*, chap. 2, par. 31.

<sup>290</sup> Swedenborg's *Intercourse of the Soul and Body*, No. 11.

<sup>291</sup> efflux of Deity

<sup>292</sup> *tatwic* phases

<sup>293</sup> *tatwas*

<sup>294</sup> five modifications of the 'Great Breath'

ear would hear form, if the more general use of the eye and skin for this purpose had not almost stifled it into inaction." The identity of Boehme's doctrine about the Breath of God and those of Eastern Theosophists is too striking to need indication, but the following coincidence might be easily overlooked. One of his most frequent sayings is that the effect of the first form of eternal nature is to darken previous light by a concentrated desire to manifest the imagination of a spirit. Thus in one passage, "we ought to know from whence darkness originateth: for in the Eternity, without or besides nature, no darkness can be... for there is nothing that can afford it. We must only look into the will and into the desiring, for a desiring is an attracting, and whereas in the Eternity it hath nothing but only itself, it attracts itself in the will, and maketh the will full, and that is its darkness."<sup>295</sup>

Rama Prasad having already said that the colour of the Akasic Tatwa is black, and that that is the first vibration in evolving Prana, i.e., soul— be it the cosmic or the human soul — says also, "Certain measured portions of the solar akasa naturally separate themselves from others, according to the differing creation which is to appear in those portions."

Again, the initial vibration is called by him the "sonoriferous ether," and Boehme, after mention of the seven forms of nature, says of the first, "That which proceeds forth in essence according to the properties of the will, is dark and causeth a strong pulsation, which is a cause of the tone or sound."<sup>296</sup>

With regard to the colours, his account differs from Prasad's in that he admits green and excludes black. As to this I must give his own words: "Here meeteth us the great secrecy which hath from Eternity lain in the mystery, viz., the mystery with its colours, which are four, and the fifth is not peculiarly belonging to the mystery of Nature, but it is the mystery of the Deity which shineth in the mystery of Nature, as a life of the light. And these are the colours wherein all lieth, viz., blue, red, green, yellow; and the fifth, the white, is God's own, yet also hath its glance and lustre in nature. The black belongeth not to the mystery, but it is the veil, the darkness wherein all lieth."<sup>297</sup>

(Mystery, it will be remembered, is used by Boehme in the sense of a chaos)

He repeatedly warns us that nothing happens in our present life without leaving ineffaceable impressions — that they will outlast both it and time. "The multiplicity of things come into one again, but the figure of everything remaineth standing in the one only element."<sup>298</sup>

<sup>295</sup> *Forty Questions*, question i, par. 9.

<sup>296</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 14, oar. 17.

<sup>297</sup> *Earthly and Heavenly Mystery*, text 7, pars. 65 and 66.

<sup>298</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 5, par. 122.



"The figure and shadow continue eternally, as also do words, both the evil and the good, which were here spoken by a human tongue; they continue standing in the shadow and figured similitude."<sup>299</sup>

What we read in Natures Finer Forces of the Cosmic Picture Gallery exactly agrees with these statements. The old seer affirms that it is so — the modern, how it is so.

On one very interesting point the agreement of these two seem to me inferential, though not fully proved. When Rama Prasad begins to tell us about the origination of mind — Manas, his term for it — he writes: "Virat is the centre and Manu the atmosphere. These centres are beyond the ken of ordinary humanity, but they work under similar laws to those ruling the rest of the Cosmos. The suns move round the Virats in the same way as the planets round the suns." "The composition of the hanu is similar to that of the Prana. It is composed of a still finer grade of the five tatwas; and this increased fineness endows the tatwas with different functions."

If we turn to p. 69, to see what the laws regarding Prana, which rule the Cosmos, are, we read, "The planets each of them establish their own currents in the organism... the real tatwic condition of any moment is determined by all the seven planets, just like the sun and the moon." This the disciples of Boehme will readily believe; but unless I greatly mistake, I think they would say that he often, directly or indirectly, refers to constellations higher than any our solar system includes, as influential over the human spirit. Does not the following sentence imply this? "The inward property or disposition of the soul lies now in the first created configuration of the stars or constellations, in the Eternal commencing ground, that is not co-imagined or framed together in the bestial configuration of the stars."<sup>300</sup>

And here again: "For as man has the outward constellation or astrum in him, which is his wheel of the outward world's essences and cause of the mind; so also he hath the inward constellation of the fire-essences, as also in the second principle he hath the light-flaming Divine essences."<sup>301</sup>

I must refer the reader to chap. 9, of *Threefold Life*, pars. 71 to 77, for a passage so imperfectly understood by me that I cannot feel at all sure whether its true sense would confirm my theory; these words seem, however, to look that way. "The image in the Revelation hath twelve stars upon the crown; for the image representeth God, it is the similitude of God in which He revealeth Himself, and wherein He dwelleth.... The number twelve containeth two kingdoms in the doubled number of six, viz., an angelic and a human, which together make twelve."<sup>302</sup> But surely it is very probable that the stars to which Boehme referred so mysteriously in pars. 17 and 22 of the next chapter as beyond ken, because of prevailing evil, are those which produce

<sup>299</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 9, pars. 21 and 22.

<sup>300</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, par. 121.

<sup>301</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 5, par. 11.

<sup>302</sup> pars. 75 and 76.

spiritual substance<sup>303</sup> in the already evolved human soul. Jane Lead, who learned much from him, is very clear upon this point, saying in her *Revelation of Revelations*, par. 33: "The outgoing power of the Holy Ghost sets the soul free in the Eternal liberty, from all conflicts which the dragon, or the starry region, hath introduced; for the soul is now influenced by those superior planets, to which these outward planets are subject"; and again at p. 42, "The suns and stars which were seen about the head of the woman in the Revelation signify those superior planets, which cannot be adulterated with the defilements of this inferior orb, as possessing far higher and more exalted powers, carrying dominion over all that is beneath them. For as the lower planets hold down in subjection to the curse, so these deliver and set free from it." Boehme appears to justify her assertion, and my inference, in the following passage: "The whole outward visible world, with all its being, is a figure of the inward spiritual world; whatsoever is internally, and howsoever its operation is, so likewise it hath its character externally."<sup>304</sup>

Now he abundantly shows that the operation of lifegiving in all *Three Principles* has been by breathing in of life; as here: "All whatsoever hath life liveth in the speaking Word, the angels in the eternal speaking and the temporal spirits in the re-expression or the echoing forth of the formings of Time, out of the sound or breath of Time; and the angels out of the sound of Eternity, viz., out of the voice of the manifest of God."<sup>305</sup>

The formings of Time I take to be the substance produced by the ethereal vibrations of our sun and planet; for he says: "By this partition, comprehension, and framing of the power of the stars, and of the four elements, we understand Time and the creaturely beginning of this world."<sup>306</sup>

By the manifested word of God, I understand "the angels which are mere imaged powers of the word of God," of whom he says: "Now as man with his senses and thoughts governeth the world and all things and substances, so God, the Eternal Unity, ruleth all things through the management and doings of angels, only the power and work is God's."<sup>307</sup>

Speaking of "their princely dominion" in another of his books, he says "that they rule in the properties of nature above the four elements, yea, also above the operation of the stars in the soul of the Great World; which also bear the Names of God."<sup>308</sup>

And again: "Each angelical prince is a property out of the voice of God and beareth the great name of God; as we have a type and figure of it in the stars of the

<sup>303</sup> or form

<sup>304</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 9, par. 1.

<sup>305</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 8, par. 32.

<sup>306</sup> *Election*, chap. 5, par. 43.

<sup>307</sup> Sixth, Theosophic Question, pars. 2 and 7.

<sup>308</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 35, par. 10.

firmament which are altogether one only dominion, and have their princely dominion in power under them."<sup>309</sup>

These are the mighty beings who seem to answer to Jane Lead's "superior planets," and if Boehme's dictum holds good, "This is the right or law of Deity that every life in the body of God should generate itself in one uniform way; though it be done through many various imaginings, yet the life hath one uniform way and original in all,"<sup>310</sup> — must we not consequently infer that from "the imaged powers of the word of God" creative breath has proceeded? given forth, as Boehme anxiously insists, not out of, but in the voice of God; from mighty beings, in the highest regions to their subordinate officers in our visible solar system, who in their turn outbreathe those slower vibrations which form soul-life on a lower plane, and continue to elaborate its substance till it is able to receive and retain the finer and swifter action of super-solar breath? How consonant is such an hypothesis with Swedenborg's report.<sup>311</sup>

The quality of intelligence from the Divine," he wrote, "was shown, and this also by a light which was brighter and more luminous than the noonday light of the sun, extending to all distance and terminating like the light of the sun in the universe "... "for intelligence is nothing else than an eminent modification of the heavenly light which is from the Lord."<sup>312</sup>

Does he not also help us to understand why the slower vibrations of ether have to evolve the grosser forms of soul-life before other finer and swifter begin to be perceptible? "That forms or substances are arranged in a manner most suitable for the influx of life, may be manifest from every single thing that appears in our living bodies. Unless life were received in substances which are forms, there would be no living thing in the natural or spiritual world, for substances or forms are the determining subjects."<sup>313</sup>

If the bearings of this truth on spiritual life were perceived, these essays on form would not seem, as I fear they must, a fruitless waste of time as well as a too ambitious direction of thought. If in another attempt I can make good my purpose, neither the reader's nor the writer's patience will be thrown away.

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<sup>309</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 16, par. 5.

<sup>310</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 25, par. 5

<sup>311</sup> he who assures us that our sun is but a small representative of the great spiritual sun from which all life derives.

<sup>312</sup> *Arcana Coelestia*, 4,419, 4.4\*4-

<sup>313</sup> Animal Kingdom

## SPIRITUAL ENEMIES

"We are to consider how, out of the eternal good, an evil is come to be?"<sup>314</sup>

If indeed mystical research is one of the objects which Light was intended to promote, ideas drawn from Jacob Boehme, the greatest of European mystics, cannot be out of place in its pages; very much out of favour no doubt they are. The majority of readers cannot care for them; but it is in the minority that pioneers of spiritual progress are generally found, and believing that to such Boehme's teaching is welcome, and that by such some adequate notion of its value will gain larger currency, I venture to plunge once more into a subject that must necessarily be abstruse — the nature of those enemies from whom human souls have to be saved was going to say desire to be saved; but the characteristic of our time is that that desire is so faint in the majority as to be hardly perceptible. There must be some reason for this which the pulpit phrase, "a growing want of faith," hardly suffices to explain. The want is evident enough— its cause in contemporary intellectual life not so easily detected. Torpor of the will, stimulated externally by ever new varieties of allurements, and dulled, as to internal consciousness, by consequent preoccupation, is of course the main factor of coldness to spiritual interests; but the peculiar anomaly of our day is that often, with a very serious attention to these, there is entire contempt for all that used to act on our ancestors, either as a religious check or incentive — the common attitude of many a highly cultivated mind as to this, being such as we take with regard to machinery that did its work well in the past, but has since been superseded by better inventions.

For example, when it is a question of belief in the *Incarnation* of the Son of God for the redemption of man, it is not vigorous disbelief that one generally discovers in unbelievers, so much as total indifference. Arguments and evidence miss their aim on minds quite incurious as to proof or disproof. When no need of salvation has been felt or perceived, the fact of a Saviour having come must be wholly unconcerning; and if, setting aside all apprehension as to a future life, it is urged that one came on earth "to save His people from their sins," the proffer is unheeded, not from ignorance of sin, or always from any lack of sincerest longing to be rid of its yoke, but from the conviction of powerful minds that human beings are able to be their own saviours; or in natures of an opposite mould, that sin is a fatality and not evitable.

This, so far as I can understand, is the fashion of modern philosophy, and it holds its ground by virtue of partial truth, famous as an amalgam for the rapid extension of error. Accepting such truth so far as it goes, — that by our own force if we will we can often resist temptation, and that organisations are frequently met with whose escape from sin would be little short of miraculous, — I appeal both to history and to

<sup>314</sup> J. B.'s *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 3, p. 2.

present living consciousness when asking, has sin no greater force than what self-command and self-culture can overpower? Have we verily no enemies worse than ourselves, promoting vice, urging us to evil?

It is very old-fashioned to admit any belief in the Satan of Holy Writ and the powers of darkness, against which it warns; by many people they have been consigned with Luther's devil to the lumber room of history, as obsolete superstitions; and so ignorant are we, for the most part, of the weakness of human nature, that in saying as some do, that they are not afraid of finding any worse enemy than self, they think it an assurance of comparative safety. But if in man's radical being there are realms of potential anguish and unguessed springs of torment, if, indeed, there is nothing in the universe which the soul of man does not comprise and share, what an idle boast it is! And if there are no evil beings alike the accomplices and the avengers of sin, why such terror in evil doers when death comes to shut them out in the unseen world? What do they fear if there are no powers of darkness? The wrath of God? Alas! it is not only belief in a devil, that has been dissipated in the crucible of modern thought!

Carlyle said truly, "The effects of optics in this strange camera obscura of existence are most of all singular. The grand centre of the modern revolution of ideas is ever this — we begin to have a notion that all this is the effect of optics, and that the intrinsic fact is very different from our old conception of it." From Boehme I learned what is the difference of the intrinsic fact and our conception of spiritual dangers; and I can see how extremely difficult it would be to rectify mistakes which run on a smooth, well-worn groove of habit, by recondite truths for which a road must be cut out through all oppositions of prejudice and sloth. Still this much must be granted, that hitherto no school of religionists has pretended to meet the root obstacle to religious faith, — the power of evil in a world created by Omnipotent God. It is invariably invaded: reason and philosophy are warned off that ground, and piety tries to fence off any approach to it, as the brink of a tremendous abyss of perplexity, lest there it should be maddened into Atheism.

Boehme challenged his contemporaries on just this point, asking after many other questions, "What do you suppose God's wrath to be? or what is that in man which displeaseth God so much that he tormenteth and afflicteth man so, seeing he hath created him? And that he imputeth sin unto man and condemneth him to eternal punishment? Why hath he created that wherein or wherewith man committeth sin? Surely that thing must be far worse? Wherefore and out of what is that come to be? or what is the cause, or the beginning, or the birth and geniture of God's fierce wrath out of or from which hell and the devil are come to be? Or how comes it that all the creatures in this world do bite, scratch, strike, beat and worry one another, and yet sin is imputeth only to man? Out of what are poisonous and venomous beasts and

worms, and all manner of vermin come to be?"... "Give your direct and fundamental answer to this, and demonstrate what you say."<sup>315</sup>

No answer has ever been attempted — to the best of my belief — from his time to ours. It has been easier, and it was judged to be safer, to leave such mysteries alone; and as to attending to the one who did give answer to these questions, it was much easier to call him either a dangerous fanatic, or a wild dreamer, than to master one of his books.

Only a few, and those of robust intellect, have accepted his teachings, at first as but a theoretic scheme; and at last as revelation that appeased all doubts.

But was it safe to leave these awful mysteries untouched? Did not such careful ignoring of their pressure on the mind cause suspicion that danger to faith lay there? When so many spiritual delusions have been ended by critical analysts of the past, it cannot surprise us that with this terrible excuse for doubt in the unexplained rule of evil<sup>316</sup>, reflective people begin to suspect all previous articles of faith of being accommodations to human ignorance. It is thus that every transitional epoch endangers the kernel with the husk.

Now, one often hears it said that all religions must undergo change and modification, as if that truth justified disbelief in the essentials of Christianity; a child when first conscious of the laws of perspective might as wisely say that these prevented his seeing some lofty hill conspicuous from all sides. Human ideas of Deity must expand, and so far alter with growth, but to try and efface the centre of structural life would be the very reverse of evolution; and to ignore a God is quite as much a retrograde movement.

Let me, as well as I can, sum up a few positions in which, apart from Boehme's solution, we must find ourselves when confronting the power of evil in this world. Either we must suppose evil and good to be alike the fortuitous outcome of impersonal will-less forces; or that evil originates in the will of some mighty Being not God, with whom God is in conflict, and so far as we can see in all our past and present here, not victorious; or to use the words of Mr. St. George Stock, "That evil is appointed in the good providence of God for some wise end." Had he said permitted, that statement might be allowed by the mystic, but, he adds, "if all is to come right to the end, one hardly sees why it should have come wrong in the beginning." Now, it is precisely that which Boehme helps us to see.

I shall have to draw so much from Boehme in order to give his solution of the mystery of evil that my own words will be little more than connecting links for his. Earthworms quote very largely from depths of earth which few eyes care to examine, and the little heaps of sifted mould which they bring up from the rough confusion of a

<sup>315</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 22, par. 36

<sup>316</sup> not to speak of any other excuse drawn from the lives of average Christians

lower soil, serve to fertilise its more superficial plane. My ambition is to perform the office of an earthworm in another sort of ground.

When the creation of human beings is spoken of, it is as if a creature such as man could be willed into existence by Divine "fiat" without any possibility of defect<sup>317</sup>, and without any formative constituents of nature. Any idea of means to this end is usually deemed unworthy of being connected with the work of Omnipotence; and this in a universe where, so far as we can judge, no end is attained without an enchainment of means that astonishes by its subtle niceties of adaptation, whenever it can be traced out.

"Many authors," says Boehme<sup>318</sup> — "have written that Heaven and earth are framed out of nothing, but I do wonder that among so many excellent men there hath not one been found that would yet describe the true ground, seeing the same God which now is hath been from eternity. Now, where nothing is, there nothing can come to be; all things must have a root, else nothing can grow. If the seven spirits of nature had not been from eternity then there would be no angel, no Heaven, also no earth have come to be."<sup>319</sup> Further on he refers to these seven spirits again thus: "Thou must know that all the seven spirits of God are in the earth, and generate as they do in Heaven. For the earth is in God, and God never died."<sup>320</sup> And in man, "for man's house of flesh is also such a house as the dark deep of this world's, in which the seven spirits of God generate themselves."<sup>321</sup>

To explain by Boehme's own words what he means by these seven spirits of Eternal Nature, and the seven "forms" in the nature of our universe derived from that, would be to write a small volume, not very intelligible either. I must therefore hazard an attempt, roughly and briefly, to indicate what he tells about them, viz., that the Infinite Source of all being willed to manifest the infinite wonders of the Abyssal only God; that this will caused the magnetic<sup>322</sup> compression of desire, the darkness of an enclosure of a previously unseeking infinitude of powers and ideas which he calls "the nothing" — in contradiction to any conceivable somewhat, and sometimes the "liberty." "The Lubet of the liberty doth introduce itself into Nature and essence, that it might be manifest in power, wonder, and being."<sup>323</sup> This enclosure of the desire, condensing power, so to speak, for concentrated purpose, is the cause of the second form of nature<sup>324</sup> — the mobility, with its ceaseless wrestling to escape from that strong astringent force, and both together are the cause of the third — the anguish generated by such contrary action, and the divided sensibility it necessitates; this again drives on to such intensity of whirling motion as to enkindle

<sup>317</sup> though that would make the derived being equal to its Creator

<sup>318</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 19, v. 67

<sup>319</sup> N. B. — He means eternal nature, as all the rest of his teaching proves.

<sup>320</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 21, par. 78.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 26, par. 81.

<sup>322</sup> attractive

<sup>323</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 14, par. 26.

<sup>324</sup> itself the first

fire, the fourth form; this again, by the secret influence of the Lubet, producing light and love, the fifth; sound and resulting intelligence the sixth; and all these finding in the seventh substantiality, their completion and full appeasement.<sup>325</sup>

It may be well to quote<sup>326</sup> one of Boehme's shortest summaries to justify my paraphrase; it can hardly be said to explain.

"We find seven especial properties in Nature, whereby this only mother worketh all things, which are these; viz., first, Desire, which is astringent, cold and hard and dark; secondly, bitterness, which is the sting of the astringent hard enclosure; this is the cause of all motion and life; thirdly, the anguish by reason of the raging of the impression where the impressed darkness falleth into a tearing anguish and pain by reason of the sting. Fourthly, the fire, where the eternal will<sup>327</sup> doth introduce itself into a darting flash ... with which the hardness is again consumed and introduced into a corporeal moving spirit. Fifthly, the egress of the free will out of the darkness and out of the fire, and the potent desire which it hath sharpened in the fire, doth now in the light's desire draw into itself the essence from the fire, dying according to its hunger, the which is now water, and in the lustre it is a tincture from the fire and light, viz., a love desire. Sixthly, the voice or sound. Seventhly, whatsoever the six forms are spiritually that the seventh is essentially, or in real substance.

"Thus these are the seven forms of the Mother of all Beings, whence all whatsoever is, is in this generated."<sup>328</sup>

I am painfully conscious of the obscurity of this passage; on first reading it will affect the mind as wonderful nonsense; but could any true explanation of creating life be sensed by the intelligence of man in his present state? I am sure it could not. The entirely ignorant must take something on trust, before any foundation of knowledge can be laid.

Readers who are fortunate enough to possess any of Boehme's writings will find in each of them abundant mention of these seven forces or forms of Eternal Nature. What I fail to make as intelligible as the subject admits, reference to his full accounts may make clearer. For instance, *Aurora*, chap. 18, par. 28. But I must observe that had it not been for Freher's more lucid, though very profound treatise on Deity as manifested through Nature, I should never, from Boehme alone, have been able to understand what he meant by the Lubet, or how the good pleasure of Divine love acted through the wrestling wheel of the seven Spirits of God. Those who have access to this very rare work or to C. Walton's Memorial of Law<sup>329</sup>, which contains

<sup>325</sup> This is, I am well aware, a very lame and crude representation of Boehme's revelation as to the origin of Nature; but this consoles me for my total inability to do justice to my theme; competent writers have admirably written about it — Dionysius Freher and William Law, for instance, and what they wrote is unread. Inferior articles have in the present day a better chance of attention.

<sup>326</sup> abbreviated

<sup>327</sup> the Lubet

<sup>328</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 14, pars. 10 to 15.

<sup>329</sup> unpublished, but to be found in most of our largest libraries



large extracts from other writings of Freher will find the trouble of following his close line of argument richly repaid.

Now, it is in the arrest of the right evolution of these seven forms of Eternal Nature that all evil begins, and before we deal with the question, "Who are our spiritual enemies?" we ought to learn how it is that in a world created by a holy God, anything can be antagonistic; and, as these "forms" are the seven Spirits of God, "generating God," as Boehme has it, the Scriptural saying, "I create evil"<sup>330</sup> is strictly true; though it is none the less true that God is love and did not will evil.

Let us try if by any possible analogy we can help ourselves to understand this passage ever so little. Suppose that an embryonic form of human origin was shewn to us, we should regard it with horror; it is an abortion, a comparatively formless and revolting approach to what, in its full growth, is a beautiful human shape, and yet it is a requisite preparation for that matured excellence. All sinful beings, in our kind of bodies or out of them, are in this sense embryonic monsters; they have fallen short of right evolution; they act and feel in God and by the powers of God, and yet are contrary to God and remain in the wrath of God because good in them has not been wrought out to true being. And what is the cause of this evil is equally the cause of the ceaseless unrest of human life. "Rest," F. Baader tells us, "is unimpeded total activity. Every being acts restlessly so long as it has not attained the totality of its energies. The striving forces of Time seek rest, not to die but to be active without hindrance."

Perhaps Freher's image of the broken ring gives as good an idea of the cause of antagonism from breach of original sequence as any form of words could. After a long and careful exposition of the original good of the darkness which must underlie the production of fire before light itself can be manifested, he continues: "It belonged therefore essentially to God's eternal manifestation, of which it was — as to our weak apprehension — the first beginning that could have been made, if its end was to be attained; and which beginning having never been separated from its end, could not have been evil and stand in opposition to its end, which was good, and both together were but one thing. For this end found and took hold of its beginning and swallowed it up, so that they made together but one globe wherein they were inseparably within each other, the light manifested in the darkness and shining in it, and the darkness hid in the light, and not comprehending it; as we see in a simile, in every ring or circle in which the beginning and the end are united and combined, and which would never be called a circle or a ring if it had no beginning and end, yet so that the end always lays hold of the beginning and swallows it up into itself, and the beginning be lost and disappear in the end. Now, Lucifer, who, it is granted, is not a maker, still less a creator, but a destroyer, first broke the harmonious ring in himself — for inasmuch as he was a creature, inferior and posterior to Eternal Nature, he must necessarily have had it within himself — and thereby the beginning of it

<sup>330</sup> Isaiah xiv, 7

appeared by itself divided from its end, and was placed in strong opposition against it; just as when a ring is broken a beginning and end appear opposite to each other, whereas it was before but one entire thing."

Lucifer, according to Boehme, first looked back into the strong first forms of Eternal Nature, in which he thought with his fire to prove superiority over the meekness of light; and in this process of imagining for himself self-chosen elevations, his light extinguished and his fire remained in the dark world.

To enlarge upon this portion of the subject would carry this paper beyond bounds, and is not necessary for its aim; only it should not be forgotten that any attempt to popularise doctrines of this vast scope must be at the sacrifice of all due proportion; many an adjacent branch of the subject must be ignored if minds unused to such themes are to be won to attend to them at all. The point I wish to make good without fatiguing by too copious extracts from my teacher, is that what we call evil took its rise when first Spirits of exceeding power, acting in God with all the Divine forces of the first four Spirits of Eternal Nature, "fell short of the glory of God," and broke the perfect sequence of right evolution. And that these mighty angels, with all their constituent Spirits, have for millions of ages remained in this state of tremendous opposition to light, to love, to all that is called in a special sense God — though nothing can have being out of, or apart from, the first Creator — God, the Father of Spirits.

If I am told that all this belief in Lucifer and the fallen angels is the remains of superstition, an obsolete engine of priestcraft, I would request answer to this one question — since no philosopher will, I suppose, deny the truth of this dictum of St. Martin's: "La mesure d'une erreur est en meme temps la mesure de la verite correspondante,"<sup>331</sup> — what can the truth be which corresponds to these old world beliefs in a mighty tempter, a cruel adversary, a tormentor of evil men?

If both philosophy and theology are silent, surely the answer which during two centuries has satisfied some of the strongest intellects, might be accepted now for at least a working hypothesis.

"We have shown you already concerning the seven forms of the Centre of the Eternal nature, where every form is a several well-spring of nature; in like manner out of every form, out of every well-spring, go forth spirits, according to the multiplicity of essences and properties, every one according to its kind."<sup>332</sup>

It is curious how absolutely blind we may be to the weight of a sentence for which we have no prepared ground: it may be read repeatedly and yet lodge no idea in the mind. This is particularly the case when we read writings so loaded with obscurities as Boehme's necessarily are.<sup>333</sup> I suppose I must have passed over these words,

<sup>331</sup> L' Esprit des Choses, vol. 1, p. 88

<sup>332</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 4, par. 37

<sup>333</sup> Could the riddle of the universe, if it were explained to us, be solved in simple language?

"Out of every form go forth spirits" at least a dozen times before — only a year ago they suddenly lit up a labyrinth of puzzles for which I had never found a clue. But I had found and held fast the Scriptural sayings that caused these puzzles, and so when the light flashed in, there was proof of its being true light, ready at every point at which it fell. And just this is the advantage of the blind faith so often scornfully spoken of; it fixes words of revealed truth in the mind, and holds them there until intelligence can overtake belief: whereas if only what can be understood is retained, the measure of understanding is too likely to become the test of what we can believe to be true, and then the superstitions of ignorance stultify us more and more.

I read in the Bible of the enemies of the soul, of the powers of darkness, of spiritual wickedness in high places, and with-out any cavil, asked myself, How can God allow them to be powers? Why are they enemies? How did spiritual wickedness get into high places? and this tempting of the devil, even supposing that myriads of evil spirits form the enemy of mankind, how is it affected when, so far as selfconsciousness goes, we are, for the most part, our own tempters? But having fully grasped Boehme's doctrine as to the soul of man being existent in the mutual interaction of the seven Spirits of Eternal Nature, having for the root of its manifested life the three first "tormentive forms" of that nature, — the fourth fire for its first essential life in nature; and the three last forms for the blissful evolution of that life, with a will acting in its fiery life free to allow either form or property of nature to elevate itself above the rest in its own abyss; free to "imagine into" either, to draw with all the magic magnetic strength of the will towards either, — then these few words, "Out of every form go forth spirits," explained to me more than I had ever hoped in this life to understand.

To say that a man has no worse enemy than himself, meaning by such words that he permits and indulges what is evil in himself, is therefore to utter a very foolish, ignorant, and cruelly misleading notion. For what is man? A being who consists as to nature<sup>334</sup> of these seven forms of Eternal Nature, which extend through all created worlds and cause all manifestation of spiritual life: hence his own abyss of being is in a very mysterious but terrible sense contiguous to that of all others, and limitless in potentiality. What is more awful still, man made in the likeness of God has no equal in the spiritual world in this prerogative — he alone among all creatures is a denizen of what Boehme calls the *Three Principles*, i.e., the dark world, the world of light, and the world of ultimated essences;<sup>335</sup> so that spirits native to those *Three Principles* all desire the agency of man, for "all would be creaturely"; even, so Boehme tells, "the Deity hath had a longing to see the wonders of the Eternal Nature and of the innumerable essences in substance and in corporeal things."<sup>336</sup> All seek the agency of a being who can represent their dominant desire in ultimates.

<sup>334</sup> of his anti-naturing original I do not speak

<sup>335</sup> corrupt and mixed in the nature of our earth, but pure and glorious and truly substantial in the region from which our world of nature derives;

<sup>336</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 4, par. 26.

In the commonest instincts of human nature this longing to realise internal life by external shows itself; witness the efforts of an angry person to get someone else into a rage; of rough strong men to promote a fight; of greedy or frivolous characters to further the gluttony and vanity which they cannot themselves indulge. Now in the dark world where true substance is impossible to attain, this eagerness for embodied representatives is presumably very strong.

In the seventh form of Eternal Nature, the substantiality, all the other forms find their completion and rest, and this, one may suppose, is one reason for the effort of the spirits in each principle or property to find ultimatum, i.e., embodiment in man.

"The desire of the dark world is after the manifestation, viz., after the outward world, to attract and draw the same essentiality into it, and thereby to satisfy its wrathful hunger."<sup>337</sup>

For every fire in the spiritual as well as in the material world needs substance to maintain its strength. Let us pause a moment to think what the will of an angry person is; — anger, that so common ripple on the surface of life's tremendous depths! — in connection with the following passage: "The Spirit of God worketh in love and anger. For it is the spirit of every life; it is in everything, like as the things will and property is; for one property receiveth another; what the soul willeth, that willeth also the same into which the soul turneth itself: it is all magical: whatsoever the will of a thing willeth, that it receiveth."<sup>338</sup> Remembering also that "the original nature, first, and radical principle or constituent essence of the soul without the light of God is as mere a devil or infernal dragon as Lucifer himself is."<sup>339</sup>

Anyone meeting the eye of man or woman when wrath bursts into utterance, must have instinctive consciousness of this, little as the oppressive or agitating influences of rage are understood. And not only one dragon in human guise confronts us then, — not one bosom devil animates us when our wrath blazes out: in either case, a multitude of spirits who go forth from the well-spring of nature in the property of wrath, combine to emphasize the provocation and keep up the fire. This is quite as certain as that the least brawl in the street quickly attracts a circle of eagerly sympathising spectators; and, if we but knew what we were about when we allow an angry look or word or gesture to escape us, we should suppress the first movement of indignation as anxiously as we remove gunpowder from risks of accidental ignition.

We have good and evil in us, into which we frame our willing, the essence thereof become stirring in us, and such a property we draw also from without into us....If we lead ourselves to the good, then God's Spirit helpeth us, but if we lead ourselves to evil, then God's fierce wrath and anger helpeth us; what we will, of that property we

<sup>337</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 2, par. 35.

<sup>338</sup> Fifth of Six Great Points, chap. 8, pars. 48 and 49.

<sup>339</sup> An Epistle of J. Boehme's, par. 11.

get a leader, and thereunto we lead ourselves. And yet it is not the Deity's will that we perish, but His anger's and our will."<sup>340</sup>

The fall of Lucifer is described by Boehme as having been caused by his sense of power leading him to despise "the meekness and lowliness in which consisteth the Kingdom of Heaven, and the virtue of the heart of God." "He saw<sup>341</sup> the greatest hidden mysteries of the Deity stand in such humility, he took offence at it, and entered into the fierce might of the fire, and would domineer with his own self-wit and reason over the heart of God: he would that God should be in subjection under him, he would be a framer and creator in nature, and therefore he became a devil."<sup>342</sup>

I am, of course, very far from thinking that by this crude statement, I convey any adequate notion of what these words were meant to indicate, — as far as I am from thinking that I fully understand them; but I understand enough for my immediate purpose, which is to show how evil and enmity began among the "throne angels," and let us hear Boehme's account of these before we go further. "Behold, when God set the Fiat in the will and would create angels, then the Spirit first separated all qualities after that manner as you now see there are many kinds of stars, and so the Fiat created them. Then there were created the princely angels and the throne angels, according to every quality out of the source of the Fire, a similitude whereof you have in the stars, how different they are."<sup>343</sup> "Now the throne and princely angels are every one of them a great fountain."... "Out of each fountain came forth again a centre in many thousand thousands.... Every host which proceeded out of one and the same fountain got a will in the same fountain which was their prince."<sup>344</sup>

Now, "when the moving to the creating of the angels was effected, then,"... "the properties stood in great working and did will to be creatural. In these properties did the creaturely will of Lucifer create; when he did apprehend the omnipotence therein, and found the wonder doing power himself."<sup>345</sup> "And instantly the properties in him became revealed or manifested, viz., the cold fire,"<sup>346</sup> — "also the sharp, hard, bitter, stinging painfulness or torment of the fire: thus became he an enemy of all love, humility, and meek gentleness."<sup>347</sup>

Why thus? "Because every property keepeth its own desire, for a property is nothing but a hunger, and the hunger doth form itself into such an essence as itself is.... The dark hunger desireth essence according to its property, viz., earthly things; and the bitter hunger desireth bitter raging, stinging pain; and the hunger of anguish desireth

<sup>340</sup> Fifth of Six Great Points, chap. 8, pars. 52-54.

<sup>341</sup> he tells us

<sup>342</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 4, par. 61.

<sup>343</sup> Note that the three first forms of Eternal Nature and the darkness they move in are necessarily prior in action to the opening of the "source of fire."

<sup>344</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 11, par. 2.

<sup>345</sup> Seventh Theosophic Question, pars. 4 and 5.

<sup>346</sup> query, what we mean by negative electricity?

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 7.

anxious hunger; also the melancholy taketh the desire to die, and continual sadness."<sup>348</sup>

And, further, Lucifer "desired to be an artist He saw the Creation, and understood the ground, wherein he would be an own self-God, and rule with the central fire's might in all things, and image himself with all things, in all forms, that he might be what he would, and not what the Creator would; as. indeed, this is still to this day their greatest joy "<sup>349</sup> "that they can transmute themselves into many images, and thus achieve or make fancy."<sup>350</sup>

It was just this self-chosen application of power — this willing in opposition to the holy will of the whole of God's eternal nature, that brought the mighty rebel and all his hosts, in Boehme's language, "out of the temperature." "This is the very abomination before God that the life's forms are gone out from the equal agreement,"<sup>351</sup> — for "nothing is evil which remaineth in the equal accord, for that which the worst doth cause and make with its coming forth out of the accord, that likewise maketh the best in the equal accord.... All was very exceeding good, but with its own elevation and departure out of the equality it becomes evil, and brings itself out of the form or property of the love and joy into a painful tormenting form and property.... King Lucifer stood in the beginning of his creation in highest joyfulness, but he departed from the likeness. He forsook his order, and went out of the harmony wherein God created him; he would be lord of all, and so he entered into the austere fire's domination, and is now an instrument in the austere fire's might, upon which also the all-essential spirit striketh and soundeth upon his instrument; but it soundeth only according to the wrathful fire's property."<sup>352</sup> I think we have now sufficient data to understand why, if "out of every form as a well-spring go forth spirits "with the same will as that of their awakening Prince, the soul of man, which subsists in the perpetual interaction of the seven forms of Eternal Nature, must live among enemies to peace, externally as well as internally, constitutionally opposed to its welfare, until all are atoned, made one in equal action by perfected evolution. Now, by such unsuitable terms as outer and inner, which in a deeper sense no one could use regarding spirits, I only mean to indicate that enemies arise from the discords of other souls as well as from those beginning in our own.

Very significantly does Boehme say in his *Aurora*, to which I must refer the student for copious<sup>353</sup> teaching about Lucifer, "In his pride he smote himself with darkness and blindness, and made himself a devil. He knew in God only the majesty and not the Word in the centre. He would needs inflame himself and rule in the fire over the

<sup>348</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 14, pars. 52-56. (Alas! we have not far to seek for proof of this; we find it in ourselves; we bewail it in other people!)

<sup>349</sup> the host of Lucifer

<sup>350</sup> Tenth Theosophic Question, par. 1.

<sup>351</sup> Fourth Text of Apology 3, point 2, par. 66

<sup>352</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 16, pars. 6 and 7.

<sup>353</sup> and to a patient mind fairly intelligible

meekness."<sup>354</sup> To the present hour how incessantly we make the same mistake! The dignity of pride, the superb stateliness of indignation, the forceful bluster of wrath, how much stronger and more availing they feel to every angry human heart! It knows the majesty, i.e., the might of the kindled aching forms of nature, but not "the Word in the centre," the meek light of love escaping from the fire, and shining far beyond the lurid prison where only wrath and pain can be generated, and never the waters of eternal life and the imperishable substance which it forms. The forces of Eternal Nature are mighty, but to the Word in the centre alone was all power given in Heaven and in earth.

In the first book of Kings, chap. 19, the agency of the powers of Divine Nature, as contrasted with that of the Word of God, is marked emphatically. We read there that "The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a still small voice." To this the negative is not added, and we are led to suppose that the God of Israel was in that voice made known. Again, when the disciples of Jesus proposed to bring fire from Heaven to punish the Samaritans, His gentle monition, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," suggests Divine knowledge of the evil source of a wish for exercising resistant power even with good intentions. "The devil sought great strength and power, as also the present world doth great might and honour and despiseth the light of love."<sup>355</sup> And until Jesus Christ came to this earth and shewed the majesty of humble self-sacrifice, the power of meekness was unknown, and to this day so contrary is it to our natural ideas of greatness that very generally it is mistaken for defect of force.

"Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly of heart," was the new and wonderful teaching of Him Who gave for His last and all-embracing commandment, "Love one another." And now we know that "in love and meekness we become new-born out of the anger of God; in love and meekness we must strive and fight,"... "for love is the devil's poison, it is a fire of terror to him wherein he cannot stay."<sup>356</sup>

"Therefore it is that Christ so earnestly teacheth us love, humility, and mercifulness; and the cause why God is become man is for our salvation and happiness sake, that we should not turn back from His love."<sup>357</sup> In this passage the connection of ideas is not evident until we remember the office of imagination in re-moulding the attitude, and hence the "spirit of the soul," for, "mark this, every imagination maketh an essence."<sup>358</sup> To say nothing here of the far less comprehensible effects of the Word taking flesh upon Him, we can easily see how much a fellow creature's example,

<sup>354</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 15, par. 12.

<sup>355</sup> Third Great Point, chap. 4, par. 31.

<sup>356</sup> Second part of Treatise on *Incarnation*, chap. 7, pars. 44, 45.

<sup>357</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 14, par. 71.

<sup>358</sup> A Warning from J. B., par. 2.

greatly admired, tells upon the ideal of his admirers, and consequently upon their self-conduct.

Jesus Christ gave the human race an absolutely new ideal. His forerunner announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, but He revealed the more important truth, "the Kingdom of God is within you." Into that Kingdom we enter so soon as we surrender ourselves to meekness and love; "in the love the fire dieth and transmuteth itself into joy."<sup>359</sup> Yes! and therefore is the joy resulting in proportion to the dying of the kindled fire.

But the habitual maintenance of love and meekness is, I suppose, a difficult achievement even to those who are constitutionally placable; to people of irascible nature so extremely difficult as to call for the Biblical proviso, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."<sup>360</sup> With all men and at all times it is not possible, and for such exceptional cases Boehme gives a recipe which no one will ever try in vain. "If a fire riseth up in one qualifying spirit then that is not concealed from the soul. It may instantly awaken the other qualifying spirits which are contrary to the kindled fire, and may quench it. But if the fire will be, or become, too big, then hath the soul a prison, wherein it may shut up the kindled spirit, viz., in hard astringent quality"<sup>361</sup> "and the other spirits must be the jailers, till wrath be allayed and the fire be extinguished.... but if the spirit breaketh out of prison, then put it in again, make good thy part against it as long as thou livest."<sup>362</sup>

I must diverge a little from the main line of this chapter to call attention to the way Boehme here contrasts the power of the seven fountain Spirits with that of the soul, taking for granted its possible supremacy in every conflict. He here identities the soul and the will; now as elsewhere the soul is spoken of as one with the seven Spirits of Eternal Nature, confusion of thought will result unless we carefully bear in mind that he has shewn that this Eternal Nature was, and is, the consequence of the Abyssal Deity willing to manifest itself: the original of the human soul also was prior to its manifestation, for we are told that God breathed into man the breath of life — a life that must have preceded all nature and creature since it emanated from God, and made man to be in the likeness of God. Hence the much contested free-will of man which now fights at such tremendous odds against what we call fate; i.e., the forces of inferior beings raised by his fall, and insubordination to comparatively superior power, may, in time, and as regards his external life to most undeniable superiority. Yet, notwithstanding all the opposition of the stars and the elements in his outer life, in the life within "all is possible; as soon is the good changed into evil as the evil into

<sup>359</sup> Apology 3 3 text 1, par. 58.

<sup>360</sup> Rom. xii, 18.

<sup>361</sup> which here I venture to explain to myself as in action and silence

<sup>362</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 10, pars. 85, 86, 90.



good. For every man is free, and is as a God to himself, he may change or alter himself in this life either into wrath or into light."<sup>363</sup>

An assertion that many will contradict, but one that should be taken as bearing upon the generality of human beings; not those who by long-continued indulgence of lowest instincts have lost, or by the hereditary penalties of ancestral vice have hardly ever attained, consciousness of their human birth-right.

In one short sentence Boehme sums up what is in the power of every human being whose spiritual degradation is not yet complete. "Man hath the death in him, whereby he may die unto the evil."<sup>364</sup>

Incapable as the deeply corrupted may be of doing or feeling anything right, ceasing to do evil remains possible, and when this — the whole of man's share in working out his own salvation — is persisted in, the Divine spirit begins and carries on the new creation of regenerate life. This habitual death to the instigations of the divided properties or forms of nature in us, is the indispensable condition of any true life. "The curse of God," i.e., the withdrawal of God's holiness — wholeness of action — "is come into the seven forms so that they are in strife and enmity, and one form doth annoy the other, and can never agree unless they all seven enter into death and die unto the self-will. Now, this cannot be except a death come into them, which breaks all their will; as the Deity in Christ was a death to the human selfhood."<sup>365</sup>

And had not Jesus Christ broken the rebellious will of the human selfhood in a true human soul, this death had not been possible to us: "For the soul, having sprung out of the Eternal source, and having its originality out of the eternity, none can redeem it in its own root of eternity, or bring it out of the anger, except there come one who is love itself and be born in its own very birth, that so he may bring it out of the anger and set it in the love in himself, as it was done in Christ....

We know very exactly that we could not be redeemed except the Deity did go into the soul, and bring forth the will of the soul again out of the fierceness in itself, into the light of the meekness; for one root of life must remain or else the whole creature must be dissolved."<sup>366</sup>

I hope that to any attentive reader of these attempts to explain the source of evil and sin, it may be said, "Seeing now we thus know what we are, and that God letteth us know it, we should now look to it and generate some good out of us, for we have the centre of Eternal Nature in us. If we make an angel out of us, then we are that; if we make a devil out of us, then we are that."<sup>367</sup> The all-important question is how to make the angel. Let not our ability be doubted, if only the will be constant, for the

<sup>363</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 18, pars. 42, 43.

<sup>364</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 16, par. 28.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 12, par. 30.

<sup>366</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 25, pars. 6, 8.

<sup>367</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 9, pars. 13, 14.

spirit of man "is a son of the properties, and also a lord of the same, for in him consists the power; he may awaken which he please."<sup>368</sup> "For thou must know that in the government of thy mind thou art thine own lord and master, there will rise up no fire in thee in the circle or whole circumference of thy body and spirit unless thou awakenest it thyself.... In whatever quality soever thou excitest or awakenest the spirit, and maketh it operative, according to that same quality the thoughts rise up and govern the mind. If thou stirrest or awakenest the spirit in the fire then there ariseth in thee the bitter and harsh anger, for as soon as the fire is kindled, which is done in the hardness and fierceness, then springeth up the bitter fierceness or wrath in the flesh."<sup>369</sup>

"Be it in love or in anger, that which thou liftest up thyself towards or against, thou kindlest the quality of that, and that it is which burneth in thy compacted incorporated spirit. For when thou lookest upon anything which doth not please thee, but is contrary to thee, then thou raisest up the fountain of thy heart as when thou takest a stone, and therewith strikest fire on a steel, and so when the spark catcheth fire in the heart then the fire kindleth. At first it groweth, but when thou stirrest the source or foundation of the heart more violently, then it is as when thou blowest the fire, so that the flame is kindled, and then it is high time to quench it, else the fire will be too great and then burneth and consumeth, and doeth hurt to its neighbors."<sup>370</sup>

A more wordy exposition of a notorious fact than the Apostle's "Behold how great a fire a little matter kindleth!" But he spoke of the effect of sparks escaping in utterance; Boehme's object was to expose the forge on which they are first struck out. And here we have to remember that the kindling of wrath is not a mischief confined to one part of our being: in the words of St. James, "it setteth on fire the whole course of nature," (wheel, or birth of nature, it is in the revised translation of the New Testament, and this precisely harmonises with Boehme's account of it.)<sup>371</sup> "If a creature which is like or as the whole being of God, spoileth, elevateth, or kindleth itself in a qualifying or fountain spirit, yet it kindleth not one spirit alone, but all the seven spirits."<sup>372</sup> But how to prevent this kindling! — "For out of the essences go the senses or thoughts; they are and have their origin out of the harsh astringency; for they are the bitterness and run always into the mind as an anguish wheel, and seek rest to try whether they may attain to the liberty of God. They are they which strike up the fire in the anguish wheel.... They are the mind's servants and are the subtlest messengers; they go into God, and again out of God into necessity. And whereinsoever they kindle them-selves, either in God or in necessity, viz., in falsehood or wickedness, that they bring home to the mind. Therefore must

<sup>368</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 2, par. 25.

<sup>369</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 10, pars. 69, 70, 81.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 10, pars. 71, 72, 73.

<sup>371</sup> *Aurora*, chap. 16, pars. 11, 12, 13.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 10, par. 7.

the noble mind often be lord over the evil and stifle it in its anguish, when the thoughts have entertained or loaden in false or evil imaginations into the desire."<sup>373</sup>

But the exceeding difficulty of that stifling! For while wrath lasts, we are animated by the eternal nature of wrath, which is incessantly giving birth to and substantiating its own creations, by reinforcements of justifying fancies; and "in the eternal nature of the wrath, the light or the kingdom of Heaven is not known, and also in the eternal kingdom of light, the kingdom of wrath is not known, because each kingdom is in itself. So is the soul of man also: it hath kingdoms in it; in which it tradeth, in that it standeth. If it trade in the kingdom of Heaven, then the kingdom of Hell is dead in it, not that it ceaseth, but the kingdom of Heaven is predominant, and the kingdom of fierceness is changed into joy; so also if it trade in the kingdom of wrath, then that is predominant, and the kingdom of Heaven is, as it were, dead; although, indeed, in itself, it doth not vanish, yet the soul is not in it."<sup>374</sup> And this trading of the mind is for the most part so blindly eager! "If one property or quality ariseth and getteth above the other, then presently something followeth, so that the mind collecteth all its thoughts together and sendeth them to the members of the body, and so the hands and the feet, the mouth, and all go to work and do something, according to the desire of the mind, and then we say that form or property that directeth the work is predominant, qualifying, and working above other forms, wherein yet all other forms of nature lie yet hidden, and are subject to that one form; and yet the mind is such a wonderful thing that suddenly<sup>375</sup> it bringeth forth and raiseth another and quencheth the form that was kindled before, so that it becometh, as it were, a nothing, as may seem in joy and sorrow."<sup>376</sup> And in what is technically called conversion also. Transition from a hopeless sense of being driven to commit sin, and so strong a fear and loathing of it, however habitual, that it is shunned as the worst of evils, little as it is believed in by careless observers, is an historic fact in human nature, and is often as complete as it is sudden: — complete as regards a totally new starting point for the will, of course pitifully and most painfully incomplete as regards achievement of perfected conduct. Nor, when the dominion of each divided property is better understood, and the tyrannic power of rulers in their darkness more justly estimated, will the suddenness of conversion be so much a matter of surprise.

Just in that power of suddenly eliciting the influences of quite another world of thought and feeling, i.e., another property of our nature, lie at once our greatest danger and our greatest ability to escape from it. As to the danger, let a lucifer box remind us how destructive a force may lie still and harmless while untouched, — force that once kindled by the slightest accident, will suffice to destroy in a few moments the noblest handiworks of many a toilsome year. An angry word, a scornful look can as quickly set the whole mind aflame: and then one mind sets fire to another, and all former growth in love or holiness seems for the time as if it had not

<sup>373</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 10, pars. 12, 17, 18.

<sup>374</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 22, par. 90.

<sup>375</sup> out of one form that is now predominant, and working more than all others

<sup>376</sup> Appendix to *Three Principles*, par. 3.

been; as we calm we are ready to think all good-will and trust destroyed as well as present peace. But though much is lost, and future risk greatly increased, relief may be as sudden. The anger into which we have entered is God's anger, and must therefore scourge and plague us powerfully. "His anger is His strength and omnipotence and consuming fire; and His heart is His love, is His meekness, and so now that which approacheth and entereth into His anger is captivated in the anger. But it is possible to go out of the anger, as His dear heart is generated in the anger, which stilleth the anger and is rightly called the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>377</sup>

Go out? And how? "When the soul inclineth itself at all towards God's face and doth but a little imagine into God's love, then the Divine life becometh stirring."<sup>378</sup> And "then the anger of God sinks down from the soul and so it is released or delivered in the love spirit from pain and lives in God."<sup>379</sup>

"Hold fast," said Gichtel in one of his letters, "to love in your imagination; nothing can take it from you but your own imagination. As soon as our imagination goes out of the love, darkness enters into the imagination, and the devil then has access." And again, "they knew from experience how easy it was to stumble and to fall by a thought from love into wrath, when the soul being plunged into a violent struggle has very hard work to recover its balance."

In this inquiry into the nature of our unseen foes, I am considering them as abettors of evil in man, rather than his antagonists; for into the mystery of their enmity to man, as such, I have here as little cause to enter as I have capacity for its comprehension. This much, however, is no sort of mystery, that the evil always detest the good, and try to bring down comparative innocence to their own state. There can be no doubt that this instinct for promoting wickedness is strong beyond our bounded scope of vision. And, among all the tender mercies of the Father of Spirits, I suppose none to be much greater than the concealment of cruel enemies, whose power to intimidate, even if not allowed to harass us otherwise, would be fully equal to their malice. While we are in the flesh we have a veil which hides them from us, and, if Boehme did not mistake, many of us from them, unless fellow feeling gives them insight to us through our passions. Speaking of "a soul new-born in the light of God," he says: "The devil cannot see that soul, for the second principle wherein it liveth, on which God and the Kingdom of Heaven standeth, as also the angels and Paradise, is shut up from him, and he cannot get to it."<sup>380</sup> And again, when speaking of covetousness, "It is the eye of hell; the devil seeth man therewith into soul and body."<sup>381</sup> But, quite apart from hostility to man, the "wrath of nature wills to be manifested."<sup>382</sup> And hence the terrific discord of the divided forms of nature tends to continual increase, for "know and observe that every life standeth upon the abyss of the fierceness.... We all, in the

<sup>377</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 20, pars. 60 and 61.

<sup>378</sup> *Apology* 1, part 2, par. 553.

<sup>379</sup> *Doctrine of Election*, chap. 10, par. 102.

<sup>380</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 5, par. 5.

<sup>381</sup> *Six Points*, chap. 10, par. 48.

<sup>382</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, par. 130.

originality of our life, have the source of the anger and of the fierceness, or else we should not be alive, but we must look to it and in ourselves go forth out of the source of the fierceness with God, and generate the love in us, and then our life shall be a joyful and pleasant habitation to us, and then it standeth rightly in the Paradise of God." "For God calleth Himself a consuming fire and also a God of love, and His name, God, hath its original in the love where He goeth forth out of the source in Himself, and maketh it in Himself joy, Paradise, and the Kingdom of Heaven....But if our life stay in the fierceness, or in covetousness, envy, anger, and malice, and goeth not forth into another will, then it standeth in the anguishing source as all devils do."<sup>383</sup>

In that anguishing source are countless tormentors; but they cannot approach us until we open what may compare to a sluice or dam of a river, rather than to a door, so great is the inrush as soon as it is made possible. "The devil continueth in his own dominion or principality, not indeed in that wherein God created him, but in the aching, painful birth of eternity, in the centre of nature and property of wrath; in the property which begetteth darkness, anguish and pain."<sup>384</sup>

Now the soul of man necessarily shares that property with him; it is the root of all creatural life. "The devil hath no authority or power over it, only that which is the source of anxiety in the soul is the very source or quality of his life."<sup>385</sup> And with this ocean of potential torment close about it, the soul is so lightly, quickly moved from one property to another, that a thought can do it. "The life of man in this time is like a wheel, where very suddenly that which is undermost becometh uppermost and kindleth itself in every creature."<sup>386</sup> We all know something of the daily marvels that result from this, and must have observed how entirely just, right, and inevitable anger and scorn, for instance, appear to us while they are felt; how they seem to take intensifying colour from all that is occurring at that time, and how actually false to the truth of things a companion appears who condemns such feelings as misleading.

"I do well to be angry; I cannot but feel scorn!" is what we feel. Now as with the rise of anger a whole spiritual world flies open to us, and in that world every wrathful thought is strictly in its own element, this temporary hallucination is quite intelligible. Alas," said Carlyle, writing to his mother, "why should I dwell in the element of contempt and indignation rather than in that of patience and love?"<sup>387</sup> Why? Carlyle did not guess that in every element of contempt and indignation there are mighty confederates; that our own access to that element introduces us to their wrath, and this corroborates ours. As Boehme has it, "The darkness grasps the holy power"<sup>388</sup> "and brings it into malignity, and then it is as the Scripture says, with the perverse

<sup>383</sup> Appendix to *Three Principles*, pars. 28, 29.

<sup>384</sup> On True Resignation, chap. 3, par. 8.

<sup>385</sup> On the Complexions, chap. 4, par. 100.

<sup>386</sup> Point 2, par. 22.

<sup>387</sup> For the mind that is prone on all occasions to kindle into wrath on the slightest provocation, often abhors the folly.

<sup>388</sup> i.e., deific powers in human nature

thou art perverse, and with the holy thou art holy."<sup>389</sup> "Thou" — God in man. In precisely the same manner, and with the same plausibility, does every vice — covetousness, gluttony, lust, revenge — justify itself; and every indulgence of either propensity strengthens its hold on the will and its certain velocity of increase. For "the image of the spirit of the soul"<sup>390</sup> "sticketh in the mind, and to whatsoever the mind inclineth and giveth up itself, in that is the spirit of the soul figured by the Eternal Fiat."<sup>391</sup> And if malignant or sensual properties have thus become creaturely in the human soul, the difficulty of opposing them by any properties that have not is, of course, tremendously increased; and when at last these evil properties rule, "And the horror of the situation is, that this power resides in one's own will and that one's will is itself subjected to this power, which itself has created and engendered."<sup>392</sup>

Therefore was our Saviour so stringent in requiring self-denial as indispensable to true life; "therefore, Christ so emphatically and punctually teacheth us in the new birth love, humility and meekness....For the desire of revenge ariseth in the centre of the dark fiery wheel of the Eternal Nature.... And the soul's fiery form stands in the Racha as a mad, furious wheel which confounds the essence in the body and destroys or shatters in pieces the understanding."<sup>393</sup>

Now when our Lord said, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire," human reason naturally understood a fire that was both external to the soul in present time, and occupying space in a future world, and in earlier ages probably no ideas less childish could have taken hold on the gross intellect of unenlightened Christendom. But it is on the strength of such absurd and obsolete ideas that even now much ignorant talk about the disproportionate judgments of an "angry God" still gains a hearing. It is surely time for such false coin to be called in. Long ago Boehme taught what that hell-fire is, — latent in every soul, — making it obvious that if that consuming and indestructible fire does not generate light and the meekness of light, it must torment with a famished desire for the bliss it cannot find. Let him explain himself as well as passages taken from their context can explain. "No creaturely spirit can subsist in the creature without the fireworld, for even the love of God could not be if His anger world were not in Him. The anger or fire of God is a cause of the light, and of the power, strength, and omnipotency."<sup>394</sup>

In all Boehme's writings he explains with most varied iteration that creaturely life begins in the sinking down of fire, calling it<sup>395</sup> — "a birth of death, where yet not death, but the beginning of the life of nature exists." The beginning of life everlasting, of the creature that is new in the old Adamic nature, takes its rise in precisely the same process; a death to the kindled fire of our evil passions, produces the light, and

<sup>389</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, par. 83.

<sup>390</sup> that which desire and imagination tend to form

<sup>391</sup> *Three Principles*, chap. 16, par. 43.

<sup>392</sup> L. C. St. Martin's *L'Esprit des Choses*, vol. 2, p. 315

<sup>393</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 22, par. 62.

<sup>394</sup> *Apology 3*, text 1, par. 57.

<sup>395</sup> *Election*, chap. 3, par. 10

that ultimates its meek glory in the heavenly substance which is formed by the water of eternal life. The analogy is complete and exact. "In the outward world, in all creatures, every life, viz., the essential fire life, draweth substance to it, and that is its food to eat. And the fire of its life consumeth the substance, and giveth forth the spirit of the power out of that which is consumed, and that is the life of the creature. And you see, doubtless very rightly, how the life ariseth out of the death; it becometh no life unless it break that out of which the life should go forth."<sup>396</sup> Now, "the centre out of which evil and good floweth is in thee; that which thou awakest in thee, be it fire or light, that will be taken in again by its like, either by God's anger fire, or by God's light fire; each of them electeth or chooseth to itself that which is like its property."<sup>397</sup> "The wicked should not dare to say God makes me evil; but the God in him, in Whose ground he stands, makes him what he can serve to be according to the utmost possibility."<sup>398</sup> "Power in the light is God's love-fire; and the power in the darkness is the fire of God's anger; and yet it is but one only fire; but divided into two principles; that the one might be manifest in the other, for the flame of anger is the manifestation of the great Love, and in the darkness the light is made known, else it were not manifest to itself."<sup>399</sup> I pray seekers for the cause of permitted evil to pause a little on that last sentence. In the Third Theosophic Question, from pars. 26 to 45, this subject of the fire of God is made clearer, to my thinking, than in any other of Boehme's works.

That the common notion of hell-fire as a punishment inflicted on evil souls *ab extra* was allowed by the permissive providence of God, and for so many centuries, is a marvel, and must be a snare to those who receive the words of Scripture literally according to their surface meanings; but it does not stand alone among the misunderstandings by which the Divine revelation has been obscured. And considering that no truth for which the human mind at its present stage of growth is prepared, can be the whole truth, or any given point of spiritual wisdom, nor absolute truth free from the modifications a finite recipient unavoidably gives to it, we should probably be wiser if we expected, as the Swedenborgians do, a continual opening of quite new meanings of Scripture, as the mind of the race opens more and more to heavenly influx.

But still, being ready to accept new meanings, and dismissing old interpretations, are very different postures of mind, and one does wonder at Divine love conniving, so to speak, at human error, by permitting the messengers of its Gospel to use language that could not but justify the horrible creed of Calvin; for example, St. Paul's sayings in Rom. ix, which have notoriously led hundreds of men and women to causeless despair, or to confidence almost as unwarrantable. From the 15th to the 24th verse of this chapter, every sentence seems calculated to confirm the terrible doctrine of irresistible predestination. Words could not, one would think, more distinctly imply an

<sup>396</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 5, pars. 46, 47, 48.

<sup>397</sup> *Apology* 1, part 1, par. 99.

<sup>398</sup> *Election*, chap. 9, par. 26.

<sup>399</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 8, par. 27.

arbitrary will in the Most High God to cause some men to be vessels of wrath filled to destruction, in order "to make His power to be known." Yet, as this contradicts the whole tenor of the New Testament, we know it cannot be a true interpretation; nor can all the ingenuity of theologians, by any strain of argument, reconcile this chapter with the recorded teaching of Jesus Christ. It would be possible so to underlie these words of St. Paul's with Boehme's elucidation as to bring them into a sort of harmony with his oft-repeated phrase about God's desire to manifest all the wonders of Eternal Nature. "The Word hath created a will in the darkness to manifest the darkness with all its forms of the wonders of God the Father."<sup>400</sup> But this sort of process would not seem honest to me, since I think it quite clear that Paul himself as little understood the real meaning of the expression he refers to, "God hardened the heart of Pharaoh," as he understood the period indicated by Christ Jesus for his future visible return; and I, not believing that the Holy Spirit ceased to reveal truth after the time of the Apostles, accept Boehme's account of those words as revelation, and am thankful thus, and only thus, to understand "whom He will He hardeneth."

Duly to appreciate the following passage, his whole treatise, *On the Election of Grace* should be studied; it is, as a whole, quite irresistibly convincing. Commenting on it in Rom. ix, v. 21, he says: — "The false, or wicked and evil soul and the holy soul come both out of Adam's soul, as out of one lump or clod of ground; which a man must understand to be spirit, or spiritually in the great mystery; but the one separates or distinguishes itself into light, and the other into darkness. This potter makes out of every separation or distinction a vessel, such as to which the separated or distinguished matter is useful and fit...As the *Ens* of the soul is, such also is the will of or to the making. God sits not over the will and makes it as a potter does a pot, but he generates it out of his own properties.... God works to the producing life out of everything; out of the evil *Ens* an evil life, out of the good *Ens* a good life."<sup>401</sup>

"The spirit without a body must remain in the fierce, wrathful fire, for it hath lost its substantiality. But the spirit with a body which the Turba is not able to devour remaineth eternally in the substantiality, in God's body, wherein His spirit standeth, viz., the body in the love of God, which is the hidden man in the Old Adamical, which there hath Christ's flesh in the corruptible or fragile body."<sup>402</sup>

The nearness of the most opposite worlds within us is one of the most momentous facts to which we can become awakened. "All is nigh unto the spirit, but it may not see in any other world's property, but only in that wherein its fire burneth: that world alone is the spirit capable of," and — what is equally certain — "into which world now

<sup>400</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 4, par. 21.

<sup>401</sup> chap. 9, pars. 4 to 11.

<sup>402</sup> Fourth Question, L., 308.



it uniteth itself and giveth up itself, from the same it getteth substance in its imagination."<sup>403</sup>

We can understand this better by a little recollection of our own experience than by any words of another person; this, and the possibility of being either inwardly transported or tortured, during the dominancy of anyone property ruling in us. Who has not known the common effects of some strong emotion making one feel, while in close companionship with other people, worlds away from their life, either rapt in secret consciousness of incommunicable joy, or sinking deeper and deeper in dismaying gulfs of sorrow, or torn by conflicts of unsuspected passion! And in all these states we feel that we are both in a different phase of being, and a different phase of being in us, — that the emotion ruling within is reverberated from all sides without; every sight and sound, as well as every turn of thought, adding to its strength either by contrast or by harmony. This, I suppose, is but a rehearsal of that state of self-determined consciousness which must be ours after death. Dionysius Freher explains it thus: "Compacted bodies or palpable materialities are only those things in temporal nature which want or rather are themselves their own place, and make by their multiplicity and differences their distances from one another, their own proper and peculiar corporeal extension in their only place.... Things, therefore, which have not, or have not yet, a compacted body, or are not yet limited to a certain extension, neither have nor require, or not yet, any place, but dwell only within themselves; and as their own visible extension is afterwards their own corporeal place, so now their own invisible original root or those radiant properties out of which they have come into visibility and palpability is their own spiritual dwelling place."<sup>404</sup>

This original root of all human life being indestructible, we can thus understand Swedenborg's report of man's spirit after death being, so to speak, in a wholly subjective condition, and yet conjoined to the society of spirits of which it was unconsciously a member before death. Death cannot remove us from the realm of that property of Eternal Nature to which our own will in this life has made us subjects. Only by the previous formation of the new creature<sup>405</sup> — be it but in feeble monage yet existant, in which all six first properties generate the seventh, the heavenly substantiality, — only in that eternal life can there be exemption from some overruling property of the un-at-one-ed "aching source of anguish which is called the anger of God."<sup>406</sup>

And hence the terrors of death, for that wellspring "hath devils of such properties and names, which are also princes in their legions, for they have imaged themselves in the hellish property. This ground is their life, and holds them captive in itself; and as the properties of the hellish foundations are manifold, so also are such princes under

<sup>403</sup> Fifth Point, chap. 7, pars. 8 and 29.

<sup>404</sup> It is in this sense, doubtless, that we are told of the traitor Judas that after he had hanged himself he went "to his own place."

<sup>405</sup> the regenerate

<sup>406</sup> *Regeneration*, chap, i, par. 24.

them, ruling in the same properties."<sup>407</sup> Could those who dare to attempt dissolution by suicide but faintly imagine how unspeakably more cruel are the tyrannies of unseen powers, than any under which they groan, suicide would be unknown. For "the dark world's substance and dominion standeth principally only in the first four forms of Nature, in a very exceeding strong and mighty potent dominion."<sup>408</sup> It is the agent of the terrific world whom the Saviour commanded His disciple to fear.

"He that hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him"<sup>409</sup>. And, again, "Give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hail thee to the judge," — the incorruptible judge of conscience — "and the judge deliver thee to the officer," — the executive property of torment inherent in sin "and the officer cast thee into prison."<sup>410</sup> The horrors of that prison he knew, and how long a period of purifying anguish of spirit must be endured, before there can be any departing thence, before "the very last mite" of the wages of sin has been paid in the convincing torment of self-condemnation.

Though I cannot for one instant believe that the loss of our flesh husk in any way interrupts the outflow of everlasting love from the heart of God towards man, I have begun to see why such alarming stress has been laid upon the now of earthly life by inspired teachers as "the day of salvation," "the accepted time," when we can work for it, before the after period when we cannot. In this life we have a shelter, a hiding-place from the violence of mighty spirits deprived even of the external light we enjoy. Into our world these spirits of the dark world cannot look except through us; "and therefore hath God introduced the soul into flesh and blood, that it might not so easily be capable of the fierce wrathful substance,"<sup>411</sup> "Also it hath its joy the while in the sidereal essence "<sup>412</sup> — and thus the evil fires of the soul are outshone. Again we have in the fleshly body an external life of our own on which the will can act, and — action and reaction being equal — this outward life reacts on the will, modifies, appeases, and even breaks it as the case may be. If anyone would duly estimate the helpfulness of a material body in this respect, let him just compare the different effects of a stinging recollection of angry thought occurring to the mind by night or by day. Even in the first case I think it will be found that generally the position of the body shifts as the painful impression recurs; we turn round as if merely moving thus lessened or changed it; and by day how many little distractions help us to manage anger better, to hold bitter thoughts in check. And not only does the activity of the body blunt internal feeling, but our rule over the body is so much more complete than our rule in the mind, that to prevent speaking angrily or acting unkindly is easy compared to getting rid of a vindictive wish or subduing a scornful impulse; for in that

<sup>407</sup> Eleventh Theosophic Question, pars. 7, 8.

<sup>408</sup> Sixth Point, chap. 9, par. 33.

<sup>409</sup> speaking no doubt of a collective spirit as one

<sup>410</sup> Luke xii, v. 5, 58, 59.

<sup>411</sup> with which wrathful spirits always strive to enkindle others; we have been taught quite recently to apprehend that there is substance transmitted by all emotion

<sup>412</sup> Fifth Point, chap. 7, par. 28

attempt the higher will can only oppose the lower with intensely concentrated self coercion.

Now with full knowledge of the extreme uncertainty of our tenure of flesh bodies, and total ignorance of all the aggressive powers that may beset us when cast out of these bodies by death, would it not be the work of good sense to try and procure another body impervious to all possible assaults in any state of being? There is such a body.

"There is an eternal in the temporal body, which verily disappeared in Adam as to the eternal light, which must also be born again through Christ."<sup>413</sup>

"The new man is not only a spirit; he is even flesh and blood, as the gold in the stone is not only a spirit; it hath a body, but not such a one as the rude drossy stone is, but a body which subsisteth in the centre of nature, in the fire; whose body the fire cannot consume."<sup>414</sup>

This gold, this heavenly substance, had been quite covered up by earthly matter, and no more grew in man; but "the heavenly Artist would not reject Adam's disappeared gold and make clean another new thing, but he took his own tincture of his own gold, out of which he had made Adam's gold, and tintured it with his own gold, that is with the Word<sup>415</sup> of God and with the essence of the Word, viz., with the Heavenly corporality."<sup>416</sup> The translator thought good to render *Wesen*, which in German is both essence and substance — essence, but here undoubtedly substance was intended. And what an unexamined mystery lies here! No figure of speech, but a fact to which I suppose every advance in ontological research will testify, i.e., that no spiritual life, even the Divine, can be existant without the interaction of an active spirit, and a passive substance. Now in man's nature, while full of discordant properties, there could not be any true substance till the "temperature" — the perfect equilibrium of all the forms of Eternal Nature — was restored. Therefore until the *Incarnation* of the Word or power of God, the new man was not possible. "Renew a right spirit within me," was David's prayer; but now "if any man be in Christ"<sup>417</sup> "he is a new creature." The Holy Spirit did indeed act on the human will, influence and guide it previously, but only with the new Adam could the new creation begin. Because wherever the Word is, there also is what Boehme elsewhere calls "the substantial Word." "With the substance of the Word, viz., the Heavenly corporality," the Word "came into the wrath of Eternal Nature, into the Father's property as to that nature, and regenerated the revolted human will in the

<sup>413</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 8, par. 15.

<sup>414</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 14, par. 22.

<sup>415</sup> viz., the power

<sup>416</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 37, par. 31.

<sup>417</sup> the Anointed Humanity

same fire through the love fire, and atoned God's love and anger, viz., the divided nature in the human will."<sup>418</sup>

"When the body deceaseth, then the sunlight is destroyed, and the soul standeth naked in the dark world."<sup>419</sup> "Therefore God brought Divine substantiality into the faded image of man."<sup>420</sup> "The highest love of the Deity in the name Jesu, did overcome the anger of God in our soul and inward Divine ground, proceeding from the substance of Eternity, and did turn it again into Divine humility, meekness and obedience, whereby the rent, torn and divided temperature of our human property entered again into the harmony and unity of the properties, viz., into Paradisical light, love, and life, that real temperature where variety doth centre and accord in unity."<sup>421</sup>

"Wilt thou not have thy soul, which is given thee from the eternal highest Good, here in this time kindled again in the light of God, so that it becometh born again in the light out of the Divine substantiality; then it falleth in the mystery"<sup>422</sup> "to the centre of Nature, viz., home again into the anguish chamber of the first four forms of Nature. There it must be a spirit in the dark anguish source with all the devils, and devour that which it hath in this world introduced into itself: that will be its food and life. But being God would not have it thus with man, his similitude and image, therefore he himself is become that which poor man was come to be, after that he was fallen out of the Divine substantiality, out of Paradise, that he might help him again; so that man hath in himself the gate of *Regeneration*, that he can in the soul's fire become born again in God."<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 40, par. 10.

<sup>419</sup> This is why the wrath is spoken of in the Bible as "the wrath to come"; it is only fully felt then when all perishable light, the matter for the fuel of the soul's fire, is withdrawn.

<sup>420</sup> Apology n, part 2, pars. 516 and 517.

<sup>421</sup> First Epistle, par. 12.

<sup>422</sup> death

<sup>423</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 6, pars. 38-40.

## READY-MADE CLOTHES

Probably most readers of *Light* have been puzzled at some time or other by the well-known trick of communicating spirits announcing themselves as distinguished people, and have now and then felt, while reading some deeply interesting message from hidden spheres, what the French call a *retour sur soi-meme*, when the unseen informant adds that it comes from Confucius, Plato, or Kepler, as the case may be. Indeed, one turns back rather sharply on such occasions to intuitive common-sense, feeling as if willingness to believe had carried one away a little too far. Yet very often communications so suspiciously endorsed seem otherwise to bear the impress of veracity. How is it, one asks, that any gleam of truth can reach us combined with evident or presumable falsehood? Swedenborg's assertion that the habitual mendacity of spirits exceed all that we are familiar with on our own plane of being, has never given me a satisfying key to the enigma: it only suggests another, Why are they so fond of fibs? Among ourselves they are seldom without motive; vanity, malice, or self-interest of some kind prompting untruth; and among the crowds which throng the accessible approaches to minds in the flesh, tricky and malevolent spirits can hardly be so many as the boundlessly false appear to be; what, therefore, can be the temptation? Only a few days ago I chanced on a saying of Swedenborg's, in a book of his not seen before, which gave me a glimpse of a reason. "It is," he says, "a peculiar circumstance in the spiritual world that a spirit thinks himself to be such as is denoted by the garment he wears, because in that world the understanding clothes everyone." Now, it has long been understood that the contents of a medium's mind always more or less modify every utterance given through it; thus the informing spirit uses what he finds there. May there not be unintentional assumption of an ideal character found in the mind of a medium? The rule which this great seer tells us obtains in spirit-world is continually exemplified in our own: as regards the clothing of our bodies, the body's mimetic representation of feelings, and the dressing up by imagination of the Conscious Ego, anyone may prove it by observing what takes place within and without. A soldier in full uniform, a bishop in lawn sleeves and apron, an ill-dressed or well-dressed woman, all feel themselves to be what their garments denote in a much stronger degree than reason alone can justify; and both actors and painters know well that to simulate gestures of passion is to induce emotional excitement; of varying intensity, of course; but invariably attitude and gesture will — in some measure — confirm the state of mind which it interprets externally. A remark of the late Mr. W. Bagehot exemplifies this very neatly. "Lord Chatham was in the habit of kneeling at the bed side of George the Third while transacting business. Now no man can argue on his knees. The same feeling which keeps him in that physical attitude will keep in a corresponding mental attitude."<sup>424</sup> Quite as certain it is that we all live up, or down, to our imaginations of what we are.

<sup>424</sup> English Constitution, p. 86.

With two such good authorities as Jean Paul Richter and Novalis to vouch for this fact, it is needless to try and make good the point. The one says, "Whoever remarks to a man, and much more to a woman, 'you are certainly cross or angry,' will find such useless plain speaking verified, even if it be not true at first. One so easily becomes that which we are taken to be." And Novalis still more boldly tells us, "If a man could all at once verily believe he was a moral man, he would become such." In each case the readymade garment of imagination dominates consciousness. Now would this surprise us if we had any adequate idea of the creative force of imagination. By it, according to Boehme, the eternal and temporal world came into existence: the imagination of the supreme abyssal Deity in the first case, and that of spiritus mundi in the other, producing all that is.

But what concerns us more practically is the warning he gives as to its momentous effects in the microcosm. "The soul," he tells us, "must have magic food, viz., by or with the imagination... it must draw in substance into itself through its imagination, else it would not subsist."<sup>425</sup>

Can these sayings of his throw any light on the love of personation so common among those who speak behind the veil of our grosser embodiments? Is it that they, having lost material bodies and not attained true enduring substance for the soul's magic food, are like people trying on one suit of clothes after another, when assuming characters, in hope of finding some that can satisfy imagination? I think self-love in the flesh knows something of that process now and then; and what a weariness constant change of its imaginative clothing becomes as time goes on! One day it all seems so poor and trumpery — the next, its tinsel glitters like gold; the inflation of self-importance so occupying! the shrunken squalor of self-contempt causing so much dismay! We have all of us a strong reminder of the risks of desirous imaginations in our present bodies, for it was "the will "of our first progenitor that did ff imagine into this monstrous property "<sup>426</sup> — of gross flesh and blood, and the worst of the danger is in the reaction of body on the spirit. "The form impregnateth its imagination"<sup>427</sup> — as surely as that fashions the form, and as "the essence is in the body even so the spirit doth figure and form itself internally."<sup>428</sup> The imagination once established, "the phantasy receiveth nothing into itself, but only a similitude or thing like itself, and that likeness is the power of its life."<sup>429</sup>

Nor does the danger stop there. Adam's lapse of imagination<sup>430</sup> brought all the race into what he so truly calls "the stage play of the self-hood of nature,"<sup>431</sup> — and in every part of that play we have most accomplished prompters behind the scenes in the victims of an antecedent rebellion. "The devil," said Gichtel, "is anxious about our

<sup>425</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 4, par. 46, and chap. 5, par. 88.

<sup>426</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 22, par. 19

<sup>427</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 3, par. 7

<sup>428</sup> *Mysterium Magnum*, chap. 20, par. 37.

<sup>429</sup> *Treatise on Election*, chap. 4, par. 122.

<sup>430</sup> I speak as the convinced disciple of Boehme

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.* chap. 4, par. 60

soul's imagination; he understands it better than we." If by any allurements of other magic he can famish our souls by hindering them from "imagining a little into the love of God," suitable sorceries for that end will be ever fresh and strong: and by the conventional *he*, I mean a host inimical to man from envy of his potential supremacy. The Father of Spirits knew how this would be, and has in mercy given us a perfect pattern of what man should be, and must be, to become wholly a man and no longer a confused creature, doubtful alike of his origin and his destiny, ready to believe himself the transient outcome of the forces of Nature — a passive irresponsible link in the chain of cosmic evolution. Especially in these days, when society echoes with a multitude of voices decrying all old phases of belief, and literature besets us with a tangle of theories only agreeing in the destructiveness of negation; when old habits of thought have been torn to rags, and souls shiver in the comfortless wastes of doubt.

Anyone who has known what it is to feel in a chaotic state of undefined purposes, driven here and there by conflicting impulses, and fruitless agitation of thought, will understand the sort of help which is afforded by a readymade ideal of what one ought to be, — a firmly settled mould into which thought can at once subside. Roman Catholics will understand it; but we need more than Papal authority can offer; we want clothing for self which death cannot remove, nor sickness discredit. It is just this which the example and counsel of our Divine elder brother supplies.

Let us take it direct from Him in its simplest principle of filial obedience and the humility which is the *sine qua non* of all persistent love<sup>432</sup> — for verily all the disguising modifications given to the character of the Lord Christ by scores of small-minded zealots have done much to disfigure it in modern views. The habits of that brother are ready for our ideal outfit at any moment, and are such as all of us can adopt; for He having worn the rough wrappings of our flesh knew what is in man in that condition, and exactly measured our need, — need of peace, and motive force that cannot fail of its object. That "the life of man is a form of the Divine will"<sup>433</sup> — was the great truth to which His whole life gave witness. Surely it would go far toward helping us to maintain cheerfulness and fortitude, at all times, if we would accept all that is unchosen and inevitable in our lot as a manifestation of the permissive will of God, as the place in life's battle where we are to hold the ground for Him, and conquer by patience and meekness of wisdom. Volition can reach this much of the garment of the Christ; at any time by exerting the magic fire of the soul it can compel itself to be dumb under insult and wrong, and refrain from accusation and threats while suffering. And if Boehme was not mistaken there is no time to lose in trying thus to clothe ourselves with humility<sup>434</sup> — for he says: "In whatsoever essence and will the soul's-fire liveth and burneth, according to that essence is also the fiat in the will-spirit, and it imageth such an image: so now when the outward

<sup>432</sup> "the throne of love is humility"

<sup>433</sup> *Theosopia*, chap. 2, par. 2

<sup>434</sup> the most comfortable and becoming wear if people would but try it!

body deceaseth, then standeth that image thus in such a source and quality. In the time of the earthly life it may alter its will and then also its fiat altereth the figure; but after the dying of the body it hath nothing more wherein it can alter its will."<sup>435</sup> Why not after the outer body's death? Because, as he and Swedenborg both assure us, with the body we lose the power of restricting our thoughts, wills, and opinions to ourselves; we become a part, so to speak, of a common-stock mind, that of a society unseen here, to which we have belonged — but unconsciously by virtue of our most interior life — while believing our spirits alone. I entreat attention to the inferential meaning of those words "in such a source or quality." Quality, according to Boehme, is an equivalent to the German word Quell, a spring or source. The outcome of every source is not confined to present time, is not limited, is not easily exhausted. If we carry with us into another world a source of misery in any vicious quality not transmuted as in this life, it may be, we must expect copious floods of anguish. If it is well now, it will be unimaginably, blissfully well beyond the short road across which we pass on earth, to have accepted the durable, close-fitting simplicity of the raiment of Christ. "God's substance" said Boehme, "is humility."<sup>436</sup> This explains a little how it was that while He Who came to rescue us from the masquerade of evil powers truly described Himself as being meek and lowly; He could announce, when quit of coarse flesh and blood disguise, that to Him was given "all power both in Heaven and earth."

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<sup>435</sup> First Apology, part 2, par. 266.

<sup>436</sup> Treatise on *Election*, chap. 7, par. 152.



## IMAGINATION AND PHANTASY

"It matters not what our wills and imaginations are employed about; wherever they fall and dwell, there they kindle a fire, and that becomes the flame of life, to which everything else appears as dead... That which concerns us therefore is only to see with what materials our prevailing fire of life is kindled."<sup>437</sup>

While writing on these subjects I am aware that my treatment of them is as insufficient as the babble of a child, and that where I seem to myself to think clearly on the surface of depths unsearchable, that clearness is probably more due to ignorance than to knowledge. Minds scantily furnished with received ideas, and saturated with the less restrictive teaching of intuitional seers, are prone thus to presume. But what still emboldens me to do what I can with their dicta is the conviction that tentative outlines of thought, if but firmly and clearly presented, may serve as skeleton maps serve in the school-room. They do not pretend to suffice; they only make ready a frame for larger knowledge to fill up.

Boehme and Swedenborg agree in reprobating Phantasy. The first assigns to the arch rebel "the kingdom of phantasy," because, breaking the harmony of the seven spirits of God's eternal *nature*,<sup>438</sup> he "introduced the eternal will out of the temperature into division, viz., — into the disharmony of the phantasy; which phantasy instantly seized upon him, and therein brought him into an unquenchable cold and hot fire source, into the opposition and contrariety of the forms and dispositions. For the wrath of the eternal nature, which is called God's anger, manifested itself in them<sup>439</sup> and brought their will into the phantasy; and therein they still live, and can now do nothing but what the property of the phantasy is, viz., practise foolery, shows, tricks, metamorphose themselves, destroy and break things; also elevate themselves in the might of the cold and hot fire, frame and will in themselves, to go forth above the hierarchies of God, viz. — the good angels."<sup>440</sup>

In another of his works Boehme credits these slaves of phantasy with originating the changeful fashions of dress that so often disfigure womankind, and indeed there has been much of late in the monstrous projections and elevations of its style to make one ready to believe it.

To sum up all, the self-will of the creature "set the phantasy in the place of God, and then the Holy Spirit departed from its nature, and now it is a spirit in its own self-will, and is captivated in the phantasy as we perceive in Adam. Now when the root of the soul, through the devil's inspiration or infection, elevated itself, then the Holy Spirit

<sup>437</sup> W. Law's Appeal to all that Doubt, pp. 307-309.

<sup>438</sup> I italicise the word as a reminder that they cause an eternal "*coming*" to be in ceaseless interaction

<sup>439</sup> notice the plural pronoun; all those forms became creaturely

<sup>440</sup> *Election*, chap. 4, pars. 72, 73,74

departed into his own principle, and so Adam became weak in the image of God, viz., in the temperature; and could not in the similitude, magically bring forth his like out of himself."<sup>441</sup>

(Swedenborg's definition of image as the spiritual, and likeness as the celestial, representative of God is worth remembering here).

In these two passages the most important doctrines of Boehme are comprised, and the essential difference of phantasy and true imagination implicit. Man was destined, in the kingdom of a great dethroned angel, to generate a race manifesting God, as His delegate and representative. The phantasy to which he became subject is but "a theatric play of the geniture,"<sup>442</sup> — because it can never evolve light and heavenly substance without which God cannot be revealed to the creature. The "phantasy only imageth or formeth itself; and now that phantasy receiveth nothing into itself but only a similitude or thing like itself; and that likeness is the power of its life. If anything else did come into it then the phantasy must cease and vanish, and then would that vanish with it, out of which it is generated, viz., nature; and if nature did cease and vanish away, then the Word of the Divine power would not be speaking or manifest, and God would remain hidden."<sup>443</sup>

There is given to reflective thought the cause of the necessity of the Redeemer of our race coming to it in a similitude — in the disguise of our phantastically monstered human nature. Had He come to our world even in its pristine glory, the consuming fire of His Divine love would have destroyed the object of salvation. But the Word was made flesh, and "re-out" spoke everlasting love, in the flesh, dwelling among us amid the phantasies of earthly life, till the imagination of man was once more quickened in "the looking-glass" of Deity.

"The new fountain of Divine love and unity hath with its outflowing, in Christ incorporated itself into the true life of the *Three Principles* of the human property, and is entered into the imaginary thoughts, into the natural creaturely apostated image-like will of the life and assumed humanity; and broken the selfhood and own self-willing with the inflowing of the sole and only love of God, with the eternal one, and inclined or turned in the will of the life again into the Temperature: where then the devil's introduced will became destroyed, and the painfulness of the life became brought into the true rest."<sup>444</sup>

Throughout his *Spiritual Diary* Swedenborg tells of Phantasy in various aspects — as a means of discipline carried on by Divine wisdom through the permitted agency of "castigating spirits" often cruel in their mode of inflicting torture. And "the cruelty of the infernals can never be described; they act from phantasy in a most cruel manner against others, upon whom they practise such cruelties that if they were described

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, chap. 6, pars. 93, 94.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid, chap. 4, par. in

<sup>443</sup> *Election*, chap 4, par. 122.

<sup>444</sup> *Theosopia*, chap. 2, par. 14.

they would cause horror."... "For such is the power of phantasies among souls that they can induce, as it were, a bodily sensation, and thus excruciating pains."<sup>445</sup> "It is wonderful that souls and spirits have sense<sup>446</sup> altogether as in the body — thus they have the sense of touch, as when they touch their garments. In like manner as to cupidities and appetites, heat, cold, yea perspiration, which are as actual as in the body, when, nevertheless, they cannot be otherwise called than phantasies; but inasmuch as the sense is real, such as it is in the body, they are, as it were, real sensations. These and similar things are induced upon spirits by an imaginative direction."<sup>447</sup>

"Unless the Lord should take away their phantasies, their corporeal things thus remaining in their minds, they would be tormented with much severer anguish than in their bodies; for evil spirits and the diabolic crew not only have such phantasies, but they inflict the like upon the minds of those whom they torment, which, unless the Lord took away and moderated, they would have a hell vastly more excruciating than would ever be possible from their bodies being held in the suffering of the most intense anguish."<sup>448</sup>

Our recently acquired knowledge of hypnotic experiments should enable us to believe this. By bending, or removing phantasies, Swedenborg tells us in the same book, gradual reformation in vicious spirits is effected, for with his usual sagacity he sees these phantasies to be so much a constituent of man's present nature on either side of death, that it would not be safe to remove them suddenly.

"At the present time," he wrote in 1747, "when there is no faith, and when scarcely anyone can be prepared for Heaven in the earth-life<sup>449</sup>, because they are in an inverted order of life, there is nothing but mere phantasies or hallucinations of the senses, which remain in souls, or in their natural mind, in the which the life of the man living at the present time chiefly consists. This natural mind, full of so many phantasies, is not broken, that is, its phantasies cannot be shaken off and extinguished, for in this case the man himself would be broken down, and nothing as to his sensitive life would remain; for this life is composed of mere phantasies — a fact which from many things is so evident that no doubt can be entertained on the subject. There is an insanity in all things which compose and govern the life of man."<sup>450</sup>

Indirect confirmation of that saying, "phantasies cannot at once be shaken off, for in this case the man himself would be broken down," seems to me to have been given by the fact which Sir A. Helps noticed some thirty years ago in the Spanish Conquests in America, that "native tribes die out so soon as their ideas are

<sup>445</sup> No. 374.

<sup>446</sup> or sensation

<sup>447</sup> No. 364. See also 376.

<sup>448</sup> No. 1720.

<sup>449</sup> he says, other life, referring to this from a transmundane position

<sup>450</sup> No. 426.

conquered." Assuredly whenever habitual belief is sapped by misgivings the whole inner man is weakened and a state of nervous collapse results, which must injure bodily health.

"The deep sea of love is a leaven of fire, which shall break the adamant nature in the man of sin, in both worlds; for it spreads itself over all worlds and reduces everything into the pure being and nature of God. Such is the true nature and property of Love."<sup>451</sup> "Christ, the inbreathed Word, Who only can reach the soul's original ground, being the creating Fiat, can alone make all new again."<sup>452</sup>

Swedenborg seems to have noticed the surface similarity and intrinsic difference of phantasy and imagination, for in No. 3, 172 of his Spiritual Diary we find, "I spoke with a spirit concerning phantasies, yea, with those who supposed that they were wholly corporeal men, although they knew they were spirits...it was granted to tell him that man seems to live for himself, and yet it is such a phantasy, and that it is not wonderful that there exists phantasies concerning the body and corporeal things so long as that phantasy of living in or from himself remains.

"Afterwards we spoke concerning angelic representations, that still they are not, although they appear. Concerning which it was granted to say, that such things are imaginations, or representative imaginations signifying celestial and spiritual truths, and are thus exhibited to angels and angelic spirits. Wherefore they are not phantasies, for they feel them and are intimately delighted with them. Such delight and felicity cannot come from any other source than from the truths of faith which are therein."

And of useful phantasies he tells valuable truth in this other entry. "Spirits seem to themselves to dwell in houses and bed-chambers, and these indeed well furnished with utensils of every kind, and also with indefinite variety according to each one's inclinations; thus because initiated into the like, during the life of the body, they also retain after life, and desire similar things; thus the like are granted them with indefinite variety according to each one's genius, and thus they are bent to good, for they arrange those things according to uses which the Lord disposes, and at the same time the use introduces quiet and innocence in their minds. Thus also peace and innocence are insinuated."<sup>453</sup> ... "They do not stand in want of all these things in the other life; wherefore such a cupidity is false; but to receive such things as have been mentioned, from the Lord, and to arrange them according to use in tranquillity and innocence, this is the chiefest reality, because it conduces to their felicity. Such imaginations so-called are real, because they have real things in themselves."<sup>454</sup>

(This is a lesson which many a discontented heart might profit by, before carrying its poison into the world of spirits.)

<sup>451</sup> Jane Lead.

<sup>452</sup> Jane Lead.

<sup>453</sup> Nos. 2,447 and 2,448, vol. 2.

<sup>454</sup> No. 2,449.

Here we have the vital distinction between phantasy and imagination vividly lit up. Contentment and consequent happiness are real, they proceed from facts; such and such pleasant phantasies are received from the Lord and tend to use. Compared with these, a phantasy proper is what the lovely vegetation seen in mirage is to the produce of fertile soil. The first must perish fruitless of all but deceiving and disappointment. It is but a seeming thrown upon barren ground by transient influences, — it is not generated. This is the difference emphatically marked in all Boehme says about imagination; so far from confounding it with any delusions he says, "the Magia is the greatest hidden secret, for it is above Nature, and maketh Nature according to the form of its will " — and after a profound analysis of its efficacy in the antecedents of Nature, he gives the key to his frequently asserted problem that "all things arose from Divine imagination " in these few words, "The Magia is the acting in the will-spirit, or the performance in the spirit of the will.... This magic will which yet sticketh in the desire, may image itself in the looking-glass of the wisdom how it will, and as it imageth itself in the tincture, so it is comprehended in the Magia and brought into a substance."<sup>455</sup>

Tincture here means the light proceeding from the soul's fire, it is the most mysterious force in nature, and here only this much can be offered to explain it — Boehme's own definition in his Explanation of the Table of the *Three Principles*: — "Tincture is the separable word out of which the seven properties" — those of Eternal Nature — "flow forth."<sup>456</sup>

This separable word, man's will re-out speaking itself as "a child of the omnipotency," forms into a substance in a surrounding plenum of what St. Martin calls "*Matieres Spiritueuses*." For every "imagination desireth only substance in its likeness wherein it doth exist,"<sup>457</sup> — and it is by the strength of its desire the performance, not the mere project of the will. It is a forcible laying hold of impressions which, without a determinate vigour, would pass away like the shapes of fleeting clouds; and the will must be as steadily fixed, while imagining, as one point of the compass if the other is to trace the desired circle. It is to this central point that Boehme refers when he says, "in every will of every essence, there is again a centre of a whole substance."<sup>458</sup>

Now the centre that generates substance must, according to his showing, be a fire: the will in the last analysis, is the soul's fire, and its light, and consequently the substance produced from light, depends on what fuel of imagination that fire is fed by. Let him explain himself here. "The fire of the soul must have the right fuel or wood, if it be to give a clear, bright, and powerful light; for from the soul's fire, God's Spirit in its power becometh separable, distinct, and manifest in the nature of the soul: as the light is manifested from the fire, and as the air is manifested from the fire

<sup>455</sup> Fifth and Sixth Point, pars. 88, 89.

<sup>456</sup> Par. 41.

<sup>457</sup> Point II, of Six Small Points, par. 21

<sup>458</sup> First of Fourth Questions, par. 115.

and light, and as a subtle dew or vapour goeth forth from the air, which becometh substantial after its going forth, whence the light draweth the power and virtue again into itself for its food... so in like manner can Christ in Man not be manifested, though indeed he be in man and draweth and calleth him, also presseth himself into the soul, unless it eat of the fiery *Ens*<sup>459</sup> into its property... and then out of the soul's fire, the right divine air spirit goeth forth out of the fire and light, and bringeth forth its spiritual water out of itself out of the light, which becomes substantial; whereof the power of the light eateth, and in the love desire introduceth itself into a holy substance therein — viz., into a spiritual corporeity, wherein the Holy Trinity dwelleth, which substance is the true temple of the Holy Ghost."<sup>460</sup> It is difficult to me to stop short in such quotations — so helpful and enlightening is the context; and one sighs to remember how few can ever read it — even of those who fain would. It was in deference to this spiritual corporeity that J. G. Gichtel said when speaking of his contemporaries: "The inner body of virtue is dead; they are but skeletons of men." And it is because the rebel angel and his host fired their imagination with proud desires, and lost the only light that can produce enduring substance — for they have but flashes of unsteady light — that they long to be creaturely, to have something like substance for their unquiet souls to exist in. "Our selfhood hath no true *Ens* wherein its light may be steadfast; for it createth with its desire not out of the Eternal One, viz., out of God's meekness, but createth itself into substance, its light originateth only in the substance of the selfhood." "Light in all forms is the master," Boehme says elsewhere, "for it has the meekness,"<sup>461</sup> — and "meekness maketh substantiality."

How literally true this is it is not here the place to show; his writings will do that — especially in the *Treatise on the Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 5, pars. 67 to 72. I can fancy how scientific readers may smile derisively at all this; but perhaps he knew something of science though not of our scientific formulae. Sir Isaac Newton was glad to borrow from him one of his most valued theories. The general reader, too, would say, of course, what absurdity to suppose that all this goes on when we feel nothing of it. But while so many vital processes of our animal life go on unfelt, it is unreasonable to think that accretions of growth in the immortal body are likely to be perceived. Nevertheless there must be a conscious death of the apostate self-will before the Divine word can re-outspeak itself in the soul. That habitual self-suppression, that resolved dying to sin is now all the human will can do towards the rebirth of the image of God.

The practical issues of these doctrines are momentous. "Every will hath a seeking to do or to desire somewhat, and in that it beholdeth itself, and seeth in itself in the

<sup>459</sup> of his love

<sup>460</sup> *Election*, chap. 8, pars. 231, 234, 238.

<sup>461</sup> *Incarnation*, part 3, chap. 5, par. 40

eternity, what itself is; it maketh to itself the looking-glass of its like, and then it beholdeth itself what itself is, and so finding nothing but itself, it desireth itself."<sup>462</sup>

If in every world we are liable to find nothing but ourselves, the unspeakable folly of setting our hearts upon external goods comes into clearest light. What we have, however delighting and desirable, is truly a matter of small importance compared to what we are, and if we could but see it, the habits of our mind, our thoughts, wishes, and aspiration are really bills of exchange upon our future lot, be it on this or the other side of bodily dissolution.

A trick of being discontented with such things as we have is a flaw in our looking-glass which no change of existence can remove; it is a defect in our own hearts which will come before us wherever we may be till humility and love have been made magical by the "spirit of the will." If we knew all the ramifications of cause and effect in external circumstances, I believe we should discover that they are not only more of a response to secret desires, but a truer reflection of character, than we generally suppose — antenatal character some will say. But short of that length of causation, all might allow it if, besides seeing how character moulds events, we could estimate the impetus given to every turn of events favouring its peculiarities by accomplices unseen. For our wills attract others in the same cupidity.

The immediate coalescence of chemical atoms that have affinity one with another may give some notion of how instant and how strongly inviting and intensifying such attraction may be. Every human being is a mighty magnet, and, the will once determined, legionary subject spirits rush into coalition. We were lost if the Love which is the life of the world of light were not as eager to combine with the faintest beginnings of spiritual rebirth: and cruel, though so often an unconscious wrong, is the word or look from a human being which imperils that in the soul of another; for "the fiery essence of the soul figureth an image for the soul, according to its imagination in the will."<sup>463</sup>

To throw upon the looking-glass of another an evil or dispiriting representation of the soul that there seeks itself, is to do much to poison the will, and deface its fair image, so fragile, so unsubstantiated still! Hence the inexpressible importance of fixing imagination on Divine love. "Whereinto a spirit introduces its longing imagination, the essence and property of that it receiveth in the great mystery of all beings."<sup>464</sup>

"Hold fast to love in your imaginations," says Gichtel, with the eagerness of a long-experienced victor over wrath. "Nothing can take it from you but your own imagination: as soon as our imagination goes out of the love, darkness enters the imagination." Merciful heaven, let this be believed! Let it not pass away from the thought as a mere opinion! For as "all things are generated out of imagination, so

<sup>462</sup> First of *Forty Questions*, par. 22.

<sup>463</sup> Appendix to *Forty Questions*, par. 29.

<sup>464</sup> *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 16, par. 25.

also the soul shall receive its property in the imagination: and every imagination reapeth its own work which it hath wrought."<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 15, par. 41



## SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

God giveth power to every life, be it good or bad, unto each thing, according to its desire, for He Himself is All; and yet He is not called God according to every being, but according to the light wherewith He dwelleth in Himself, and shineth with His power through all His beings. He giveth in His power to all His beings and works, and each thing receiveth His power according to its property; one taketh darkness, the other light; each hunger desireth its property, and yet the whole essence or being is all God's be it evil or good, for from Him and through Him are all things; what is not of His love, that is of His anger.<sup>466</sup>

That extremes meet is an axiom verified every day, but a more striking instance of its truth could hardly perhaps be found than in the similarity of mental attitude which so-called evangelical doctrines and those of Universalists induce.

The net result of both is jubilant confidence in a blessedness not depending on the conduct of human beings.

Many years ago an old lady, nearing death, told me that she had no kind of anxiety about her readiness for it, because she had "rolled all her sins upon her Saviour." From what I knew of her antecedents I inwardly feared that they might roll back upon her conscience with oppressive weight, when mundane spells were broken and introspective life began.

Those cheerful reasoners, who call their mode of belief Universalism, roll all apprehensions arising from sin on a still wider breadth of repose — on the irresistible power of Divine order; shifting all responsibility from man to God; they seem to wonder that other people cannot make themselves as comfortable by a close application of logic to the designs of the Most High God. The express declaration that His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither our ways His ways<sup>467</sup>, seems to offer them no obstacle to this process: they will use the little measure of human reason for estimating infinitudes of Deific wisdom all the same. We have lately read in *Light* that this new Gospel of human irresponsibility is what "the pure theologian has missed; for he fails to see that salvation is no scheme, but an absolute necessary unhinderable evolution."<sup>468</sup>

It is no wonder surely that he fails to see what the whole tenor of the Bible contradicts, though here and there passages do occur which undeniably predict, the ultimate restitution of our race to lasting wellbeing; but at what a terrific distance from our own is the ultimatum! Setting aside the consensus of inspired men, might not the

<sup>466</sup> Boehme's *Signatura Rerum*, chap. 8, par. 42.

<sup>467</sup> Isa. 55: 8

<sup>468</sup> *Light*, May 7th, 1 89 1.

records of geological science suggest a warning to people who expect release from evil by the irresistible force of evolution? Its methods are formidable enough when good is being evolved in a terrestrial orb. Think of the long periods of glacial lifelessness, the tremendous volcanic upheavals of successive layers of soil, the recurrent cataclysms from fire and water that took place before our earth was habitable, and imagine, when all this was necessary for securing material conditions, what convulsions of a spiritual nature may be the analogous preliminaries of evolution in undying souls.

The testimony of unhappy spirits still bound to earth by the anguish of a remorseful memory, must surely have too much weight with Spiritualists to allow them to accept this misleading *jeu d'esprit* of logic, which, because God will be all in all when our solar system has collapsed and Time is at an end, cruelly foreshortens the perspective between now and then, and urges that even for guiltiness, "good will be the final goal of ill," — urges it upon us now, while on all sides the conscience is made drowsy by the asphyxia of sin, while the struggle for spiritual life amid the chaotic confusions of thought is more and more relaxed, and the sorceries of this present life obliterate anxieties about the next. I doubt the bravest Universalist assenting to the term "unhinderable evolution" when enduring, for a seeming eternity the irrefusable wages of sin in his own nature, the will at enmity with God's order, and the heart alone, in the horrors of self-loathing, with no escape from self, for "the will cannot break, and the soul must continue in the will."<sup>469</sup> "All earthly food and lust passeth away at the end of days, but the will remaineth standing eternally and the desire in the will."<sup>470</sup>

At that stage of evolution we may be very sure the goal of evil will be undeniable torment. Nor can we suppose the despair of those who suffer it, if repentance begins to quicken, finding any solace in such a line of thought as this, "Ye must be born from above." "Such perfection of life is a debt which the All-Father owes, and which He will assuredly discharge to every-one of His children in due time."<sup>471</sup> It is not what the Father owes the child, but what the child has owed, and not paid, of obedience and love that will occupy the conscience-stricken mind when once the veil lifts.

Now we must allow that the extreme Evangelical offers to "conscious sinners" a quietus fully as stupefying as those who teach the doctrine of irresponsibility; for example, in such lines as these taken from a popular hymn:

It is finished, yes, indeed, Finished every jot; Sinner, this is all you need, Tell me, is it not? Weary, working, burdened one, Wherefore toil you so? Cease your doing; all was done Long, long ago!

<sup>469</sup> Boehme's *Forty Questions*, q. 18, par. 10.

<sup>470</sup> *Threefold Life*, chap. 15, par. 15.

<sup>471</sup> *Things to Come*, p. 6.

But there is this difference between the two dealers in spiritual narcotics — absurdly erroneous as such expressions sound, I believe those who use them are nearer to helpful ideas than they who can think of sin as a phenomenal dream, necessarily dispersed by death, for these seem to me both to deny the real essence of sin and to have no knowledge of what human will is. The acted or worded sin might be phenomenal if act and word were not consequent on the direction of the will — and even what is aimless at the time must always be an evidence of previous, if not habitual motive; volition, however closely masked, being incessantly at work within; nor can any determination of the will be without reaction on itself, because the imagination of the heart which determines it is intensified by pursuit; and its truly magical stimulus strengthens attraction to any object of desire, be it good or evil. Nothing that the will is used to seek can be easily given up; the whole bulk of spirits' communications for centuries past assures us that it is not given up when means for its exercise are withdrawn. This makes sin "the sting of death," a famished will deprived of its prey.

The conversion of the will is therefore the one indispensable condition on which Evangelicals offer comfort before sinful habits are at all overcome, and anyone who is intelligently Christian will see that there is better ground for such comfort than appears on the surface, for the will must be inclined to receive salvation through Jesus Christ before the seemingly precipitate offer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved,"<sup>472</sup> — can be accepted: and the will once converted from rebellion, all that desire to keep God's commandments and follow Christ's example can effect, is potentially won. The truth of sudden and real conversion is often doubted because habits of sin are known to be almost ineradicable, and the assurance given to penitents that "all their sins shall be blotted out" naturally rouses contempt in minds hostile to Christianity, yet were such sayings interpreted by a deeper knowledge of human nature, what now appears foolishness might be justified even to rational people. From what are sins to be blotted out? Not, assuredly, from the imperishable records of all that has been, but from the imagination of the heart, which must be vain and evil, until the will has turned back from alluring images of good to its divine and central magnet. It is this magic faculty which must be cleansed by "the Blood of Christ"<sup>473</sup>, not only from seductive images, but from the dismaying memories of sin, which can so dominate the unconverted mind as to make reformation seem impossible; and what people suppose themselves to be they generally are in conduct. And, besides, the effect of all sinfulness is confusion: Selfhood unreconciled to God "loses itself in the dim anarchy of a sphere without a centre."

The thought of a loving Saviour strongly impressed on a mind in this state is like the first distinct indication of the sun's whereabouts in a hopelessly cloudy day.

<sup>472</sup> Acts 16, 21

<sup>473</sup> the highest tincture of Divine love

"Thoughts open the spirit that it may come to the will " and "the Divine fire of the soul was through sin shut up, which none could unshut and kindle, but only the love of God in this incorporated grace covenant." "Now, if the soul does but a little imagine into the love of God, the Divine life becometh stirring"; and if that spark of life is not quenched again by permitted sin, desire for grace and pardon will strengthen, and then all that man can do is secured; for "man hath the death in him whereby he may die unto the evil "and "the desire standeth in our will, but the conversion standeth in God's mercy."<sup>474</sup>

"Thou must create a will out of thy soul and with the same go forth out of evil, wickedness, and malice into God ... the willing spirit that will kindle thy soul, and then reach after the life and spirit of Christ, and thou wilt receive it; which will new-regenerate thee with a new willing, which will abide with thee."<sup>475</sup>

It is while even the initiatory stages of conversion are precarious that one shudders to hear some modes of speech applied, such as "accepted in the beloved," to a person still a stranger to any kind of self-denial, though cultivating a holy imagination. It is true that in Christ's most gracious parable the father runs to meet the long-lost son while he was "yet a great way off," but the son had arisen; so must the will of everyone rouse to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ because that only can avail us, which is substantiated by our own desire.

It is the necessity of this initial action of the human will which both Universalists and Evangelicals seem to ignore. Both trust to the inevitable evolution of goodness; the one because omnipotent love wills it; the other because full assurance of salvation by faith in the completed work of the Redeemer cannot, they think, be mollified by subsequent backslidings; with regard to this last persuasion, perhaps no better answer could be given to it than the words found in Ezek. 18:26, and Matt. 25: 11, 12. In one case iniquity, in the other a neglect of the conditions requisite for grace, hindered spiritual progress.

As to Universalists, I think some modifying ideas might be gained by them if the relations of a human father to his young children were attentively studied: he is comparatively omnipotent; he can alter their circumstances for weal or woe at pleasure, but he cannot — be they ever so weak — compel them to say or do what they have set their will against, for they brought in with life a force which the originator of their earthly existence cannot constrain to obedience. Tyranny can break down that force, and with it all the gladness and vigour of nature: a parent's love withholds him from any such risk, and thus limits power. This, on a very minute scale, is an exact picture of what Boehme teaches us as to the restraint of Deific Omnipotence in winning men or devils back to their allegiance — in preventing the arrest of orderly evolution caused by their own self-will. "God," he tells us, "cannot

<sup>474</sup> I use Boehme's words because they give my meaning better and more briefly than any others could.

<sup>475</sup> *Incarnation*, part 2, chap. 9, pars. 26, 29.

fight against God," and in every immortal spirit there is a "sparkle of Deity." If Divine love could put forth irresistible power and coerce the will of the creature, the deep sighs of its pity, which thrill here and there in both Old and New Testament, would be meaningless. Our own hearts feel them to be the utterance of sorrow and not figures of speech.

In such sentences as these the yearning expostulations of love cannot be mistaken.

"Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"<sup>476</sup>

"Oh that My people had harkened unto Me and Israel had walked in My ways."<sup>477</sup>

"Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity hath your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, and walked in vanity, and are become vain?... Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?"<sup>478</sup>

"Oh My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me."<sup>479</sup>

"Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not."<sup>480</sup>

Having come to this point, ye would not "yield to the will of Almighty God, there is no honest escape from reference to the unfathomable mystery of free-will; and perceiving, as I do, that no one, however wise or learned, tries to explore it without breaking thought against one or other of two opposing truths — that God is omnipotent, and that man has ability to choose or refuse what is presented to him for choice — I know for me to pretend to throw any light on the subject would be absurd: not so to try and explain why its mystery never darkens my own intellectual light. Every docile student of Boehme's revelations could witness, suppose, to having the same privilege.

For while philosophers reason about the will of man as an attribute, assigning to it in their theories more or less of intrinsic power, Boehme shows that in the last analysis it is the man himself; that by his will he is a creature individualised in the ocean of life; proving that a will has separated itself from the whole will of the supreme God into divisional existence; and the method of this transaction from an unrealised idea to creatureliness, is given in the following words as intelligibly, perhaps, as by any number of quotations.

<sup>476</sup> Deut. 32: 29.

<sup>477</sup> Psa. 81: 13.

<sup>478</sup> Jer. 2: 5, 31

<sup>479</sup> Micah 6:3.

<sup>480</sup> Luke 13-34

"The eternal word breathes forth itself into an infiniteness of plurality<sup>481</sup> — and brings the plurality of knowledge into imagination, and the imagination into desire, and the desire into nature and strife, till it comes to fire... the fire giveth soul,"<sup>482</sup> A yet deeper opening in the abyss was granted to Boehme, which I think Greek scholars may claim for Plato before him. He teaches that an idea or thought in the Deific mind originated the separated creaturely will. "The image," he wrote, "was not a substance but a will to a substance."

Nor does he allow us to think that the mode of man's creation was exceptional, though, as to this universe, it was the highest pitch of Divine imagination which brought into manifest life the image and likeness of God. "The centre of everything," he asserts, "is spirit from the original of the Word. The separation or distinction in the thing is own-self, will of its own self-impression or compaction, where every spirit introduceth itself into substance according to its essential desire."

Everything, includes of course, crystals, plants, and animals: little as we can discern the action of a will in plants it is indisputable; a plant has its will and makes it valid, as many a weaker growth finds to its cost.

But are we to conclude that all creaturely wills originate from ideas in the Divine wisdom, i.e., the efflux of Deity?

What goes on in the passage above quoted saves us from that supposition, "the formability of bodies existeth out of the experience of the willing, where everything's centre, as a portion of the outspoken Word, re-outspcaketh itself and frameth itself into separability, after the kind and manner of the Divine speaking."<sup>483</sup>

This justifies the belief that the idea, will, and desire of inferior beings in the supersensual world may originate creatures — not immortal, as on the highest plane the "spiration of the Word created man." I find it helps my faith in the loving-kindness of God not to believe that all hideous animals and more loathsome reptiles were spoken forth by Him. Look at a rhinoceros or alligator, and even some kinds of fish to feel this.

The hypothesis that these embody the foul ideas of minds not holy will explain St. Martin's curious saying about insects. "One need not," he says in a very striking chapter on The Third Nature and Insects, "worry oneself as naturalists do to classify insects in the regular order of animated nature. In relation to nature they are evidently apocryphal creatures; they are excluded or cut off, so to speak, from the true family line, and the name given to them, insect from the Latin word *insecare*, alone implies what I have just shown to be their origin.

<sup>481</sup> Sixth Epistle, pars. 21, 24

<sup>482</sup> by nature here understand the first forms of nature, the astringency and mobility which strive against each other till their conflict strikes out the involved fire of an antecedent will.

<sup>483</sup> Knowledge of God and all things, pars. 11, 12. (Almost identical with Boehme's Sixth Epistle.)

Returning from this digression to the point chiefly in view — if the will is the factor of creaturely existence, all that exists having proceeded, by however many gradations, from the One Holy Will — two deductions appear to me to be inevitable. First, that no human creature can be a manifestation of the sum of all beings."

For even in numbers no one can have for its product a unit of equal value.

Secondly, since every derivative fraction of the all-comprehending One, such as angel or man, is energised by the will of God<sup>484</sup> its will cannot be amenable to compulsion.

To this may be objected the common fact of one human will being subdued by the force of another, and so in our own minds may one form of volition conquer another; but this is not equivalent to destroying a faculty which, if such things can be brought into comparison without profanity, would be similar to the Holy Will of God annihilating the will of a human creature. Besides, even between man and man or man and woman, where the will seems to be conquered, we may be sure that the semblance, of selfinterest led to the surrender: after which a kind of hypnotism prolongs defeat. Again, the hopeless slavery of habit, which seems to hold people fast to follies and vices they abhor, is often taken for proof that human will is not free.

Might we not as well say that limbs have no power of movement because many are paralysed, and some can be made rigid and incapable of self-direction by mesmeric art?

I have no doubt that thousands of human beings are hypnotised by evil spirits to whose incitements they have yielded while yet free. In a very terrible degree proving the truth of the saying, "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey."<sup>485</sup> To conclude, honesty obliges me to confess that since I firmly believe that after slow and tremendous discipline, at last the most violently and discordant fractional will is to be brought into divine harmony, it may fairly be said, why, then, need you doubt God's ability to do now at once what by more slowly working influences is to be affected? and if that is possible must not the Holy One design and promote the discords of sin?<sup>486</sup>

If nothing already alleged prevents this inference I can only answer — by what may seem a weak evasion — that as all created beings in the strictest sense inhabit the life of the supreme source of life, it is necessarily impossible for us, minutest atoms of that life, to conceive aright of its modes of action: that, therefore, the attitude of thought prescribed by the Father of Spirits must be our nearest approach to wisdom. Now the tenor of Scripture from beginning to end is deceptive if man has not freedom of choice.

<sup>484</sup> in nature

<sup>485</sup> Rom. 6: 16.

<sup>486</sup> *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 5, pars. 132, 133.

Denying that freedom, we can hardly accept other Bible doctrines with any show of consistency. It is, I know, a very old-fashioned position to rest in when reason is non-plussed, but for me, the summary of wisdom recorded by Job remains most uncomfortably clear. "To man he said, Behold to fear God that is wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding."

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