

The Life of a Christian Philosopher

by Franz Hartmann, M.D.

"The fulness of time has taken place, and the kingdom of God has arrived.
Repent and believe in the gospel of truth." — J. B.

JACOB BOEHME was born in the year 1575, at Alt Seidenburg, a place about two miles distant from Goerlitz in Germany. He was the son of poor country people, and in his youth he herded the cattle of his parents. He was then sent to school, where he learned how to read and to write, and afterwards he entered as an apprentice a shoemaker's shop.

It seems that even in early youth he was able to enter into an abnormal state of consciousness and to behold images in the astral light; for once, while herding the cattle and standing on the top of a hill, he suddenly saw an arched opening of a vault, built of large red stones, and surrounded by bushes. He went through that opening into the vault, and in its depths he beheld a vessel filled with money.

He, however, experienced no desire to possess himself of that treasure; but, supposing that it was a product of the spirits of darkness made to lead him into temptation, he fled.

On a later occasion, while left alone in the shoemaker's shop, an unknown stranger entered, asking to buy a pair of shoes. Boehme, supposing himself not entitled to make such a bargain in the absence of his master, asked an extraordinary high price, hoping thus to get rid of the person who desired to purchase. Nevertheless, the stranger bought the shoes and left the shop. After leaving, he stopped in front of the shop, and, with a loud and solemn voice called to Boehme:

"Jacob, come outside."

Boehme was very much astonished to see that the stranger knew his name. He went out in the street to meet him, and there the stranger, grasping him by the hand, and, with deeply penetrating eyes looking into his eyes, spoke the following words: "Jacob, you are now little; but you will become a great man, and the world will wonder about you. Be pious, live in the fear of God, and honour His word. Especially do I admonish you to read the Bible; herein you will find comfort and consolation; for you will have to suffer a great deal of [Page 4] trouble, poverty, and persecution. Nevertheless, do not fear, but remain firm; for God loves you, and is gracious to you." He then again pressed Boehme's hand, gave him another kind look and went away.

This remarkable event made a great impression on the mind of Jacob Boehme. He earnestly went through the practical exercises necessary in the study of practical occultism; that is to say, he practised patience, piety, simplicity of thought and purpose, modesty, resignation of his self-will to divine law, and

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he kept in mind the promise given in the Bible, that those who earnestly ask the Father in Heaven for the communication of the Holy Ghost will have the spirit of sanctity awakened within themselves, and be illuminated with His wisdom.

Such an illumination, indeed, took place within his mind, and for seven days in succession Jacob Boehme was in an ecstatic state, during which he was surrounded by the light of the Spirit, and his consciousness immersed in contemplation and happiness. It is not stated what he saw during those visions, nor would such a statement have the result of gratifying the curiosity of the reader; for the things of the spirit are inconceivable to the external mind, and can only be realized by those who, rising above the realms of the senses and entering a state of superior consciousness, can perceive them. Such a state does not necessarily include the exercise of the external faculties; for, while Plato says about Socrates, that the latter once stood immovable for a day and a half upon one spot, in a state of such ecstasy, in the case of Jacob Boehme we find that during a similar condition he continued his external occupations in his profession.

Afterwards, in the year 1594, he became master-shoemaker, and married a woman, with whom he lived for thirty years, and there were four sons born to him, who followed the same profession as himself.

In the year 1600, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, another divine illumination took place in his mind, and this time he learned to know the innermost foundation of nature, and acquired the capacity to see henceforth with eyes of the soul into the heart of all things, a faculty which remained with him even in his normal condition.

Ten years afterwards, *anno* 1610, his third illumination took place, and that which in former visions had appeared to him chaotic and multiplied was now recognized by him as a Unity, like a harp of many strings, of which each string is a separate instrument, while the whole is only one harp. He now recognized the divine order of nature, and how from the trunk of the tree of life spring different branches, bearing manifold leaves and flowers and fruits, and he became impressed with the necessity of writing down what he saw and preserving it.

Thus, beginning with the year 1612, and up to his end in the year 1624, he wrote many books about the things which he saw in the light of his own spirit, comprising thirty books full of the deepest mysteries regarding God and the [Page 5] angels, Christ and Man, Heaven and Hell and Nature, and the secret things of the world, such as before him no man is known to have communicated to this sinful world, and all this he did, not for the purpose of earthly gain, but for the glorification of God and for the redemption of mankind from ignorance regarding the things of the Spirit.

But his first work, entitled "Aurora" (the beginning of the new day), was not quite finished, when, by the indiscretion of a friend, copies of the manuscript came into the hands of the clergy. The head parson of Guerlitz, whose name was Gregorius Richter, a person entirely incapable of conceiving of the depths of that religion which he professed to teach, in ignorance of the divine mysteries of true Christianity, of which he knew nothing but its superficial aspect and form, too vain to bear with toleration that a poor shoemaker should be in possession of any spiritual knowledge which he, the well-fed priest, did not possess, became Jacob Boehme's bitterest enemy, denouncing and cursing the author of that book, and

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his hate was raised to the utmost degree by the meekness and modesty with which Boehme received the inquiries and denunciations directed toward him.

Soon the bigoted priest publicly in the pulpit accused Boehme of being a disturber of the peace and an heretic, asking the City Council of Goerlitz to punish the traitor, and threatening that if he were not removed from the town, the anger of God would be awakened and he would cause the whole place to be swallowed up by the earth, in the same manner in which he claimed that Kora, Dathan, and Abiram had perished after resisting Moses, the man of God.

In vain Jacob Boehme attempted to reason personally with the infuriated Doctor of Divinity. New curses and insults were the result of his interview with him, and the parson threatened to have Jacob Boehme arrested and put him in prison. The City Council was afraid of the priest, and, although he could not substantiate any charge against Boehme, nevertheless, they ordered him to leave the town for fear of the consequences that might result if they did not comply with Rev. Richter's request.

Patiently Boehme submitted to the unjust decree. He requested to be permitted to go home and take leave of his family before going into banishment, and even this was refused to him. Then his only answer was: "Very well; if I cannot do otherwise, I will be contented".

Boehme left; but during the following night greater courage entered into the hearts and a better judgement into the heads of the Councilmen. They reproached themselves for having banished an inoffensive man, and the very next day they called Jacob Boehme back, and permitted him to remain, stipulating, however, that he should give up to them the manuscript of the "Aurora", and that henceforth he should abstain from the writing of books.

For seven years, Boehme, in obedience to this foolish decree, restrained himself from writing down the experiences which he enjoyed in the realm of [Page 6] the spirit, and, instead of bringing light to mankind, contented himself with mending their shoes. Hard was the battle required to stem the tidal wave of the spirit, which with overpowering strength descended upon his soul; but at last, encouraged by the advice of his friends, who counselled him not to resist any longer the impulse coming from God, for fear of disobeying man-made authorities, he resumed the labour of writing.

The writings of Jacob Boehme soon made their way in the world, and attracted the attention of those who were capable of realizing and appreciating their true character. He found many friends and followers among the high and the lowly, the rich and the poor, and it seemed, indeed, as if a new outpouring of the Spirit of Truth was intended to take place in priest-ridden and bigoted Germany.

Jacob Boehme during that time wrote a number of books and pamphlets: — "Aurora"; "The Three Principles of Divine Being" ; "The Three-fold Life of Man" ; "The Incarnation of Jesus Christ" ; "The Six Theosophical Points" ; "The Book of Terrestrial and Celestial Mysteries" ; " Biblical Calculation Regarding the Duration of the World" ; "The Four Complexions" ; " His Defence " ; the book about "The Generation and Signature of all Beings" ; of "True Repentance", "True Regeneration", "The Supersensual Life", "Regeneration and Divine Contemplation", "The Selection of Grace", "Holy Baptism", "Holy Communion",

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"Discourse between an Enlightened and an Unilluminated Soul", an essay on "Prayer", "Tables of the Three Principles of Divine Manifestation", "Key to the most Prominent Points", "One Hundred and Seventy-seven Theosophical Questions", "Theosophical Letters", and other smaller works and articles regarding philosophical matters.

In March, 1624, and shortly before his death, began for Jacob Boehme a time of great suffering. In 1623, Abraham von Frankenburg had some of Boehme's works published under the title of "The Way to Christ". and the appearance of this book, full of Divine Truth, again inflamed the envy and rage of the angry parson of Goerlitz, being blown into a flame by the observation of the great favour with which the book was received by all truly enlightened minds. With the utmost fury he began again his persecutions of Jacob Boehme, cursing and damning him from the pulpit, and published against him a pasquillo, full of personal insults and vulgar epithets, which contained neither reason nor logic; but in their places innumerable calumnies, such as only the brain of a person made insane by passion could invent or concoct.

This time Boehme did not remain so passive as on a former occasion; but he handed over to the City Council a written defence in justification of what he had done, and he moreover wrote a reply to Richter, answering in a quiet and dignified manner every point of the objection raised by Richter, annihilating his arguments by the force of his logic and by the power of truth. This defence was not in an ironical style, but pregnant with love and pity for the misguided [Page 7] man, modest and eloquent to a degree such as rarely can be found even among the greatest orators.

The City Council, however, being once more intimidated by the blustering priest, did not accept Boehme's defence, but expressed a wish that he should voluntarily leave the town, and they expressed their wish to him in the form of a well-meant advice, to save him from incurring the fate of heretics, which was to be burned alive on a stake by order of the Kurfürst or Emperor, either of whom might have been inclined to lend a willing ear to the representations of the clergy, being supposed to hesitate very little to give the requisite order, if the whim of the priesthood could be gratified by such a comparatively insignificant thing as the execution of a troublesome person who disturbed their peace.

Boehme, in obedience to that advice, which he well knew was a command in disguise, left Goerlitz on the 9th day of May, 1624, and went to Dresden, here he found an asylum in the house of a physician named Dr. Benjamin Hinkelman. There he received many honours and offers of aid; but he remained modest, writing to a friend that he intended to put his trust in no man, but in the living God; and that, as he was doing so, he was full of joy and all was well.

About this time Boehme, by order of the Kurfürst, was invited to take part in a learned disputation which was to take place between him and some of the best theologians of those times, including two professors of mathematics. The discussion took place, and Boehme astonished his opponents by the depths of his ideas and by his extraordinary knowledge in regard to divine and natural things; so that, when asked by the Kurfürst to give their decision, the theologians begged for time to investigate still more the matters which Boehme had represented to them, and which seemed to reach to the limits of what they believed themselves capable of grasping. One of these theologians, Gerhard by name, was heard to say that he would not take the whole world if it were offered to him as a bribe to condemn such a man, and the other, Dr. Meissner, answered that he was of the same opinion, and that they had no right to condemn that

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which surpassed their understanding; and thus it may be seen that not all the theologians were like Gregorius Richter; but that in the clerical profession, as in any other, there may be wise men and fools. Such theologians, of noble mind and without bigotry, were henceforth to be found among Jacob Boehme's admirers and friends, and whenever he met them he treated them with respect.

Soon afterwards he wrote his last work, entitled " Tables Regarding Divine Manifestation", and, having returned to his home, he was taken sick with a fever. His body began to swell, and he announced to his friends that the time of his death was near, saying: " In three days you will see how God has made an end of me". Then they asked him whether he was willing to die; and he [Page 8] replied: "Yes, according to the will of God." When his friends expressed the hope to find him improved on the following day, he said: " May God help that it shall be as you say. Amen".

This took place on a Friday; but on the next Sunday, on the 20th of November, 1624, before 1 A.M., Boehme called his son, Tobias, to his bedside, and asked him whether he did not hear a beautiful music, and then he requested him to open the door of the room so that the celestial songs could better be heard. Later on, he asked what time it was, and when he was told that the clock struck two, he said: " This is not yet time for me; in three hours will be my time". After a pause he again spoke, and said: "Thou powerful God Zabaoth, save me according to thy Will". Again he said "Thou crucified Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, and take me into Thy kingdom". He then gave to his wife certain directions regarding his books and other temporal matters; telling her also that she would not survive him very long (as, indeed, she did not), and, taking leave from his sons, he said, "Now I shall enter the paradise". He then asked his eldest son, whose loving looks seemed to keep Boehme's soul from severing the bonds of the body, to turn round, and, giving one deep sigh, his soul gave up the body to the earth to which it belonged, and entered into that higher state which is known to none except those who have experienced it themselves.

Jacob Boehme's enemy, the bigotted head-parson, Gregorius Richter, refused a decent burial to the corpse of the philosopher, and, as the City Council of Goerlitz, again in fear of the priest, were wavering and uncertain what to do, it was already decided to take the body for burial to a country place belonging to one of Boehme's friends, on which occasion, undoubtedly, a row would have taken place, and the ceremony be disturbed by the populace, whose prejudices were aroused by the clergy; but at the appropriate time the Catholic Count Hannibal von Dronha arrived, and ordered the body to be buried in a solemn manner, and in the presence of two of the members of the City Council. This took place accordingly ; but the parson pretended to be sick, and took medicine so as to avoid being obliged to hold the funeral sermon, and the clergyman who held the sermon in his place, although he himself had given absolution and the sacrament to Boehme shortly before the latter died, began his speech by expressing his great disgust at having been forced to do so by order of the Council.

Some friends of Boehme in Silesia sent a cross to be put on his grave; but it was soon destroyed by the hands of some bigot, who imagined to please God by insulting the memory of a man who was obnoxious to the priests; but who had done more to bring to mankind a true knowledge of God than priest-craft ever did in modern or ancient times.

In his exterior appearance, Boehme was little, having a short, thin beard, a feeble voice, and eyes of a greyish tint. He was deficient in physical strength; [Page 9] nevertheless, there is nothing known of his

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having ever had any other disease than the one that caused his death. But, if Jacob Boehme was small in body, he was a giant in intelligence and a powerful spirit. His hands could accomplish no greater works than to write and to make shoes; but the power of God having become manifest in that apparently insignificant organism and compound of natural and spiritual principles which represented the man Jacob Boehme, on this terrestrial globe, was strong enough to overthrow, and is still over-throwing, the most petrified and gigantic superstitions existing in his own and subsequent centuries. His "Spirit" is still battling with the powers of darkness, and the Light which was kindled in the soul of poor little Jacob Boehme is still illuminating the world, growing larger and brighter from day to day in proportion as mankind becomes more capable of beholding it, and of receiving and grasping his ideas. His spirit, or to speak more correctly, the Spirit of Truth as manifested through the writings of Jacob Boehme, is gradually bringing life into old dry-bone theology, killing clericalism and bigotry, superstition and ignorance, the giant monsters which have been devastating the world for ages past, and to whom more victims have been sacrificed than have died by the hands of the god of war, by pestilence and drugs. The thinking part of humanity is beginning to see that there is a vast difference between the true spirit of Christian religion and its external form in which it is represented to the vulgar mind. Even the better class of clergy — that is to say, those who are not fully absorbed in the dogmatic opinions which were engrafted into their minds in their schools, but who dare to seek for self-knowledge in God — know that a clinging to the external forms of religion prevents the mind from penetrating into their depths and grasping the spirit that produced these forms, and which is one and the same in all great religions; for the truth is universal, external and only one; it is the learned ones who take a multiple aspect of it, and regard it through manifold coloured glasses.

Among the most prominent followers and successors of Jacob Boehme might be named many celebrated theologians and philosophers, such as Dr. Balthasar Walther, Abraham Frankenberg, Friedrich Krause, and even the son of Boehme's worst enemy, Richter of Goerlitz, who published eight books containing extracts of Boehme's works.

Boehme's works were translated into different languages, and attracted the attention of Charles I. of England, who, after reading his "Answers to Forty Questions", exclaimed, "God be praised that there are still men in existence who are able to give from their own experience a living testimony of God and His Word". Johannes Sparrow, in the years 1646-1662, produced a translation in English of Boehme's works, and Edward Taylor another during the reign of James II. A third translation was made in 1755 by William Law, and many authors (the great Newton included) are said to have drawn largely from Boehme's works. His prominent disciples, however, and the ones most capable [Page 10] of grasping his ideas, seem to have been Thomas Bromley (1691) and Jane Leade (died 1703), the founder of the society of Philadelphians (if comprising under that name all persons who have entered a certain stage of development can be called the founding of a society).

Henry Moore, professor at Cambridge, was requested to examine the books of Jacob Boehme, and *to report against them*. He examined them; but his report had turned out differently from what had been expected; for even if he, on account of his own engrafted theologian ideas, was not fully capable to comprehend Jacob Boehme, and misunderstood him in many ways, nevertheless, he pronounced himself in his favour, and said that he who treated Boehme with contempt, could not be otherwise but ignorant and mentally blind; adding that Jacob Boehme had undoubtedly been spiritually awakened for the purpose of correcting those false Christians who believed merely in an external Christ, without regard whether or not they had the Spirit of Christ within themselves.

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For the instruction of those who believe that the present may learn a lesson from the experience of the past, we must prominently mention the name of Johann George Gichtel, a pious man and one of the greatest disciples of Boehme, a man of great insight and power.

He was a deep thinker, leading a blameless life. In 1682, he re-published Boehme's writings, and added to them many valuable engravings, with explanations, showing great profundity of thought and spiritual knowledge. By exposing the faults of the clergy, he made them his enemies. He wanted to reform them by force. Several times he was put into prison, and once he was even publicly exposed in the pillory in consequence of his sincerity. He established a society called the "Angelic Brothers", and in which every member was supposed to have actually renounced the world and entered into a state of angelic perfection. These "Angelic Brothers" were to be free from all human imperfections and so situated as not to be pestered with terrestrial cares. They were supposed not to be inclined to marry, and not to do any manual labour; but to live in continual contemplation and prayer, and by penetrating to the centre of good to abolish all evil, so that the wrath of God might be extinguished within the souls of all men, and universal love and harmony prevail everywhere. They were to depose the clergy, and, in their places, to be true priests, after the order of Melchisedec, taking upon themselves the *Karma* of all men and the sin of the world for expiation and redemption. Thus, this otherwise well-meaning man forgot that the organization of an angelic brotherhood would require, above all, the acquisition of angels to constitute its membership. Such angels are not easily to be found, and if they were to be found, they would require no external organization. Nevertheless, Gichtel's society, although being presumably neither angelic nor divinely wise, is said to have done a great deal of good, and Henke, a church historian, writes that they especially were [Page 11] tolerant, and never condemned any person on account of his belief or opinions, and that they never boasted, but silently accomplished many good works.

The followers of Jacob Boehme were not always left in peace. There will be theological and other bigots as long as ignorance exists in the world. Such persons, incapable of understanding the spirit of Boehme's teachings, imagined them to contain heresies, and, in 1689, Quirinus Kuhlmann, a follower of Boehme, was burned alive at the stake at Moscow, because he had been too free in expressing his opinions regarding the iniquities of the clergy of those times.

All the arguments which the enemies of Jacob Boehme have ever put forward consist merely in the application of vile epithets, such as " Fool ! Atheist! Swine! Shoe-patcher ! Crank! Hypocrite! " and phrases such as the following: —

" Boehme's sect is truly Devilish, and the vilest excrement of the Devil; it has the father of lies for its origin; the Devil had possession of Boehme, and grunted out of his mouth." (*Johann Trick*)

" We have no desire to climb up the ladder of dreams created by Boehme. To do so would be to tempt God and lead us down to perdition." (*Delitsch*)

" The writings of Jacob Boehme contain as many blasphemies as there are lines. They have a fearful odour of shoemaker's pitch and blacking." (*Richter*)

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" The shoemaker is the Antichrist." (*Richter*)

" We ask who deserves belief ? The word of Christ or the prejudiced shoemaker with his dirt ? " (*Richter*)

" The Holy Ghost has anointed Christ with oil, but the villain of a shoe-maker has been daubed over with dirt by the devil." (*Richter*)

" Christ spake about important things; but the shoemaker speaks about things that are vile." (*Richter*)

" Christ taught publicly; but the shoemaker sits in a corner." (*Richter*).

" Christ used to drink good wine; but shoemakers drink whisky." (Rev. Gregorius *Richter*)

The above will be sufficient as specimens of the theological arguments of those times. However laughable they may appear at the present time, there was a serious aspect attached to them for Jacob Boehme and his successors. Hobius of Hamburg, a follower of Boehme, had to leave the city for fear of being assassinated by the rabble, whose fury was excited against him by the bigotted parson, Rev. J. Frederic Mayer; and Abraham Hinkelman, from the same cause, died of grief; while Joh. Winkler, a theologian, who had refused to express a contempt for Jacob Boehme, was saved from his persecutors by the protection offered him by the King.

On the other hand, there were many of the more enlightened theologians who stood up in defence of Boehme and his doctrines; foremost of all John [Page 12] Winkler, John Mathaci, Frederick Brenkling, and Spencer, and especially so, Gottfried Arnold, the author of a history of churches and heretics. The wise can find wisdom in everything, even in the prattle of a child; but the fool sees his own image in everything, and therefore the great historian Mozhof (1688) sees in Jacob Boehme a saint and a sage; while F. T. Adelung, who wrote a book on human folly, denounces him and Theophrastus Paracelsus as fools. The so-called "Rationalists", and the great bulk of the theologians, combined with each other to fight against that which they were unable to understand, while Johann Salomo Samler, a self-thinking man and capable of entering into the spirit of Boehme, calls the writings of Boehme "a fountain of happiness and spiritual knowledge, from which everyone may drink without having the order of his external life disturbed thereby".

Among those who were pre-eminently capable to grasp Jacob Boehme's ideas, we will only mention the great theologian, Frederic Christop Octinger , Pastor Oberlin, and Louis Claude de St. Martin, the "Unknown philosopher", who translated his works into French. Many other persons, whose names are well-known in history, and who had more or less penetrated to the fountain of truth, such as Henry Jung Stelling, Friederich von Hardenberg, Friederich von Schlegel, Novalis, Heinrich Jacobi, Schelling, Goethe, Franz Baadez, Hegel, and many others might be named; but all this proves nothing. The value of the truth cannot be made to depend on the recommendation or certificate of any person, however great an authority he may be; it is beyond all praise. The reason why men have so much difficulty in seeing the truth is because it is so simple that even a child can behold it; but the minds of the worldly-

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wise are complicated, and they seek for complexedness in the truth. Let, therefore, those who wish to enter the spirit of the doctrines of Jacob Boehme dismiss their own prejudices, and open their eyes to the light. Those who are able to see it will see it; while to those whose eyes are closed, the writings of Jacob Boehme will be a sealed book, and it will be advisable for them to first learn the lesson taught by terrestrial Life, before they attempt to judge about the mysteries of the Life in the Spirit of God.

The writings of Jacob Boehme are all in accordance with, and based upon, the statements contained in the Christian Bible, and this circumstance will at once prove to be an obstacle in the way of those who have no understanding for the internal meaning of the Bible accounts, and may frighten them away from giving any attention to his works. The Bible, which, in an external sense, was formerly credulously believed and accepted by the pious and ignorant, is now universally disbelieved and laughed at by the "enlightened" portions of rationalistic humanity; and very naturally so, because the rationalistic specimens of mankind are not enlightened enough to see the delicious fruit within the indigestible shell; they do not know that behind these tales, full of absurdity, there is hidden more wisdom than in all the philosophical books of the world. [Page 13] They know nothing about the inner life, the *Soul-life* of this world, and that the personalities, which are as dramatic actors introduced to us in the Bible, represent actual living and conscious powers, which may not have become objectified and represented in terrestrial forms as on the terrestrial plane. If, departing from the pseudo-scientific standpoint, which regards the world as being made up of a conglomeration of self-existent, individual entities, we look at the world, and especially at our solar system, as being unity, indivisible in its essential nature, but manifesting itself in a multitude of appearances and forms of life, the history of the Bible will cease to appear to us as the history of persons that lived in olden times, and whose lives and adventures can have no serious interest for us at the present time; but the history of the evolution as contained in the Bible will be understood to mean the history of the evolution of Man — *i.e.*, *Adam*, the king of the earth, whose body is as great as our solar system; the history of the universal Man, wherein we all exist; who has become material and degraded; but was again redeemed and spiritualized by the awakening within him of the immortal life and light of the Christ.

When or at what time this descent of divine Logos took place; at what time or where the last *Avatar* appeared who redeemed mankind, is a question which may be left to the decision of the historian and theologian; to me it is sufficient to know that there is a divine element in humanity, by means of which humanity may be redeemed from materialism and ignorance and be bought to realize again her originally divine state. Moreover, each human individual constitutes for itself a little world wherein are contained all the powers, principles, and essences that are said to exist in the great world, the solar system wherein we live. In each of these little worlds the great work of redemption which is described in the Bible as having taken place in the great world is continually going on. For ever the divine Spirit descends into the depths of matter within our corporeal being, and, by the power of light and love of Christ within the soul, overcomes the lurid fire of the wrathful will within for the purpose of re-establishing in man the divine image of God. For ever the Christ is born between the animal elements in the constitution of man, teaching the intellectual powers therein; crucified on the cross, in the centre, of the four elements and resurrected in those who do not resist the process of their own regeneration, whereby they may attain life in the Christ. It is a process eternally repeating itself; but that in regard to our world, it had a beginning in time, as it has a timely beginning in every individual being upon the earth, seems to be self evident, for if "Adam had never fallen in sin" — that is to say, if the universal consciousness constituting the foundation of our solar system had never sunk into a material state — there would have been no occasion for redeeming it by awaking within it a consciousness of a higher kind; neither can it be supposed that the world is perfect now, and has always been and remained perfect [Page 14] because we see that it is not

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perfect, and if it were so, the work of evolution would be useless and come to an end.

This work of evolution and redemption is going on continually everywhere. Downwards shines the light of the sun and upwards spring the fountains that come gushing from the womb of the earth. Thus the light of the spirit comes from the sun of divine wisdom, the sacred Trinity of Will and Thought and its manifestation; and from the depths of the human heart up-wells the light of love, overruling the arguments of the intellect that has been misguided by external appearances. The seed is put into the earth, not for the purpose of finding its final object in enjoying itself in the earth, but to gradually die and become transformed while it lives; to die as a seed, while developing into a plant, whose body is raised out of the dark earth into the light and air, and whose form bears no trace of the original form of the seed; nor has the seed been put into the ground to die and to rot before becoming a plant. Thus the spiritual regeneration of man is to take place now, and while he lives in the body, and not after that body which is necessary for such a transformation to take place has died, and is eaten up by the worms.

When the seed ceases to be a seed, it becomes a plant. When man, the medium between an intellectual animal and a god, ceases to be such an animal, he becomes a god. This takes place when the universal God, the Christ, begins to live in him. Then the illusions end, and the interior truth becomes revealed. Not in books, nor in opinions, nor in the vagaries of metaphysical speculations; but in the living Truth itself is the Light to be found.

Thus prepared, we may take up the study of Boehme's works.

He himself says in the introduction to one of his books as follows: —

“God-loving reader! If it is your earnest and serious will and desire to devote yourself to that which is divine and eternal, the reading of this book will be very useful to you; but if you are not fully determined to enter the way of holiness, it would be better for you to let alone the sacred names of God, wherein his supreme sanctity is invoked; because the wrath of God may become ignited within your soul. This book is written only for those who desire to be sanctified and united with the supreme power from which they have originated. Such persons will understand the true meaning of the words contained therein, and they will also recognize the source from which these thoughts have come.”

One of the most enlightened critics of Jacob Boehme says, in regard to his book on divine mysteries: —

“This book is a treasure-box wherein all wisdom has been hidden from the eyes of the fool; but to the children of light it is always open. No one will clearly understand it unless he has the key necessary for that purpose, and that key is the Holy Ghost. He who is in possession of that key will be able to open the door and to enter to see the mysteries of Divinity; divine magic, angelic cabala, and natural philosophy. That key opens the door of divinity, [Page 15] and, like a lightning flash, it illuminates the darkness of material conditions; for its imperishable spirit is contained within all things. This spirit and no other can teach the soul of man from what depths the truths contained in this book have originated, for the purpose of glorifying the Divinity in nature and man.”

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And, again, he says: —

“The spirit of man is rooted in God; the soul of man in the angelic world. The spirit is divine, the soul angelic. The body of man is rooted in the material plane; it is of an earthly nature. The pure body is a *Salt*; the soul a *Fire*; the spirit is *Light*. Spirit and soul have been eternally in God and breathed by God into a pure body. This pure body is a precious treasure, hidden within the rock. It is contained in matter doomed to perish; but it is neither material nor mortal itself. It is the immortal body spoken of by St. Paul. These things are mysterious, sealed with the seal of the spirit. and he who desires to know them must be in possession of the spirit of God. It is this spirit that illuminates those minds who are His own, and wherever it is to be found, there will the *eagles* — the souls and the spirits — collect. No animal man, living according to his sensual attractions and animal reasoning, will understand it; because it is above the reach of the senses and above the reach of the semi-animal intellect; it belongs to the holy mountain of God, and the animal touching that mountain must die. Even the sanctified soul rising up to that mountain must bare her feet and leave behind that which is attached to her as a creature. She must forget her personality, and not know whether she is in or out of the body. God knows it. These things are sacred. They are written for children; to animals we have nothing to say.”

Let, then, the reader *pray*; not with his mouth nor with mere words, but with his spirit — that is to say, let him open his heart to the influence of the power of God, and by the power of the Divine Will rise up to that universal realm of Light from which Jacob Boehme received his illuminations. It is the realm of the living *Word* which was in the beginning, and by whose power the world was created; the Christ that continually whispers consolation to the despairing and dying soul; the heart and centre of God, of which the material sun that fills our terrestrial world with light and life is merely a symbol, an outward representation. Then will we see the internal world filled with a superior and living light, incomparably superior to that of the physical world, and in that world we shall find God and the Christ and the holy Spirit of Truth revealed, together with all the angels and mysteries; truly and satisfactorily beyond the possibility of being disputed away; because we shall not then need to be taught by mere letters or words, but by the truth itself, and learn what it is, and not what it appeared to be to another, because we shall then ourselves be one with the Truth and know it by the knowledge of self.

In the year 1705, the saintly Gichtel wrote: “Whoever in our time wishes **[Page 16]** to bring forth anything fundamental and imperishable, must borrow it from Boehme. Boehme's writings are a gift of God, and, therefore, not every kind of reason can apprehend them; therefore, you must not be satisfied with mere reading and rational speculation, but beseech God to give you His Holy Spirit, that shall lead you into all truth”.

These prophetic words, quoted in Mrs. A. J. Penny's excellent essay on the way how to study Jacob Boehme's writings, have been fully verified by the succeeding events; for every great philosopher that has come before the public since that time seems to have received his inspiration from Boehme's books. Even the great Arthur Schopenhauer, one of the most admired modern philosophers, whose works are praised by many who would treat with contempt the works of Boehme, which they have never studied, was a follower of Boehme, and his writings are fundamentally nothing but an exposition of Boehme's doctrines from the point of view of Mr. Schopenhauer, who misunderstood Boehme in many respects. Schopenhauer likewise says about Schelling's works:

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"They are almost nothing except a remodelling of Jacob Boehme's 'Mysterium Magnum', in which almost every sentence of Hegel's book is represented. But why are in Hegel's writings the same figures and forms insupportable and ridiculous to me, which in Boehme's works fill me with admiration and awe ? It is because in Boehme's writings the recognition of eternal truth speaks from every page; whilst Schelling takes from him what he is able to grasp. He uses the same figures of speech; but he evidently mistakes the shell for the fruit, or at least, he does not know how to separate them from each other."
(*Handschriften, Nachlass, page 261*).

It would be too tedious to produce a collection of what the various modern philosophers in different nations have said about the writings of Jacob Boehme; the only way to form a correct estimate about him is to enter into his spirit and to see as he did. We will, therefore, in conclusion, merely quote the words of Claude de Saint Martin: "I am not young, being now near my fiftieth year; nevertheless, I have begun to learn German merely for the purpose of reading this incomparable author". " I am not worthy to open the shoestrings of this wonderful man, whom I regard as the greatest light that has ever appeared upon the earth, second only to Him who was the Light itself."..... "I advise you by all means to throw yourself in this abyss of knowledge of the most profoundest of all truths."..... "I find in his works such a profundity and exaltation of thought and such a simple and delicious nutriment, that I would consider it a waste of time to seek for such things in any other place." (*Letters to Kirchberger*)