
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

world of sin. But He is risen. He is exalted. Our life is hid with Christ in God. We are citizens of heaven. 'Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.'

This is the secret of what always seems to me the most amazing paradox on God's earth, the zeal of the Christian fellowship, renewing its youth from age to age in proclaiming the gospel to the whole creation. This is, no doubt, the marching orders of the Church. But it is only by maintaining an unremitting propaganda that the Church lives at all. To those acquainted with the facts, Christian missions are, and never more so than in our own time, the romance of history.

The conversion of the whole earth is the wildest dream, contradicted by the experience of each successive generation. What greater irony than the thought of Christian Europe as the pledge of a regenerate world! Such a world as this has never had a place in the philosophy of Christians. Take the short view, prevalent in apostolic times. The apostles never inscribed upon their banner, 'The world for Christ in this generation.' Or take the long view, that many ages of evolution still await an infant race, on which some of our modern teachers insist as though it were, not a paralysing but an inspiring outlook. What compensation were a Christian community commensurate at some far distant date with the round globe itself for the millions who will have lived and died, to borrow the Pauline phrase, 'without God and without hope in the world!'

But the prospect the New Testament sets before us is more sombre still. 'When the Son of man cometh,' said Jesus, 'shall he find faith on the earth?' The apparent pessimism lurking in this question is caught up by the apostolic writers, one after another. The Manchester view of progress has no justification in Christian thought. Nor has a world of perplexity, in which the sea and the waves roar and men's hearts fail for fear, any message of despair for those who have sounded the depth of Christian hope. The long distance evolutionism of the present day may be true. It is a subject on which I offer no opinion. But true or not true, it is irrelevant to the issues of the gospel. The only end of the world, of which we as Christians know anything, is the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour—at midnight, at cock-crow, or in the morning.

That is the spirit of missions. At one time men may speak of saving souls from the fires of hell, at another of winning the world for God, at another of spreading a Christian civilization, at another of evoking from new nations fresh interpretations of the one Christ. None of these reasons is sufficient. None can explain that mighty impulse which rolls on through centuries of witness. It is the Advent hope of the Evangelical Prophet that inspires the preachers of the reconciling word, and makes their feet beautiful upon the mountains. 'In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'

'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.'

'He that testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus.' *Marana tha!*

Recent Foreign Theology.

The Boehme Tercentenary.

On the 17th of November 1624, Jacob Boehme (*Anglice*, Behmen) died in his fiftieth year. The last words of this 'inspired shoemaker,' whom Hegel called 'a man with a mighty mind,' were 'I go to-day to be with my Redeemer, and my King in Paradise.'

Reports of the Tercentenary celebrations at Görlitz in Silesia, where Boehme lived and died, tell of the honour done to the memory of the man who, in his lifetime, was denounced as a fanatical heretic from the pulpit of the St. Peter's Church, silenced for seven years by the Town Council, and persecuted by his fellow-citizens. It is good to read of the Guild of Shoemakers, the civic dignitaries, and the Lutheran clergy joining with students of his philosophy in praise of a self-taught seer

whose influence on thinkers has been far-reaching and deep.

In the various appreciations of Boehme scanty reference is made to the numerous links which unite him to philosophers outside Germany. On the other hand, little notice has been taken of the Tercentenary in our journals. Yet, assuredly, Boehme was a citizen of the kingdom which has no frontiers. In the words of Evelyn Underhill, he has 'left his mark upon the history of Mysticism' as well as upon German philosophy. In the admirable survey of *Mysticism in English Literature*, by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, a worthy place is given to this German mystic, and concerning him this comprehensive statement is made: 'In addition to completely subjugating the intellect of Law, he profoundly influenced Blake. He also affected Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, and through him Carlyle, J. W. Farquhar, F. D. Maurice, and others. Hegel, Schelling, and Schlegel are alike indebted to him, and through them, through his French disciple St. Martin, and through Coleridge—who was much attracted to him—some of his root-ideas returned again to England in the nineteenth century, thus preparing the way for a better understanding of mystical thought.'

In the addresses at Görlitz there was abundant evidence that Boehme has still ardent disciples who, undeterred by the obscurities of his style, are studying his writings in order that they may reinterpret his message to the modern mind. Foremost among these is Studienrat Felix Voigt, one of the selected speakers, who has also contributed an informing and discriminating article to *Die Christliche Welt*.

Boehme was wont to say, 'I have no books, but I have myself,' and Voigt recognizes that it is difficult to indicate with precision the sources of his teaching. Nevertheless, he was not isolated from the intellectual movements which stirred the minds of theologians during the first century of Protestantism. When Hess died in 1544 he was almost the last Catholic in Görlitz, but even from the Lutheran point of view the town was far from orthodox. As early as 1528, Kaspar Schwenkfeld had numerous and influential followers, many of whom became Boehme's disciples. About the same time there is a record of the suppression of Anabaptists in the neighbourhood, and of the presence of Rosicrucians. In the early part of the seventeenth century the first three Rectors of the *Gymnasium Augustum* were accused of crypto-Calvinism. Against the same charge Boehme had to defend himself, for his Theodicee has affinities with the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination.

The powerful influence which Theophrastus Paracelsus exerted upon Boehme may possibly be due to the reading of his writings, but Voigt attaches greater importance to the fact that from 1560 onwards, there is evidence that friends of Boehme, especially Dr. Kober, Michael Kurtz, and Dr. Balthazar Walther had studied at Basle and returned with the ideas of the great Renaissance philosopher. Walther was a great traveller; he had spent six years in Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, searching diligently for the hidden wisdom; to his influence Voigt ascribes any resemblances in Boehme's writings to Gnostic, Neo-Platonic, and Origenistic ideas, as well as to the doctrines of the Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita.

Critics of German poetry have given Silesia the second place of honour, next to Swabia. In Voigt's opinion it has greater claims to distinction on account of the religious and mystical temperament of its people. He gives the names of many mystics who sprang from this region in order that a correct idea may be formed of the mental and spiritual atmosphere in which Boehme grew up.

Voigt prefers to describe Boehme as a Theosoph, but his right to the well-worn name of Mystic is not questioned if the word is clearly defined. 'It is true that by means of direct mystical vision Boehme attained to the knowledge of God, but he differs from the Mystic, if the word is used in its narrower meaning, in that striving after the *unio mystica* was only a small part of his ideal aspirations. The real Mystic lives his life remote from nature, his tendency is towards the mortifying and nullifying of the senses in order that God may take full possession of the great emptiness thus created.' On the contrary, the Cosmos is an integral part of Boehme's thought-domain; to him it is the living garment of the Godhead. His purpose, therefore, is to contemplate, and to endeavour to comprehend, the mystery of Nature *sub specie eternitatis*. Hence students of Boehme are urged to remember the connexion of modern Theosophy with the new world-consciousness that has arisen since the fifteenth century, that is to say, since the decay of mediæval Mysticism. With the true mystical idea of God as an eternal, infinite, incomprehensible Unity — the *mysterium magnum* — Boehme com-

bines the conception of God as Will, thus advancing from the position of Master Eckhardt to that of Goethe.

Voigt warmly commends the Memorial volume by R. Jecht, a speaker at the Festival banquet, who has charge of the town archives, and having searched them has been able to give a graphic description of Boehme and his contemporaries as well as of Görlitz in his time. The picture is not one of which a present-day inhabitant of the town can be proud, but it is guaranteed as 'authentic and no phantasy.' Exception is taken to the views expressed by Paul Deussen in his recently published work—already in its third edition—because it summarizes and labels Boehme's philosophy as 'Dualistic Pantheism.' Voigt acknowledges that in the *Aurora*—Boehme's earliest work,—there are passages which support Deussen's interpretation; but he maintains that in the later writings there is a remarkable advance both in quality of thought and in clarity of expression, the result being that the ultimate conclusions sometimes contradict earlier opinions.

Concerning the relation of God to Nature, Boehme did, undoubtedly, hold different views at different times. Towards the close of his life (April 1624) he made this plain declaration: 'Nature is only an instrument in the hands of God. . . . Nature is not to be identified with God, who is immanent in Nature.' Basing his judgment on Boehme's riper utterances, Voigt concludes that if any philosophical term is to be used, Panentheism accurately describes his teaching concerning God and Nature. Confirmation of this view is found in the writings of Krause, who gave this term the stamp of his approval, defining it more clearly. Krause was a disciple of Schelling, upon whose mind Boehme's philosophy made a deep impression.

As regards Dualism, Voigt confesses that traces of Persian teaching concerning the opposition of light and darkness, goodness and evil, are to be found in Boehme's system of thought, even as they are present in Judaism, Greek syncretism, early Christianity, and Manichæism; but scattered throughout Boehme's writings there are also Monistic tendencies. He was too much of a realist to regard evil as non-existent, thus he avoided the Neo-Platonic type of Monism. He did, however, teach that evil is willed by God in order that, by its means, good may manifest itself, just as the electric fluid emits light only when a thin metal thread offers to it a sufficiently strong opposition. This attempt to solve the age-long problem of the origin of evil does, in Voigt's opinion, enable Boehme to keep clear both of cosmic dualism and of the theory of the non-existence or illusory nature of evil. His view of the world may, therefore, be described as 'panentheistic and monistic.'

In occasional sentences Voigt implies what Dr. Alexander Whyte plainly states in his appreciation of Boehme. Despite enthusiastic admiration of one aspect of the German Mystic's teaching, his sympathetic Scottish exponent warns students that they will have to search for the fine gold amidst much slag and much dross, and to winnow the finest of the wheat from much straw and much chaff. Voigt honours Boehme in so far as he has been successful in his attempt to provide a bridge to span the chasm which separates mediæval mysticism from modern scientific thought. But Boehme's direct and inexhaustible experience of God is held to be of far greater value than his synthetic philosophy. Earnest seekers after God to-day are assured that if they will persevere, they also will discover, in the records of that experience, good reason for saying, with Charles I.—who in 1646 read one of Boehme's books—'God be praised that there are still men who are able to give, out of their own experience, a living testimony to God and to His word.' The work referred to is entitled *Forty Questions*; it contains the answers given by Boehme to a series of questions collected by his friend Walther from the Universities. The answers are attempts to solve philosophical and theological problems which, in those days, were perplexing the minds of scholars; they revealed such ability and originality as to gain for Boehme the title of 'the Teutonic philosopher.'

J. G. Tasker.

Leamington Spa.