

## **Jacob Boehme The Teutonic Theosopher (1575-1624)**

Jacob Boehme, "chosen servant of God," was born in Alt Seidenburg, Germany, in 1575.

John Wesley, in his day, required all of his preachers to study the writings of Jacob Boehme; and the learned theologian, William Law, said of him: "Jacob Boehme was not a messenger of anything new in religion, but the mystery of all that was old and true in religion and nature, was opened up to him," — "the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

Born of poor, but pious, Lutheran parents, from childhood, Jacob Boehme was concerned about "the salvation of his soul." Although daily occupied, first as a shepherd, and afterward as a shoemaker, he was always an earnest student of the Holy Scriptures; but he could not understand "the ways of God," and he became "perplexed, even to melancholy, — pressed out of measure." He said: "I knew the Bible from beginning to end, but could find no consolation in Holy Writ; and my spirit, as if moving in a great storm, arose in God, carrying with it my whole heart, mind and will and wrestled with the love and mercy of God, that his blessing might descend upon me, that my mind might be illumined with his Holy Spirit, that I might understand his will and get rid of my sorrow . . .

"I had always thought much of how I might inherit the kingdom of heaven; but finding in myself a powerful opposition, in the desires that belong to the flesh and blood, I began a battle against my corrupted nature; and with the aid of God, I made up my mind to overcome the inherited evil will, . . . break it, and enter wholly into the love of God in Christ Jesus . . . I sought the heart of Jesus Christ, the center of all truth; and I resolved to regard myself as dead in my inherited form, until the Spirit of God would take form in me, so that in and through him, I might conduct my life.

"I stood in this resolution, fighting a battle with myself, until the light of the Spirit, a light entirely foreign to my unruly nature, began to break through the clouds. Then, after some farther hard fights with the powers of darkness, my spirit broke through the doors of hell, and penetrated even unto the innermost essence of its newly born divinity where it was received with great love, as a bridegroom welcomes his beloved bride.

"No word can express the great joy and triumph I experienced, as of a life out of death, as of a resurrection from the dead! . . . While in this state, as I was walking through a field of flowers, in fifteen minutes, I saw through the mystery of creation, the original of this world and of all creatures. . . . Then for seven days I was in a continual state of ecstasy, surrounded by the light of the Spirit, which immersed me in contemplation and happiness. I learned what God is, and what is his will. . . . I knew not how this happened to me, but my heart admired and praised the Lord for it!"

At the age of twenty-five, Boehme was given another great illumination, in which the Lord let him see farther into "the heart of things, . . . the true nature of God and man, and the relationship existing between them." Ten years later "the divine order of nature" was opened up to him, and he was inspired to write what the Lord had revealed to him.

From 1612 to 1624, he wrote thirty books, "My books are written" Boehme said "only for those who desire to be sanctified and united to God, from whom they came . . . Not through my understanding, but in my resignation in Christ . . . from him have I received knowledge of his mysteries. God dwells in that which will resign itself up, with all its reason and skill, unto him . . . I have prayed strongly that I might not write except for the glory of God and the instruction and benefit of my brethren."

Jacob Boehme's persecutions and suffering began with the publication of his first book, "Aurora," at the age of thirty-five. then notwithstanding five years of enforced silence, banishment from his home town, and an ecclesiastical trial for heresy, his "interior wisdom" began to be recognized by the nobility of Germany; but at this time, at the age of forty-nine, Boehme died, "happy," as he said, "in the midst of the heavenly music of the paradise of God," in Silesia in 1624.