



THE CONFESSIONS OF JACOB BOEHME

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THE CONFESSIONS OF JACOB BOEHME

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The Confessions of Jacob Boehme.

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CHAPTER 13

OUTWARD reason saith, How may a man in this world see into God, into another world, and declare what God is? That cannot be: it must needs be a fancy wherewith the man amuses and deceives himself.

Thus far such reason comes: it cannot search further that it might rest; and if I staid in that same art, then would I also say the same; for he who sees nothing says nothing is there; what he sees, that he knows, and further he knows of nothing but that which is before his eyes.

I would have the scorner and wholly earthly man asked whether the heaven is blind, as also hell and God himself.

Or whether there is any seeing in the divine world; whether also the Spirit of God sees both in the love-light world and in the fierce wrath in the anger-world.

Does he say there is a seeing therein? as indeed is very true: then he should look to it that he himself does not often see with the Devil's eyes in his purposed malice.

If he would drive the Devil out, then he would see his great folly which the Devil has prompted him to. Yet he is so blinded that he knows not that he sees with the Devil's eyes.

In like manner the holy man sees with God's eyes; what God purposes, that the Spirit of God in the new birth sees out of the right human eyes of the image of God. It is to the wise a seeing and also a doing.

In the way through the death of Christ the new man sees into the angelical world; it is to him much easier and clearer to apprehend than the earthly world; it is done naturally, not with fancying but with seeing eyes, with eyes of that spirit which goes forth out of the soul's fire.

That spirit sees into heaven; it beholds God and eternity. It is the noble image according to the similitude of God.

Out of such seeing has this pen written, not from other masters, nor out of conjecture whether it be true or no. Though now indeed a creature is

but a piece and not a total consummation, so that we see only in part, yet what is written here is to be searched into, and is fundamental.

The Wisdom of God suffers not itself to be written, for it is endless, without number and comprehension; we know only in part.

And though indeed we know much more, yet the earthly tongue cannot exalt itself and declare it: it speaks only words of this world and not words of the inward world, though the mind retains them in the hidden man.

Therefore one always understands otherwise than another, according as each is endued with the Wisdom; and so also he apprehends and explains it.

Everyone will not understand my writings according to my meaning and sense; indeed there may not be one who does so; but everyone will understand according to his gifts, for his benefit; one more than another, according as the Spirit has its property in him.

For the Spirit of God is often subject to the spirits of men, if they will that which is good or well; and it furthers what man wills, that his good work be not hindered, but that everywhere, above all, God's willing and desire be done.

What is there now that is strange to us or in us, that we cannot see God? This world and the Devil are the cause that we see not with God's eyes, else there is no hindrance.

Now if anyone saith I see nothing divine, he should consider that flesh and blood, together with the subtlety and craft of the Devil, is oftentimes a hindrance to him, in that he willeth in his high-mindedness for his own honour to see God, and oftentimes in that he is filled and blinded with earthly malignity.

Let him look into the footsteps of Christ and enter into a new life, and give himself to be under the Cross of Christ, and desire only the entrance of Christ into himself; what shall hinder him then from seeing the Father, his Saviour Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

Is the Holy Spirit blind when he dwells in man? Or write I this for my own boasting?

Not so, but that the reader may forsake his error, and that with the divine eyes he may see the wonders of God, and so God's will may be done. To which end this pen has written very much, and not for its own honour or for the sake of the pleasures of this life.

Dear children of God, you who seek with much sighing and tears, I say to you in earnest sincerity: Our sight and knowledge is in God; he manifests to everyone in this world as much as he will, as much as he knows is profitable for the man.

He that sees from God, he has God's work to manage; he should and must order, speak, and do that which he sees, else his sight will be taken from him; for this world is not worthy of God's vision.

But for the sake of the wonders and of the revelation of God it is given to many to see; that the Name of God may be manifested to the world. We are not our own, but his whom we serve in his light. We know nothing of God; he, God himself, is our knowing and seeing; we are nothing that he may be all in us. We should be blind, deaf and dumb, and know no life in us, that he may be our life and vision, and our work be his.

If we have done anything that is good, our tongue should not say, This have we done, but, This hath the Lord in us done; his name be highly praised.

But what does this evil world now? If anyone says, This has God in me done; if it be good, then saith the world, Thou fool! thou hast done it; God is not in thee; thou liest. Thus they make fool and liar of the Spirit of God.

When you see that the world fighteth against you, persecutes you, despises, slanders you because of your knowledge and the Name of God, then consider that you have the black Devil before you. Then sigh, and long that God's kingdom may come to us, and the Devil's sting may be destroyed, that the man, so influenced by the Devil, may through your longing, sighing and prayer be released. Then you labour rightly in God's vineyard and prevent the Devil of his kingdom.

In love and meekness we become newborn out of the wrath of God; in love and meekness we must strive and fight against the Devil in this world. For love is his poison; it is a fire of terror to him wherein he

cannot stay. If he knew the least spark of love in himself he would cast it away, or would destroy himself that he might be rid of it. Therefore is love and meekness our sword, wherewith we can fight with the Devil and the world.

Love is God's fire; the Devil and the world are an enemy to it. Love hath God's eyes and sees in God; anger has the eyes of the fierce wrath that sees in hell, in torment and in death.

The world supposes merely that a man must see God with the earthly and the starry eyes; it knows not that God dwells in the inward and not in the outward.

If it sees nothing admirable or wonderful in God's children it says, Oh, he is a fool, he is an idiot, he is melancholy; thus much it knows.

O hearken, I know well what melancholy is; I know also well what is from God. I know them both, and thee also in thy blindness; but such knowledge is not purchased by melancholy, only by a wrestling to victory.

It is given to none without striving, unless he is a vessel chosen of God; otherwise he must strive for the garland.

Indeed many a man is chosen to it in his mother's womb, chosen to open and disclose the wonders which God intends; but not all are chosen thus. Many are accepted out of their zealous seeking; for Christ saith, Seek and ye shall find, knock and so it will be opened unto you. Also, whosoever come to me, those I will not cast out.

Herein lies the seeing out of Christ's spirit, out of God's kingdom, in the power of the Word, with the eyes of God and not with the eyes of this world and of the outward flesh.

Thus, thou blind world, know wherewith we see when we speak and write of God, and let thy false judging alone: see thou with thine eyes and let God's children see with their eyes; see from out thy gifts, let another see from out his gifts.

As everyone is called, so let him see; and so let him converse. We manage not all one and the same conversation, but everyone according to his gift, and his calling to serve God's honour and wonders.

The Spirit of God suffers not itself to be tied or bound up, as outward reason supposes, with decrees, canons and councils, whereby always one chain of Antichrist is linked to another so that men come to judge about God's Spirit, and to hold their own conceits or opinions to be God's covenant, as if God was not at home in this world, or as if they were Gods upon earth.

I say that all such compacts and binding is Antichrist and unbelief, let it seem or flatter how it will. God's Spirit is unbound, he enters not into such compacts or obligations, but enters freely the seeking, humble, lowly mind, according to its gift and capacity.

He is also even subjected to it, if it does but earnestly desire him; what then can institutions in human wit and prudence of this world do for that mind, since it belongs to the honour of God?

Friendly conference and colloquy is very good and necessary, wherein one presents or imparts his gifts to another; but compacts are a chain against God.

God has once made one covenant with us in Christ; that is enough for eternity, he makes no more. He has once taken mankind into the covenant and sealed it by blood and death; there is enough in that.

It is not so slight a thing to be a right true Christian, it is the very hardest thing of all; the will must be a soldier, and fight against the corrupted will. It must sink itself down out of the earthly reason into the death of Christ, and break the power of the earthly will.

This must be with so hardy and bold a courage that it will hazard the earthly life upon it and not give over till it has broke the earthly will; which indeed has been a strong battle with me.

It is no slight matter to fight for the garland of victory; for no one wins that unless he overcomes; which yet of his own might he cannot do.

He must make his will as it were dead, and so he lives to God and sinks into God's love; though he lives now in the outward kingdom.

I speak of the garland of victory which he getteth in the paradise world if he once presses in; for there the noble seed is sown, and he receives the

highly precious pledge and earnest of the Holy Spirit, which afterwards leads and directs him.

And though he must in this world wander through a dark valley, wherein the Devil and the world's wickedness continually rush and roar tumultuously upon him, and often cast the outward man into evils and so hide the noble seed, yet it will not suffer itself to be kept back.

Thence it sprouts forth, and a tree grows out of it in God's kingdom, despite all the raging and raving of the Devil and his followers and dependents.

And the more the noble tree is cherished, the more swiftly and strongly it grows; it suffers not itself to be destroyed though it costs the outward life.

God is in Christ become man, and the faith-spirit is also in Christ born man. In that the will-spirit converses or walks in God, for it is one spirit with God, and works with God divine works.

And though it may be that the earthly life so hides it that a man knows not his work which he has generated in the faith, yet in breaking the earthly body it will be manifest. Seeing we know this we should let no fear or terror keep us back, for we shall well reap and enjoy eternally. What we have here sown in anguish and weariness, that will comfort us eternally. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

WE cannot say that the outward world is God, or the speaking Word; or that the outward man is God. That is only the expressed Word, which has stiffened itself in union with the elements. I say, the inward world is the heaven where God dwells; and the outward world is expressed out of the inward, through the moving of the eternal speaking Word, and enclosed between a beginning and an end.

The inward world abides in the eternal speaking Word. The eternal Word speaks it into Being through Wisdom, out of its own powers, colours, and virtue, as a great mystery from eternity. This Being is a breathing from the Word in the Wisdom; it has the power of generation in itself, and introduces itself into forms, after the manner of the generation of the eternal Word, or, as I might say, out of the Wisdom in the Word.

Therefore there is nothing nigh unto or far off from God; one world is in the other and all are one as soul and body are in each other, and time and eternity. The eternal speaking Word rules through and over all; it works from eternity to eternity; and though it can neither be apprehended nor conceived, yet its work is conceived, for this is the formed Word, of which the working Word is the life.

The eternal speaking Word is the divine understanding or *sound*. That which is brought forth from the love-desire into forms, that, I say, is the natural and creaturely understanding and sound which was in the Word; as it is said, In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The harmony of hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, and smelling, is the true intellectual life. When one power enters into another, then they embrace each other in the sound; and when they are become one they mutually awaken and know each other. In this knowledge consists the true understanding, which, according to the nature of the eternal wisdom, is immeasurable and abyssal, being of the One which is All.

Therefore one only will, if it has divine light in it, may draw from this fountain and behold infinity. From which contemplation this pen has wrote.

In the light of God (which is called the kingdom of heaven) the sound is wholly soft, pleasant, lovely and pure; yea, as a stillness in comparison with our outward gross speaking and sounding. It is as if the mind did play and melodize in a kingdom of joy within itself, and did then hear in a most entire inward manner a sweet, pleasing melody and tune; and yet outwardly did neither hear nor understand it. For in the divine light all is subtle, in manner as the thoughts play and make mutual melody in one another. And yet there is a real, intelligible, distinct sound and speech used by the angels, according to their own property, in the kingdom of glory. The powers of the formed and manifested Word, in their love-desire, do introduce themselves, according to the property of all the powers, into an external being, where, as in a mansion, they may act their love-play, and so have somewhat wherewith and wherein mutually to play and melodize one with another, in their wrestling sport of love.

God, who is a Spirit, has by and through his manifestation introduced himself into distinct spirits, which are the voices of his eternal pregnant harmony in the manifested Word of his great kingdom of joy: they are God's instrument, in which his Spirit melodizes in his kingdom of joy; they are angels, the flames of fire and light, in a living, understanding dominion.

We are not to think that the holy angels dwell only above the stars beyond the place of this world, as the outward reason, which knows nothing of God, fancies. Indeed they dwell beyond the dominion of this world, but the place of this world (although there is no place in eternity), and also the place beyond this world, is all one to them. We men see not the angels or the devils with our eyes; yet they are about us and among us. The evil and the good angels dwell near one another, and yet there is the greatest immense distance between them. For heaven is in hell and hell is in heaven, and yet the one is not manifest to the other. Although the Devil should go many millions of miles, desiring to enter heaven and to see it, yet he would still be in hell and not see it.

If evil was not known, joy would not be manifest. But if joy be manifest, then is the eternal Word spoken in joy, to which end the Word, with nature, has brought itself into a creation. Whosoever rightly sees and understands this has no further question about any thing, for he sees that he lives and subsists in God, and that he may further know and will

through him and speak what and how he will. Such a man seeks only the estate of lowliness, that God may alone be accounted high.

My will-spirit, which now is in Christ's humanity, lives in Christ's spirit, that shall in his power give sap to the dry tree, that it may arise in the sound of the trumpet of the divine breath in Christ's voice, which is also my voice in his breath, and spring afresh in paradise. Paradise shall be in me; all whatever God has and is shall appear in me as an image of the divine world's being; all colours, powers and virtues of his eternal Wisdom shall be manifest in me, as in his likeness. I shall be the manifestation of the divine and spiritual world and an instrument of God's Spirit, wherein he makes melody with himself, with this voice which I myself am. I shall be his instrument, an organ of his expressed Word and Voice; and not only I, but all my fellow-members in the glorious choir and instrument of God. We are all strings in the concert of his joy; the spirit from his mouth strikes the note and tune of our strings.

Therefore God became man, that he might repair his glorious instrument of praise, which would not sound according to the desire of his joy and of his love. He would bring again the true love-sound into the strings; he has brought the voice which sounds in his presence again into us; he is become that which I am and has made me that which he is, so I may say that in my humility I am in him his trumpet and the sound of his instrument and his divine voice.

thou lovest thy brethren. In hating thyself thou hatest only that wherein the evil sticks close to thee. There is, there can be, no selfishness in love; they are opposed one to another. Love, that is, divine love (of which alone we are now discoursing) hates all evil selfhood. It is impossible that these two should subsist in one person; by a necessity of nature the one drives out the other.

The height of love is as high as God; it brings thee to be as high as God himself is, by uniting thee with God. Its greatness is as great as God: there is a latitude of heart in love which cannot be expressed; it enlarges the soul as wide as the whole creation of God. This shall be experienced by thee, beyond the compass of all words, when the throne of love shall be set up in thy heart. Its power supports the heavens and upholds the earth; its virtue is the principle of all principles, the virtue of all virtues. It is the worker of all things and a vital energy through all powers natural and supernatural. It is the power of all powers, nothing being able to let or hinder the omnipotence of love, or resist its penetrating might. If thou findest it thou comest into that fountain from whence all things are proceeded, into that ground wherein they subsist; and thou art a King over all the works of God.

Be silent therefore and watch unto prayer, that thy mind may be disposed for finding that jewel, which to the world appears as nothing, but which to the children of Wisdom is all things. The way to the love of God is folly to the world, but wisdom to the children of God, for whom that which is despised of the world is the most precious treasure; yea, so great a treasure it is, that no life can express, nor tongue so much as name, what this inflaming, all-conquering love of God is. It is brighter than the sun; it is sweeter than any thing that is called sweet; it is stronger than all strength; it is more nourishment than any food, more cheering to the heart than wine, more pleasant than all the pleasantness of this world. Whosoever obtaineth it is richer than any monarch on earth, and he who winneth it is nobler than an emperor and more potent and absolute than all earthly powers and authorities.
