

Boehme Has It Right

By Brian Coatney

Jacob Boehme was the 16th century German shoe cobbler and unveiler of great Bible mysteries about God, man, and universe. Many wise and devout souls have taken a leap into marvelous faith through his writings; others have missed what he says. But before attempting a capsule article on Boehme, let me start first with a core teaching of many teachers of union with Christ, and that is the idea that since God made us all our appetites and faculties deserve trust and yea, even accolade. Therefore, such a proposition suggests that we zoom on, trusting this present vessel with all its feelings and thoughts. I differ with this and think Boehme does too.

Boehme talks about three principles, by which he means three realms. The first realm is who God properly is, as God, which is not wrath: wrath is the dark side, which God swallows up and never manifests. The second realm is the manifestation of the dark side, as Lucifer opened it up, by which he became Satan and the devil. For the first time, the hitherto unmanifest potential of self-for-self darkness and chaos came into manifestation. The third principle is the outer created world.

After the devil's fall, God created, or recreated earth as a paradise, in which he put Adam, covered with His glory (Boehme calls her the Virgin). God created man, Boehme says, of all three principles. Therefore heaven was in him, hell was in him, and he was of the outer creation, which at that time existed, in a perfect balance without corruption. Adam consisted of all three principles as one person.

God intended Adam to live out of the light principle, which is properly called God, as Boehme puts it. In this condition Adam could go in and out of the outer creation, but he was not of the outer creation. Rather, he possessed a body, I would say, like we see literally in the Song of Solomon—one made of the jewels of heaven and human flesh. But Adam was not to take the third principle, the outer world, as his source of life or be dependent on it in any way. In that day, he would die.

Die he did, and as Boehme asserts, took on a bestial body, which God blesses by grace, but nonetheless is a vile body and a campground now of the second principle, namely the enemy. So what do we do with this mortal, corrupted flesh that Christ lives in for the Christian? Boehme says that we do not trust the cravings of this present body; we do not trust the continual solicitations of the enemy; instead, we feed ourselves in the light on the ascended body and blood of Christ. From them, we live from a new, heavenly body inside that feeds on the first principle, namely the life of God Himself.

From this new body, joined to Christ's ascended body, we then experience a quickening in the outer body that makes it a fit instrument of the Spirit. But note that we do not live from the outer body. That is folly in the Bible; it is folly in Boehme; it is folly all around. To do such merely calls this present flesh Christ, missing the spiritual man inside, our real person. Norman Grubb does not speak this way, but I think he generally means the same by talking about discerning the difference between soul and spirit. No point exists in taking condemnation for a body "dead because of sin" as Paul puts it. Besides, I am not my body or soul.

I think this is what Boehme basically says, and of course this article describes only in the barest sense what Boehme strains with travail and illumination to say, with much more detail and outline. This does not make the body evil, but it does not make it good and trustworthy either as a guide to holiness. God never intended that a man live in slavery to the thoughts and feelings of this body. He doesn't intend condemnation either; but He does offer us the opportunity to live from the Spirit and then watch with what ease, and at times attending pain, the Spirit puts to death the deeds of the body.

So I think that this says what Boehme says and captures also Norman's old saying, "We're spirit people, not matter people." Lewis and Clark, the astronauts, and sailing ships of old explored much of outer reality. The man within, Christ joined to our new humanity, soon to be revealed in glory as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, possesses infinite ground spiritually to explore, which while we're

still on terra firma, will radiate out through these old tires we live in now.