

The Mystic Side of Christianity

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" In der Beschränkung zeigt sich der Meister."
(In limitation is shown the hand of the master.)
GOETHE.

(Page 3) THIS aphorism of the great German master-mind seems to me a fitting One with which to commence a subject so vast, varied and important as that which I have been asked to open this evening! for in the studies that the little time at my disposal has enabled me to make for it, I could have been tempted to roam into fields of literature endless in extent and teeming with interest, but that I remembered that life is short and that the subject, however long, must, be brought within the limits necessary for presentation to you this evening. The art of selecting well requires however, as Goethe says, a master-hand, and I must ask your indulgence for the somewhat ill-assorted jumble which is the best I have to offer under the circumstances, and hope that the interest of the subject will compensate for its incompleteness and for my want of skill in weaving the fragments together into a whole.

In seeking for a satisfactory definition of the word "Mysticism", I have found it necessary to apply a common rule with regard to the meanings of words. There is one meaning founded on *derivation*, by which we trace a word to its source and find how it originated; we may often gain much light from this, but we must never forget that in its descent down the stream of time, a word gathers accretions of new meanings and becomes applied to objects widely different from those of its first association, so that the meaning in its later *application* is far removed from that of its primary *derivation*. It is evident that the word mysticism came originally from the mysteries, those secret ceremonies of initiation into the higher life in ancient Egypt and Greece, of which we Theosophists have heard so much and know so little. For the term is based, we are told, on the Greek word *muo*, to close the mouth, to be silent; the *mystae*, those admitted to the mysteries, were not allowed to divulge what they were shown. The unknown is necessarily the misunderstood, hence in common parlance the words "mystery" and "mysterious" came to mean not merely that which cannot be spoken about, but owing no doubt to a later material bias of men's minds, something which does not really exist, or something contradictory to sense and reason and which is only professed by charlatans [Page 4] or those who want to mystify others and to get credit for knowledge they do not really possess. But this is a later development. What is properly understood as a mystery, and consequently mysticism, is that which is related to the essence and inner principle, the ultimate *reality* of things, precisely the reverse of the popular idea. It implies something which not only *may* not, but which *cannot* be fully divulged. It is concerned with experiences on a plane beyond the reach of words, and when the subject of these experiences tries to express them in ordinary language, the result is a confused account, a sort of floundering in a sea of terms altogether inadequate to the expression of such things. Thus in answer to the complaint of obscurity of style in Jacob Boehme, his

translator and expounder William Law remarks, "what he saw and conceived was quite new and strange, never seen or spoken of before, and therefore, if he was to put it down in writing, words must be used to signify that which they had never done before".

Christian Mysticism, our subject this evening, may, I think, be described as the striving after the knowledge of the soul and its relations to God and the invisible world. To some who have had the intuitional faculty developed as the result of that striving in previous incarnations, that knowledge was, and still is, what is called *revealed*; others have received it from teachers, through whom it has been handed down through countless generations. This is what is meant by *tradition*. Certain it is that it has come down in a continuous stream, at times so small as to be scarcely perceptible, at others altogether hidden, then bursting again into the light under some fresh impulse of persecution, or during a season of peace and comparative freedom.

At some time or other this stream became bifurcated, and we see it taking two different directions, the one inclining to the devout or more purely spiritual side, which may be called *religious* Mysticism; the other to the side of physical nature and its inner workings, which is known as Alchemy. To the students of the latter belong the Rosicrucians, and to choose out a few great names, Paracelsus, Roger Bacon, Robert Fludd, Van Helmont, and all those known as alchemists, fire-philosophers, and students of magic, down to Cagliostro and Eliphas Lévi in modern times. Of this part of the subject, I do not propose to treat; it is a side which does not attract me, and therefore I have never studied it, except incidentally: the other side has attracted me from my earliest youth, and I have taken some pains to become acquainted with at least a minute fraction (though *only* a fraction) of the immense wealth of writings in which it abounds.

One word, however, before dismissing the Nature-theurgists; it is claimed for them, I believe, that under the guise of chemical and physiological [Page 5] research, the transmutation of the baser metals into gold, they were seeking also for the divine Spirit. This path, however, seems to have led many into the realms of black magic, and must therefore be attended with unusual danger. It is better by far to seek the Divine in our own souls.

In the Christian Church the tendency to mystic thought, leading to isolation and retirement from the busy haunts of men, must have first found expression in the life of the solitaries, the Fathers of the Desert, who had their settlements along the banks of the Nile. Among these were St. Anthony, and later St. Athanasius in his early days. When the centre of the Christian Church became firmly fixed at Rome, and the seat of Empire was removed to Constantinople, the Roman Imperial power in the West fell to pieces, and Europe was overrun by the Northern races. All was confusion, strife, and unsettlement. All those whose nature led them to shun a warlike life, were forced to retire to the mountains in search of the safety and seclusion necessary for a life of study and meditation. Thus was founded, in the early half of the sixth century, the community of St. Benedict on Monte Cassino in Southern Italy, their watchword being Labour and Study. They also devoted themselves to the instruction of the young, and their abbeys and schools quickly sprang up in every part of Europe, including the British Isles. They were followed by the Cistercian and Carthusian Orders, still more bent on the development of the inner life, so that to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, common to all, they added the vow of perpetual silence, and chose for their monasteries the most inaccessible sites, such as that still occupied by the Grand Chartreux in the Alps of Dauphiné. Each order has a prevailing note, represents a separate idea, though all have a common object, *i.e.*, the pursuit of the religious life. From these monasteries and abbeys issued the Bedes and Bonifaces, the Gregorys and Augustines, the Lanfrancs and Anselms, the

Bernards and Bonaventuras, as well as the great Latin hymnologists of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Of St. Bernard of Clairvaux I should like to speak a little more fully, because he combined in a remarkable, if not in a unique manner, elements of character not often found together. He had at once a strong love of the interior life, and that fiery enthusiasm of humanity that led him to aim at nothing less, says Mr. Frederic Harrison, than the regeneration of his age. His social and domestic feelings were so strong that though he determined to take refuge in a cloister, he would not enter it alone, but induced his five brothers and an uncle, besides many friends, to follow him. But the abbey of Citeaux was too small a field for his ardent spirit, and the Abbot, Stephen Harding, sent him forth with a few kindred souls to found a new religious colony in the wilds of Central France. Here, at Clairvaux, for fifteen years, he ruled his monastery and gradually acquired that character of sanctity, as well as [Page 6] strength of intellect, which made him in so many respects the foremost man of his age. His influence became so widespread that we find him appealed to by the King of France concerning a quarrel with his bishops, by other abbot's concerning the government of their religious houses, by the Bishop of Lincoln, by the Chancellor at Rome, by the Emperors of Germany, by numerous Popes in succession; while at the same time, he stooped to welcome the outcast and to perform the humblest duties in his own convent. Forced into the publicity of European ecclesiastical politics, and of an intellectual tournament with Abelard, whom he vanquished, he always returned with thankfulness to the seclusion of his cloister, and to the further renewing of his spiritual life. There in his little cell, not much larger than his last resting-place, he died, surrounded by the humble brethren of his order. The life of *St. Bernard and his Times* is a work of deepest interest to Theosophists, showing as it does, what a mighty, engine is true spiritual force, constantly fed from above and within, and directed to the benefit of mankind at large, without thought of worldly advancement or selfish aim of any kind. Among his mystic writings a precious gem is a treatise on "The Love of God, and other Fragments", translated by Mr. and Mrs. Coventry Patmore.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries arose the orders of St. Francis in Italy, and St. Dominic in Spain. The note of the first was poverty, and was a protest against the spirit of luxury and greed which had grown up with the commercial prosperity of the great Italian Republics. The second was devoted to preaching, in order to keep alive the Catholic faith against the inroads of heresy, and likewise to the education of youth. The Dominicans number among their saints the great Thomas Aquinas, the disciple of Albertus Magnus, and who was equally a saint and a *savant*, the master of the scholastic philosophy and author of the *Summa Theologiae*, the great text-book of Catholic theology; another is St. Catherine of Siena, the tanner's daughter, who could barely read and write, till her vast correspondence with many renowned personages of her age forced her to perfect herself in worldly lore to the point of the third or fourth standards in our board-schools. Finally she was the means of restoring the papacy from its exile in Avignon to its former seat in Rome. Her mystical writings are still greatly esteemed in the Catholic Church. Another example of the influence of purely spiritual force.

Turning to Germany in the same century (the thirteenth), we find a different spirit in Meister Eckhart, the forerunner of those who lead up to one of whom I shall have much to say later on, Jacob Boehme In Eckhart (it is said, for I have not studied him personally), there appears no longer the spirit of the cloister, but a new system is evolved in which the old Church doctrines keep their place, but are shown in altogether a new [Page 7] light. His speculations, indeed, are allied to those of the later German idealist philosophers, such as Hegel, and particularly Schelling and Franz von Baader, likewise to the teaching of Theosophy, in that he declares the identity of the inner man with God.

Eckhart's influence on his contemporaries was so great that he received the name of "The Master", by

which he is still known.

A Society which was formed later in the Rhineland and Switzerland, called the "Friends of God", numbered amongst its members many followers of Meister Eckhart. The best known is John Tauler of Strasburg, a preacher of eminence. His great friend in the religious life was Nicolas of Basel, and it was in this town of Bâsle that the Friends of God had their headquarters, where their books were published and whence an extensive correspondence emanated. An offshoot from these *Gottesfreunde* were the Brethren of the Common Life, whose communities flourished chiefly in the Netherlands. Their first house was at Deventer, where lived the renowned Thomas a Kempis, author of the "Imitation of Christ". [I leave aside the controversy concerning the authorship of this work] They lived together in simplicity and piety, sharing all things in common, but were bound by no monastic vows. Nicolaus of Cusa, who was also a student at Deventer, finally rose to be a Cardinal of the Church.

No one can study the writings of men such as these, and say that there is no esoteric side to the Christian teaching. Their works, especially those of St. Bernard and Thomas à Kempis, are the daily textbooks of thousands, not only of Catholic, but even of Protestant Christians. There is in them but slight allusion to the doctrines of the Church, though these are of course taken for granted. They address themselves to the inner sense alone. I have often been struck with the great similarity between the "Imitation" and the "Bhagavat Gîta"; both consist in parts of a colloquy between God and the Soul, or, as Theosophists would say, between the Higher and the Lower Self.

"Blessed indeed are the ears", says the "Imitation", "which listen not for the voice which sounds from without, but to the inner voice of truth". "Blessed are they who dive into things internal, and strive day by day through spiritual exercises to gain a deeper capacity for receiving heavenly secrets".

"I am the Rewarder of all who are good, and the Mighty Prover of all who are devout. Write my words upon your heart and meditate diligently upon them" "Walk before Me in truth, and ever seek Me with simplicity of heart". "Simplicity must be in the motive and purity in the affection".

"Place thy heart on me", says the "Bhagavat Gîta", and penetrate me with thy understanding, and thou shalt without doubt hereafter enter [Page 8] unto me. But if thou shouldst be unable, at once, steadfastly to fix thy mind on me, endeavour to find me by means of constant practice. If after practice thou art still unable, follow me in my works; for by performing works for me, thou shalt attain perfection. But shouldst thou find thyself unequal to this task, put thy trust in me alone, be of humble spirit, and forsake the fruit of every action."

In the "Imitation" we find — "Be therefore ready for battle, if you wish to win the victory. Without a conflict you cannot obtain the crown of patience". The first books of the "Bhagavat Gita" contain an allegory in which Krishna tries to induce Arjuna to fight against his foes, which are his passions. A more studied comparison of these two far-famed works is well worth the attention of theosophists, the difference between them being quite as interesting as the likeness. In the sixteenth century, when the war-note against Roman corruption had been sounded by Martin Luther, there arose many new religious Orders in the Church, and some of the older ones underwent a thorough reform. It was to the work of reform in the ancient Carmelite Order that a simple nun first addressed herself, she who was known afterwards as St.

Teresa. She had the mystical tendency from a very early age, for it is related of her and her little brother that they wandered away from their home when quite children; "they had gone", they said, "to look for God". In the face of opposition and numerous difficulties, including intense physical suffering, this resolute woman succeeded in getting the reform accepted in all the convents for both men and women in Spain, besides establishing new ones on a stricter basis. Her work on the religious life is entitled "The Perfect Way"; in acknowledgment of the merit of this and other writings, Teresa received the doctor's cap from Rome. Her disciple, known as St. John of the Cross, has perhaps reached the acme of religious thought in his "Obscure Night of the Soul"; this may be studied in an English garb, and has been lately republished here in London.

Contemporaneously Ignatius of Loyola and his six companions, St. Francis Xavier, Rodriguez, and others, were forming the nucleus of the Society of Jesus, while at Rome St. Philip Neri was gathering around him the brothers of the Oratory. St. Ignatius was an officer in the army, and received a wound in the leg while mounting the breach at the siege of Pampeluna. Confined to his couch, he had finished reading such Spanish romances as could be mustered in the place, when some one brought him the "Lives of the Saints"; before he had finished them he was transformed from a soldier in the King of Spain's service to a soldier of the Cross. As soon as he recovered from his wound, he went home to his father's baronial castle, hung up his weapons in the armoury, and left it again in the garb of a pilgrim. He went to a famous shrine at Montserrat near [Page 9] Barcelona, and lived for some time as a hermit in the cave of Manresa. It was here that he received in a vision the plan of the celebrated "Book of Exercises", on which so many men and women have formed their religious life, and the methods of which are still in daily use by pious persons, cleric and lay, in and out of convents, throughout the whole Catholic world. Of the plan of the Exercises I have already written at some length in *The Theosophist*. They have been translated into every language, and except the "Imitation", there is no book besides the Bible which has a wider circulation. Yet the "Exercises" must be taught, orally transmitted, they cannot be understood by the uninitiated. Once properly instructed, one may continue on the same lines during a lifetime and never wish for any other.

Among later mystical writers perhaps the one most appreciated outside the Catholic Church is Molinos, founder of the Quietists, and author of the "Spiritual Guide". His teaching was condemned by the Orthodox as tending to too great passivity of mind. It seems to have somewhat resembled that of the Quakers who, as we know, were equally persecuted by the dominant Church. Fénelon, and especially Madame de la Mothe Guyon, wrote in the manner of Molinos, and both had evidently great internal illumination. All three were more or less persecuted, but the *animus* against them appears to have originated more in personal feeling than in any distinct error in doctrine.

But I must leave this rapid historical sketch, which I hope has not been too tedious, and return to the sixteenth century, where the stream of mysticism bifurcates again, and this time flows through the channel of the Protestant Church, or rather, starts afresh in a member of that communion. Jacob Boehme, called the Theosopher, was born in a village near Goorlitz in Silesia. From a child he was psychic, he saw visions and heard voices. In early youth he lived the life of a shepherd and was afterwards apprenticed to a shoemaker. "During his apprenticeship he was one day left alone in the shop (I give the anecdote as related in Dr. Hartmann's "*Life of Boehme*") when a 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 extraordinarily 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 house, and with a loud and solemn voice called to Boehme: 'Jacob, come outside'. Boehme was very much astonished to find 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, said: Jacob, you are now little: but you will become a great man, and the world will wonder about you. Be pious, live in the [Page 10] fear of God, but 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 trouble, poverty, and persecution. Nevertheless, do not fear, but remain firm; for God loves you, and is gracious to you. He then went away".

Soon after this Boehme had a period of internal illumination, and remained for seven days in a state of ecstasy, during which the eyes of his soul were opened, and he was able to read the secrets of God and nature. This faculty remained with him until death, and the period of special illumination recurred from time to time, and he began to write down systematically what he saw and heard. In the space of twelve years he wrote thirty books full of deep mysteries concerning God and the angels, Christ and man, and concerning the external world. The attitude of his mind appears to have been that of a sincere seeker after truth by means of prayer, study of the Scriptures, the practice of virtue, and conformity to the Divine Will. He says: " I resolved to regard myself as one 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 firmly by my earnest resolution, and fought a hard battle with myself, and while I was wrestling and battling, being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my soul". Describing the manner in which he wrote, Boehme says in his "Letters": "I might sometimes perhaps write more elegantly, and in a better style, but the fire burning within me is driving me on. My hand and my pen must then seek to follow the thoughts as well as they can. The inspiration comes like a shower of rain. That which I catch, I have".

Again he says: "I am not collecting my knowledge from letters and books, but I have it within my own self; because heaven and earth with all their inhabitants, and moreover God Himself, is in man".

As, however, Boehme found that he could not long retain this knowledge after the trance condition was past, he began to write it down. This he did in the early morning, calling the notes he made " Memories ". The larger work that grew out of these was called the "Morning Redness", or, as a friend entitled it, " Aurora, the Root or Mother of Philosophy, Astrology, and Theology". His more important works, however, are the "Three Principles" and the "Mysterium Magnum".

I do not propose in this brief sketch to present you with any analysis of his works or teachings. To do so in the briefest manner would require a separate paper and many months, if not years, of study on my part. Mrs. Penny, who has herself written an admirable introduction to the study of Boehme, tells me that after thirty-four years of careful study, she still finds much that she has not mastered. His system of man and the [Page 11] universe may however be gleaned from his two careful biographers, Dr. F Hartmann and Dr. Martensen, and very much may be learned from Claude St. Martin's "Theosophic Correspondence" and "Man, his true Nature and Destiny", both translated and published by the late Mr. Penny. An encouragement to Theosophists to try to learn something of Boehme may be found in a few lines in the "Secret Doctrine" (1) 494), where H. P. Blavatsky says: "Thus Newton, whose profound mind had fathomed the spiritual thought of the Great Seer in its mystic rendering, owes his great discovery to Jacob Boehme, the nursling of the genii (Nirmânakâyas) who watched over and guided him". But though a complete presentation of Boehme's system is impossible at the present moment, there are some points in it which I should like to place in comparison with the teaching in the "Secret Doctrine".

I. Boehme posits the Absolute as the Chaos, the "Abyss"; he calls it the "Mysterium Magnum", which dwells in darkness and stillness, yet contains the potentiality of all manifestation. (Parabrahm.)

II. From this arises first a Will. (First Logos.)

III. Next he posits the Mirror, which he also calls the Divine Idea, the Eternal Wisdom, the Sophia, the Maiden. In this mirror is reflected the Divine Ideation which, seeing its own "glory, forthwith goes forth into manifestation. This seems to me most like Mulaprakriti and Mahat. In Boehme the *Will* at this stage is called the Son, and that which goes forth from it the Spirit. Thus is conceived the Triune Being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Maiden or Virgin.

But there is as yet no activity; all is merely a *Magia*, an Imagining. After a time sets in Motion. Desire is added to Imagination, and the latent, eternal nature, which is a potency in the Divine Being, begins to manifest. This nature Boehme does not call matter, but an obscuration, which in contrast to pure Light and Spirituality he calls *thick*, whereas the other is *thin*. In *Centrum Naturae* are developed seven chief properties, four of which make for darkness and three for light; the central one is that in which goes on the struggle for supremacy, and is figured as a wheel, or rotation. Then nature, weary of the struggle, longs for light and union with the Higher. The sixth property is Sound, harmony, heavenly music; the seventh and last the Synthesis, the Essential Wisdom, the image which was from the first beheld in the Mirror. Thus is formed the complete cycle of Evolution.

In a work entitled "Forty Questions on the Soul", comes the question so often asked by new students of Theosophy: "Wherefore has God created the world, since He did not create it for His own perfection?" Boehme replies: "The reason why the eternal and unchangeable God has created the world is an unfathomable mystery; it can only be said that He [Page 12] did it in His love". Elsewhere, however, he says: "He did it to reveal Himself to Himself".

In speaking of the Seven Properties, Boehme says; "the first and seventh quality must be regarded as one, likewise the *second* and *sixth*, also the *third* and *fifth*, but the fourth is the object of division. In this the student of the Esoteric Philosophy recognises the seven globes on four planes of matter, the fourth being the lowest.

In the first circle of Creation Boehme places three great, angels, Michael, Lucifer, and Uriel, and below these seven throne angels, corresponding to the Dhyana Chohans of the "Secret Doctrine", and the Sephiroth of the "Kabala". These existed prior to man, or the coming into being of the Cosmos. The process of regeneration in man occupies a prominent place in Boehme's teaching. Man must die to his selfhood and make his will an instrument for the Eternal Will, and this by what he calls "sinking down" into God, that grace may be poured into him. This doctrine of passivity it was, as I understand, for which the Quietists were condemned, as tending to slacken man's activity, instead of inducing him to work out his own salvation.

But to follow the stream of which Boehme was the fountain-head. Though he attained a certain notoriety in Germany during his lifetime, we first hear of him in England one hundred years later through the

writings of William Law, whose "Serious Call" and "Spirit of Prayer" were long favourite books of piety. He translated portions of Boehme's works and began to make him known, and in England Law is always associated with his teachings. Other mystic writers of this century were J. G. Gichtel in Germany, and Jane Lead and Pordage in England. The greatest tribute, however, is paid to Boehme's philosophy by Claude St. Martin, a French count, who lived during the great Revolution in France". He called Boehme "the greatest human light that had ever appeared", and he learned the German language at fifty years of age in order that he might read him in the original. St. Martin had belonged to a school of mystics then existing in France under the headship of Martinez-Pasquales, after whose death it embraced the doctrines of Swedenborg, when St. Martin separated from it, and applied himself entirely to Theosophic study; he produced several works, of which "Man, His True Nature and Destiny" and his "Theosophic Correspondence" are, as I have already said, translated by Mr. Penny, and from which some knowledge of Boehme may be gleaned. Appended to the latter work is a long list of the libraries and institutes in Great Britain and her dependencies, as well as in the United States, where Theosophic works are to be found, as well as the syllabus of a scheme for publishing a "Course of Theosophy, Scientific and Practical", bearing the date 1863. This brings us within fourteen years of the publication [Page 13] of "Isis Unveiled". Four years later than this were delivered the series of Lectures now bearing the title of "*The Perfect Way, or The Finding of Christ*", the most complete exposition, to my mind, of the science of the soul yet presented to us in a perfected form. But I speak for myself only, for I know that I am treading on debatable ground, and that I differ in opinion from many here present.

You will have observed, perhaps, that I have omitted one remarkable name, and have made no mention of Swedenborg, the only one among the great mystics and seers who founded a Church to carry on his name and to perpetuate the doctrine which he had received. I can say no more about him for two reasons; one is, that any account of him would carry me beyond the limits of my time tonight; another, that his works are easily accessible to all, and are probably much better known to most of you than they are to myself. He lived more than a century later than Boehme, and died before the outbreak of the French Revolution. To many, his new "Interpretation of the Scriptures" has been a great help to the better understanding of the Bible, but his too literal descriptions of heaven and hell and the spirit-world show plainly that he did not penetrate beyond the astral spheres.

Other names I have doubtless passed over, which may strike students of the mystic science, Jung Stilling, the Counts von Stollberg, St. Germain, and many more. But the thought in all is more or less similar, the secret of the mystics is always the same. Each and all have found that the true unveiling takes place within, that God reveals Himself anew to every human soul, that is, to every soul who seeks Him in real earnest in her own inner chamber.

I think those of you who have followed me thus far, and even more from your own experience and knowledge of these matters, will agree with me that in spite of all the boasted enlightenment and advance of knowledge of the nineteenth century, these early Christian mystics arrived at something which is not to be learned from books, nor taught in sermons and lectures, nor to be studied in the outer and phenomenal, even as it appertains to man. Their prayers and meditations, their lives of active beneficence, were inspired by love and not by knowledge, by a divine impulse from within, not by any stimulus from without, beyond that afforded by association and by the teachings and services of their Church. St. Teresa had not many books; St. Ignatius, on leaving his hermitage at Manresa, did not sit down to a course of study, nor did he even begin to organise the Society of Jesus, he went immediately and tended the sick in the hospitals, a task not then by any means so easy as it is now. His companion,

Francis Xavier, went to the distant Indies to preach the Gospel, and died in the midst of his labours on an island in the Chinese seas, at a time when India [Page 14] and China were much further off than they are now. Love for a Divine Master was their inspiring motive; because He laboured they would labour, because He was poor, they would give up all; because He suffered and died, they would do the same, if necessary. The daily prayer that S. Ignatius taught his followers was: "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, all that I have and possess. I offer unto Thee all my thoughts, words, actions and sufferings of this day, to be used for Thy honour and glory". Jacob Boehme says, in like manner, that we must make our wills become the *Will of God manifested in us*, and that all the evil, sin and misery in the world come from the arrested evolution of the nature of God in man. Mark the term "*arrested evolution*", for it seems to me the key to much that we do not rightly understand. At certain periods in the world's history this evolution seems, from the multitude of outward obstacles, to be more completely arrested than at others, and then there seems to come a special flow of that vitalising influence which appears like a new revelation — a revelation given to the world, says the "Bhagavat Gīta", as often as its spiritual level falls below what may be assumed to be the lowest average required for the uses of incarnation.

Therefore it would seem that Jesus Christ was sent for the spiritual uplifting of the Western world, in the "fulness of time", say the Scriptures; that is, at the period when the decay of Roman morality was setting in, and the stern virtues of the early Republic were being superseded by the odious vices of the Imperial Court, which were soon to spread like a cancerous growth throughout the length and breadth of the Empire. Then it was that the asceticism of the young religion performed its cleansing work, and the God within impelled men to flock to the standard of purity, nobility and self-sacrifice borne into their midst by the immediate followers of the Prophet of Nazareth.

And now with regard to the inference to be drawn from our hasty glance at the mass of writings, spiritual, theosophic, philosophic, or whatever name we may give to them, which are the records of men's experiences at these times of spiritual uprising. When we see the millions who have sought for them, studied them, drunk them in eagerly, lived by them, suffered for them, does it not show how keen is the desire, how tormenting the thirst that drives man to seek for the source from whence he came ? does it not prove man's consciousness of his too great separation from that source, and the universality of the longing for his return to God, for a reconciliation with the Divine principle, with which the earthly principle is somehow at war ? Some have found the way by one means, some by another, as the variety of these records easily proves to us. Some have reached it by seclusion, others by communion. Some by a death of martyrdom, others by a life of toil and service. None can prescribe for [Page 15] another, nor dare he bar the way to a brother because that way is not his own. For the brotherhood of humanity many paths lead up the mountain of sanctification, some direct, others circuitous; some see dimly on the mountain-top above them the figure or the banner of one Master; others image the Christ as seated on its slope, teaching the people, descending into their homes, providing for their physical wants, healing their sick, blessing their little children; or they gaze on Him as he stood silent before the Jewish Sanhedrim, or meekly bore the stern penalty of the Roman law. Whatever speaks to the soul, draws it upward in meditation, strengthens it in the midst of trial, lifts it above gross matter and the fret and worry of daily life and material surroundings — *that* is its Saviour, its Mediator, its Reconciler, and its God.