THE LIFE OF THE ANGELS—DERIVED ETERNITY AND TIME

THE work of Creation unfolds itself through a diversity of circles of creation. The first circle of creation which God produces is the Angelic World, a Kingdom of pure spirits of Light. Here Boehme specifies the three Archangels—Michael, Lucifer, and Uriel—each of whom has his own kingdom with a multiplicity of angels. Michael is the symbol of the Father, Lucifer of the Son, Uriel of the Holy Ghost. They have under them seven other Throne-angels with the heavenly hosts. The Angels dwell in a wonderful natural world, the perfection of which far transcends that of our earth; it is akin to God's own Paradise, the Uncreated Heaven, and by this it is encircled.

The Angels are created out of Fire and Light, for no creature can come into being without having in itself the fiery Triangle, the obscure nature-basis. They are spirits, although not destitute of corporeity. As with the flowers in a meadow, each angel has its specific colour. Everything stands in temperature. The astringent and sharp in their nature is transfigured in the light and love of God.

The life of the holy Angels is not fettered by the limitations of time and space, as our human life is in this material world; their existence is temporally and spatially free. They have indeed their proper place and region, but are not restricted to it; they can exist where they please, and are raised above the contrast between near and far. They roam among one another in the three kingdoms of the Trinity and hold communion of love with each other in common joy. And yet each of them retains its own region as its property and possession. In a similar manner, they are free from time. Although they may acquire a history by reason of the trial which they have to undergo, and by means of which their relation to
God is to be established and confirmed; and although they may acquire a relation to time by becoming God's fellow-labourers and ministers in later natural creations, and by their participation in the history of man; they are nevertheless from the beginning without history and without temporal succession. They live in the circle of eternity, in the undivided fullness of Life; the periods of their life are not parcelled out, but exist in simultaneity. Their life-employment is adoration of God, blessed contemplation of His glory, and reciprocal love. They live their life in a partial or derived eternity.  

A derived, a communicated Eternity! Jacob Boehme does not employ the term, but it harmonizes with his thought; and this thought is not without validity. Primitive, original Eternity belongs only to Him who alone hath immortality, because He is self existent, and aseity is His attribute. The creature can only possess an eternal life which is imparted to it and is the gracious gift of God; can live only in an eternity which is derived from the eternity of God, and participates in it. We are certainly able, as Christians, to have eternal life in faith during this temporal order; but still, we look forward, as the phrase is, "to exchange time for eternity," to exchange this form of existence, where everything is fragmentary and sundered into succession, for a fuller and richer form of being, where everything is simultaneous, whole, and undivided. But this eternity, which for us lies in the future, we cannot designate otherwise than as a derived and communicated eternity, which participates in the Eternity of God, and receives its content from this.

But now, instead of looking forward, we look back into the morning of creation and ask, When did the derived Eternity begin? When were the angels born? Boehme replies, "The creation of the angels had a beginning; but the powers of which they are created had no beginning." Does this mean that the angels have a temporal beginning, or that they have an eternal beginning? A temporal beginning is very hard to imagine, because the angels were not created to live in the forms of time and succession, but in those of eternity and circularity. Not to mention the fact that, if temporal beginning means that they were created in time, time must
have elapsed before they were created. 'Time is nothing in itself, but is only a form for existence; and then it must be asked, What temporal existences preceded the angelic? The whole representation of the angels includes the idea that they were created with the natural world that belongs to them, their heaven and glory, all at once.

Or does it mean they have an eternal beginning, that they sprang from that movement in the unchangeable God which Boehme regards as unsearchable, but which does not presuppose time, as if a space of time had elapsed in God Himself before He began to create; a movement which, consequently, was itself eternal? But if so, then they are not created at any point of time; then there has been no time when there were not angels before the throne of God, no time when the Alleluia of creatures did not ascend to the Eternal One who alone hath immortality. And then it will be asked, Is not this pantheism? If the world—which here means the angelic world—is thus made co-eternal with God Himself, is not this a denial of the conception of creation? We are unable to perceive this. Creation is an act of the freedom of God, who does not need a world, but wills it out of pure love; and this freedom and love are not impoverished by the supposition that no time elapsed in God before the world was created; nor are they magnified by the supposition that God, whose resolution to create must certainly have been eternal, postponed the execution of His design.

The main point here, in a metaphysical respect, is this, that the eternity of the Angels and the eternity of God are essentially dissimilar. The eternity of the angels is posited, assigned by God; they lack aseity; and this is the important point if a fundamental distinction is to be drawn between God and the angels. These created beings, the angels, know themselves to be in absolute dependence upon God, as brought into existence by Him, although they have no recollection of a temporal origin. And surely there may have existed, prior to this palpable world subjected to time, a world which stood in the light of Eternity, a world of pure spirits, even although they had not entered into "history," and were as yet exempt from succession, but who stood in the simultaneity of all the elements that pertained to their existence, and surrounded the throne of God; a kingdom prior to the creation of our world, in which the creative love of God,
which would not endure to be without a world, had always
its abode; a kingdom of which it cannot be said that
there was a time when it was not, because there was no
time before it was, and because for this kingdom itself
there had as yet arisen no time, no succession, no
becoming.

Many passages of Scripture seem to point to such a
heavenly world which belongs to the Throne of God; e.g.,
the living creatures in Ezekiel and in the Apocalypse,
the representatives of created life, Cherubim and
Seraphim. We may add the seven Angels who stand before
God (Apoc. viii. 2), and are not to be confounded with
the seven Spirits who, as we have seen, are uncreated. As
to the Throne we note that Jewish mysticism regards it as
the point of transition from the Divine to the
creaturely.

Can one imagine the Throne of God as coming into
existence in time?

But in whatever manner one may interpret
Boehme and answer the question as to the temporal or
eternal origin of the angels, it remains clear that, for
Boehme, the fundamental type of the angelic life is not
that of time, but of eternity; that for him the primal
circle of creation is a spirit-world, standing in a
derived eternity in which there is as yet neither time
nor history. It is incontestably his view that the angels
are prior to man, indeed, prior to this earth; and here
he is in harmony with the declaration of Scripture (Job
xxxviii. 7) that, when the corner-stone of the earth was
laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons
of God shouted for joy." The creation of the angels is
certainly included in the general description: "In the
beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But it
is altogether arbitrary to assign the creation of the
angels to the Mosaic creative days. The angels were prior
to the whole history of the creation of this earth of
ours, which Moses narrates, while he maintains absolute
silence with regard to the angels. When the morning-stars
and the angels are compared in Job, it must be remembered
that, according to Scripture, there is a mysterious
connection between the angels and the stars.
If we take our standpoint with Boehme in this beginning, we gain the best position with regard to this temporal world and acquire a living view of the unity of the universe. Thus, the first circle of creation is a spirit-world in a derived eternity. The final circle of creation into which the whole pours itself; perfection, the future world, is also a derived eternity, but one far richer than the former, because it embraces the heavenly Jerusalem with the Church of Christ. But in the midst lies the temporal world, the region where means and object, where beginning, middle, and end, past, present, and future are outside one another, while in eternity all these are within one another; where the predominant feature is not rhythmic circular movement, but linear or progressive and serial movement; where that congeries of events and actions occurs which we call history. This middle world, accordingly, has not always existed, nor will it always continue to exist. Its significance is simply that of being an intermediate world, a world of transition to eternity. Thus we are released from the dreary and nebulous conception of the infinity and boundlessness of the world. The current ideas of the infinity of the universe with unlimited time without beginning or end and illimitable space are only valid in a purely abstract view of the world, when one looks wholly aside from its teleological (purposeful) and conditioned elements, and regards this abstract conception of the world exclusively through logical, mathematical, and physical categories, as, for instance, when one discusses the infinite divisibility of matter. But if we are to apprehend the living, actual, teleologically-defined world (the characteristic of which is to be not only a natural world, but a world of spirits and souls), we need finiteness and limitation, we require a beginning and an end. We demand of every work of art that it shall be finished and symmetrically rounded off in itself, so that therein it shall have its own inward infinity. Does then the universe; which must, most assuredly, be the most consummate work of art, lack this symmetrical self completeness, be without object or limitation, begin and end in cloud or mist? We ask with Schelling: "Which is the more perfect, an endless series of worlds, an eternal circle of existences with no goal of perfection, or a universe which issues forth into something definite and consummate?"

Boehme expressly teaches, and is here in close accord
with Scripture, that the Universe begins with something definite and perfect, and issues into something definite and perfect; and that, for this reason, it must be self limited. But how, then, did this temporal world, this middle world between two eternal worlds; which may be well compared to an island floating in a vast ocean with eternity behind it, before, above, beneath, and around it; how did this world come into being? That, in some mode or other, Time must have proceeded out of Eternity is obvious, for whence else could it have come? The clearest conception that we can frame is, that it arose by a new creative determination, a new creative act, in relation to which the angelic world, in its derived eternity, would then be placed as an antecedent world, and would thereby receive a qualification of time.

But according to Boehme, this process did not take place so peacefully and harmoniously as one might imagine or as it would have done if the work of creation had advanced along strictly normal lines. He points to the suggestions which are presented to us in Revelation itself, and teaches that time originated in a Fall from Eternity. This temporal world arose, at the outset, as an Eternity broken and shattered, flung into confusion and disorder. Boehme directs our attention to a great catastrophe in the morning of creation, a rebellion in the spirit-world! And this forms the starting-point of a long history.

1This is the condition called aevum by St. Thomas Aquinas, midway between time and eternity.

CHAPTER II

REVOLT OF SATAN AND THE ORIGIN OF EVIL
RUIN OF PRIMAEVAL CREATION AND ITS RENOVATION DESCRIBED IN GENESIS – CORRUPTION OF EVOLUTION EVIDENCE OF SCIENCE

L U C I F E R,1 that is, Satan, in the angelic world and amongst the primitive hierarchies, was a mighty spirit of Light; he was,
indeed, the mightiest of all created spirits: he had above him only the Son of God, and he ruled over a domain of natural worlds, which for us is indeterminable, but of which this earth of ours formed a part, standing then in marvellous beauty and glory. But Lucifer did not maintain himself as a spirit of Light, did not continue in the truth (John viii. 44); he conspired against God and a multitude of his subordinate angels shared his fall, the effects of which also extended to the natural world that was subject to him.

We here face the mystery of the Origin of Evil; and the first thing on which we must fix our attention is the Temptation. Boehme certainly indicates the possibility of temptation more profoundly than other thinkers have done by his doctrine of the two centres; the Nature-centre and the Light-centre, Egoism and Love. A being that can be tempted must have within himself two contrasting principles, according to either of which he may determine himself. It is necessary that even the angels should be tempted and proved, in order that their holiness may not be simply nature, but may be conditioned by their own free-will. Temptation takes place in the fourth Natural Property, where Fire and Light, Darkness and Light are separated. It is the will of God that the creature shall sacrifice the Fire-principle, Egoism and Selfishness, to the Light-principle; shall sacrifice the Fire-life, the Own-life, by absolutely surrendering it to the Light, to the Life of Love. With this Will Lucifer would not comply. He beheld his beauty, for he was marvellously beautiful; he regarded his power, for he was a most powerful Lord; and he passed into the realm of false imagination. Instead of setting his imagination upon God and serving Him in obedience and meekness, he fixed his imagination upon himself, envied the Son of God, who was more beautiful and mighty than he; he looked upon the created world and perceived its fiery foundation. Then he fancied that he also could become a God, and rule over all things by the power of fire, that he could become the
Fire-Lord of a fiery Kingdom; and that, by reshaping his own thoughts, he could destroy what God had made and replace it by something altogether new. The Fire-ground burned within him and sought to be manifested, and the darkness in him sought to become creative.

Thereupon Lucifer opened his centre of nature. And behold, his Light was quenched. The beautiful star was wholly darkened. The foundation of Hell, hidden from all eternity, was now revealed. He aroused in himself Hell and the principle of the Wrath of God,—these three first natural properties that now have dominion over him, plunging him in perpetual torment, in that he is ever climbing up to destroy the Heart of God, but, as often as he reaches the height, he is plunged back into the deepest abyss. ("He that exalteth himself shall be abased!").

Exhaustive knowledge of the Temptation and Fall in the angelic world is impossible for us, because the angelic world and that potent angelic prince, whom we firmly renounce in Christian Baptism, is too high for our comprehension, particularly as we can form but a very imperfect conception of the power that was bestowed upon him by the Creator. But the general metaphysic which is here necessary is accurately given in Boehme's doctrine of the two centres. It might seem incredibly absurd that a creature could desire to undertake a conflict against its Creator, and to enter upon an utterly hopeless opposition. But if we reflect upon all the absurdities, all the hopeless revolts against God and His world-order, and all the illusions of possible victory to which highly-gifted human spirits so often abandon themselves, we cannot deem it incredible that a corresponding event, on a higher scale, should have taken place in the angelic world. "Lucifer," says Boehme, "knew well that he himself was not God, and he foresaw the judgement of God; but he had no sensible perception of it, but only a bare [theoretical] knowledge; his sensible perception was only of the Fire-ground that burned within him and incited him to wish something altogether new, to uplift himself above all kingdoms and above the whole Deity." (Mysterium Magnum, ix. 9; Aurora, xiv).

Perhaps we may add, too, that the angels stand in a derived Eternity and that thus the illusions lay ready to Satan's mind, when the Fire-principle tempted him, that
he was not created—the illusion that a primitive eternity was also his possession; and that so, he might enter, as a veritable God, an Anti-God, into conflict with the Most High. This is a feature, at all events, which the great poets have ascribed to Lucifer. Thus, for instance, in Byron's Cain Lucifer says that "he does not believe that God created him," whereupon he proceeds to question and argue away all moral attributes in God and grants validity only to the conception of might. Another trait which the poets have assigned to Lucifer is his confidence in his own immortality, his belief that God cannot annihilate him; and that thus he may enter into conflict with God with impunity. In Milton's poem, Satan says: "What tho' the field be lost? All is not lost... . since, by fate, the strength of gods and this empyreal [i.e., fiery] substance cannot fail!"

It is the consciousness of being spirits—for to be a spirit is to be immortal, imperishable, and unquenchable; that emboldens the devil and the demons in their defiance. In their spiritual consciousness, by which they are certainly in kinship with God, they delude themselves into the idea that an absolute autonomy belongs to them, and so they utterly reject God's rule. They forget entirely that they are not self existent, that they do not possess the attribute of aseity, that their Eternity is not primitive but derived; and that the final meaning of their unquestioned deathlessness is merely this—"their Fire is not quenched."

According to the view that predominates in Boehme, the reality of evil must be traced back exclusively to the free-will and choice of the creature. He insists again and again that the idea that it was impossible for Lucifer to have resisted temptation is inadmissible. Lucifer, like the other Throne-angels, had the light of the Majesty of God before him. If he had centred his imagination upon this, he would have continued to be an angel. But he withdrew himself from the Love, and passed into the wrath of God. It is true that God foresaw his fall, but He was unable to prevent it. True also that the realm of imagination had existed from all eternity, and that it provided him with the opportunity of falling. It was, nevertheless, absolutely and entirely of his own free-will, and without constraint, that Lucifer entered the realm of false imagination. The pervading thought in
Boehme's doctrine of the *Election of Grace* is that the intelligent creature, whether angel or man, possesses in itself the centre in which good and evil originate. It is false to suppose that it is not the will of God to admit all to heaven; it is His will that all should be helped to enter. But every being arouses Heaven or Hell within itself. What thou stirrest up within thee, whether it be Fire or Light, is accepted by its like, either by the Fire of the Wrath of God, or by the heavenly Light-Fire of Love. If one will be a devil, the wrath of God will have him; if one will be an angel, God chooses him to be an angel. If a man has entered into wickedness and selfishness, the wrath of God judicially confirms him in his choice. If a man has entered into the word of the Covenant, says Boehme, God confirms him to be a child of Heaven.

It follows from this view that what has been called the Mystery of Evil, or the Sinful Fall, is one with the Mystery of Freedom of Choice. No other reply than this can be given to the question why Lucifer placed himself in hostility to the Will of God. Because he willed it so, because he willed to *centre in himself*. The same reply must be given when the question of Adam's Fall is proposed. No other reason for this can be assigned except the will itself; it cannot be supposed that outside the will some other cause is to be sought, which is hidden only from us, which we do not know, but which we may perhaps discover some day. The fact is that there is absolutely no other cause. Shakespeare felt this when he made Julius Caesar say: "The cause is in my will" (Act ii, Sc. 2), and placed the same reply in the mouth of Shylock in the *Merchant of Venice*. For, if the cause were outside the will, a will-coercing cause, then Will would not be will, would not be the power to initiate a new beginning—not a primal and creative power.

At the outset, the electing will lies in indifference; it has not yet characterized itself, is impelled by no motive. It is certainly necessary that various motives should present themselves to the will, in order that it may choose from amongst them. Here, now, the great significance of fancy or *Imagination* displays itself. Every motive presents itself to the electing will as a phantasmal image of the good, be it a real good or only an apparent good. The image on which the free-will dwells with pleasure assumes more and more magic of colouring,
grows definitely into shape, and becomes magically influential. And when, at length, the free creature wholly fixes his desire upon it, surrenders himself to it, and takes it to himself, this image becomes a fructifying and impelling power for life or death. If the will has chosen, it is no longer free. The motive for Lucifer was the phantasmal image of his own greatness and glory, and of the novelty which he desired that his revolution should introduce into God's world.

We have said that this is Boehme's fundamental teaching, for it is undeniable that isolated expressions are to be found which suggest that evil could not fail to become actual. These utterances agree with Boehme's conviction of the necessity of contrasts for the manifestation of life, wherein, as we have already pointed out, he sometimes fails to distinguish between contrast and contradiction, between possibility and reality. But if we dismiss from our regard these inconsistencies (which must be viewed as partly casual expressions), and keep to Boehme's distinctly-marked and general meaning and intention, we believe that no philosopher has given a truer and more profound explanation of evil. Evil is, as is well known, the weakest point in philosophical systems; it is, indeed, the mark of their imperfection. The majority of philosophical systems regard evil and sin as necessarily attached to finiteness—a view by which either God is made the origin of evil, or else evil is abolished as evil, and, from a higher standpoint, is resolved into deficiency and mere semblance. According to Boehme's doctrine, rightly understood and cleared from its obscurities, it is not the reality of evil, but simply its possibility which is associated with finiteness and with the conception of a free creature. According to Boehme, evil is not a semblance, but an actual abnormality which has entered the creation; for it is the result of a real separation, an actual rending asunder from unity and wholeness; it depends upon the perversion of the originally moral and good powers, a perverted relation of supremacy and subordination; depends upon the fact that the creature is in antagonism to God, and posits itself as a false centre, which seeks to gather about itself, both from within and from without, a multiplicity of forces, which constitute its sphere of power.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the disturbances it
occasions, evil continues, in the main, to be powerless; continues to be only an effort which never achieves its purpose; continues to be merely subjective, and can never bring itself into objectivity. The devil, notwithstanding all his disturbing power, is still only the slave of God; is compelled in the Divine economy to be the instrument of God, and, in self despite, to contribute to His Glory.

When Satan, by his self-kindling, loses his normal relation to God, he drags down with him in his Fall his subordinate Nature-world, which has its centre in this earth. The then-existing Natural World was, according to Boehme, thin and subtile, and there was a magical connection between Spirit and Nature. Spirit is the unity of Nature, the uniting dynamic centre of the natural forces; and when a disturbance, an explosion so to speak, takes place at the centre, it is transmitted throughout the whole circle. There now occurs in Nature an appalling turba! The bond of the forces is broken; and, instead of harmoniously co-operating, every force is now left to itself, and seeks to express itself in a particularistic fashion. Thus arises a state of Chaos, which bears the fundamental stamp of the Wrath of God, with fierce consuming fire, materialization, darkness, and death.

But it is not the Will of God that confusion should be the final condition; He, therefore, introduces a reaction. God submerges the whole under water (Genesis i. 2, 7, 9) and begins a new creation. This forms the subject-matter of the Mosaic history of Creation, which describes the new creation of the earth. The various stages in the advancing history of Creation, the Days of Creation, are to be interpreted as the stages of a progressive struggle between God and the Powers of Darkness, whereby the fettered Light-forces are in a measure restored to their former relation, until the whole work culminates in Man. It is now that what we call Time (i.e., successively-advancing teleology) makes its appearance. According to Boehme, Time begins at the Fall of Lucifer, with the Divine reaction that was then induced. The fundamental meaning of Time is the struggle of the Light against the Darkness, both in the spiritual and physical world, until the perfect triumph of the Light. Nevertheless, other normal relations of Time and Space would have arisen if Lucifer, and subsequently
Adam, had not fallen. Time would then have been the form for a rhythmic, entirely beneficent evolution, and Space the form for corporeal relations, conditioned, strictly and throughout, by idea and spirit.

If we ask whether Boehme's interpretation of the Mosaic history of Creation has any foundation in Holy Scripture, it must be on the understanding that we only expect to find in Scripture isolated and obscure suggestions upon this subject. If, with some Hebrew scholars, we ventured to read in Gen. i. 1-2 : "In the beginning God had created the heaven and the earth, but the earth had become waste and void (Tohu Bohu), and darkness was upon the face of the deep," the matter would be as good as settled. For it would then be the distinct teaching of Revelation, that a great change had taken place upon the earth, a catastrophe, which would naturally direct the mind to a catastrophe in the spiritual world, as a presupposition of that in the natural world. But we dare not trust so disputed a rendering, and, therefore, we abide by the old : "The earth was waste and void" (Tohu Bohu). The most accurate interpretation, then, seems certainly to be that which is the general one in theology; that the earth had been, from the very first, in an unformed condition, had been a chaotic mass of primordial matter, which, in itself, was spiritless, and needed ' to receive life from the Spirit; and that the Creator, who willed to develop His work from the imperfect to the perfect, and whose Spirit brooded over the face of the waters, fashioned and finished this formless matter through a series of creative periods, until it had attained the perfection for which it was destined. On this interpretation, the only question is that of a primal creation, which proceeds quite normally.

A closer consideration of the remarkable second verse in the Bible : "And the earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep," may, however, excite doubt as to the correctness of this view. Tohu Bohu, 3-and it is obvious that this mere verbal sound contains something sinister and terrible; means not simply the imperfect and the as yet undeveloped chaos; but, when this expression occurs in other parts of Holy Scripture, it includes the idea of the disturbance and destruction of a previously orderly condition, with the implied notion of the wrath and punitive righteousness of
God (Isa. xxxiv. 11; Jer. iv. 23). It is by no means unjustifiable to ask: Can Tohu Bohu be an immediate product of creative activity? Is it not, on the contrary, an expression showing that a turba has entered in? If it is an immediate product of creative activity, why, then, is not Tohu Bohu reckoned among the creative days themselves as the work of the first day? Why do we not read: "And God said, Let the earth be waste and void; let there be Tohu Bohu"? But to this is added the sentence of Scripture: "There was darkness over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters." Again, then, we must ask: Is the darkness an immediate product of the creative activity? To assert this is equally discordant with Scripture. Darkness, in Scripture, signifies Evil. It makes its appearance with sin, and the physical darkness is the counterpart of the ethical. In so far as darkness, in Scripture, is traced back to God it is as a manifestation of the wrath of God. The judgement day is depicted in the Bible as a dark day. Darkness and Death, Darkness and Hell are closely cognate conceptions. Nor do we read: "God said, Let there be darkness!" but "God said, Fiat Lux, Let there be Light! and He divided the light from the darkness." That God divided the Light from the Darkness implies that both, the Light and the Darkness, are realities; for only realities can be divided. It is a great and an unscriptural error to treat the Darkness as a mere deficiency, an absence of Light. According to Scripture, Light and Darkness are contradictory principles, conflicting forces; Darkness is the power which is hostile to Light. We also read that God called the Light good, while He did not say that the Darkness was good (Gen. i. 4); That God divided the Light from the Darkness shows that the Light must have been imprisoned in the Darkness, and overwhelmed by it; and we recollect that the Apostle says, with a manifest allusion to the history of Creation: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, hath shined in our hearts" (2 Cor. iv. 6). The creative days advance from light to light, until at length Paradise appears as a home of light, destined for the Light-creature, who is made in the image of God, viz., Man. The more attentively we study the darkness, the Tohu Bohu, the "deep," which betokens a bottomless abyss, and the "waters," which seem to denote the troubled agitation, or turba, in which the earth was placed, the more are we strengthened in the conviction that all this cannot have belonged to God's
original creative order; but that it represents a state in which the earth, created of God became the scene of a catastrophe, a revolt in the spiritual world, which had transplanted itself to nature as an appalling tempest in the morning of time. (Cp. also John i, 5; iii, 19).

If we ask what Natural Science teaches us with regard to the history of the earth's development, we find it unanimously stated that the fashioning of the earth did not proceed by the path of peacefully progressive evolution, but by that of the most violent and tempestuous revolutions, as a contest between creation and confusion, between the powers of life and death. A power of Death, bordering on the incredible, exercised a widely-extended dominion in the antediluvian world. We hear of destroyed fauna and flora, perished worlds of plants and animals; multitudinous swarms of living creatures, which made their appearance contemporaneously with the formation of the mountains, surged forward on land and in the waters, but suddenly met their death, some by floods and deluges, some by precipitated masses of the self shaping mountains by which they were buried, others by torrents of fire that burst forth with fury from the volcanoes; all of which reminds us irresistibly of Boehme's three first Natural Properties, his Negative Ternary, which is here conspicuous in its utmost ferocity. And a similar experience repeats itself in subsequent geological periods, an emerging world of living creatures, animals, and plants, and the whole soon transformed into a huge field of death, with desolation and silence and the doom of petrifaction.

We will not venture further into these dreary regions, where, for naturalists themselves, there is a chaos of uncertainty and doubt amid an infinity of hypotheses. We are well aware that many of the hypotheses of natural science have already experienced, and that others are destined to experience the same fate as the destroyed and buried fauna and flora. Accordingly, we hold fast simply to that which is now (c. 1881) generally acknowledged. No one denies that in the antediluvian world death ruled as a destructive and disturbing power, or that the animal world was full of horrible monstrosities. a And now we ask, Is this in character with a creative history that unrolled itself along normal lines? Can this be in harmony with that God whose essence is Holiness, Wisdom,
and Love; who has Omnipotence as His instrument? Must true creation not rather be founded on the condition of a nature which comes from a God who is a Lover of Life; while these revolutions would force us to the conclusion that He takes delight in death and in the ruin of the creation? It is quite inadequate to seek to explain this by saying, that God, in His creative work, advances from the less perfect to the more perfect; that the Creator Himself was obliged to undertake certain crude and tentative experiments, before the perfect could appear; that these races of living creatures, so quickly and suddenly destroyed, these perished fauna and flora are the postulate for that which was intended to be permanent; and that, without this postulate, the latter could not have come into being. This assertion, that a life that was to be permanent could not arise without the postulate of Death, is precisely the assertion which requires proof. No necessity for this, no definite creative purpose therein has been even faintly indicated, or can be indicated. We ask: Why, then, was God unable to allow His creatures to advance in calmly progressive evolution? Whence the necessity for all this destructive revolution? We can readily understand that God, whose Will it is that the Creation should develop itself and in a certain sense produce itself, suffers the Creation to advance from the imperfect to the perfect. But monstrosities, violent and destructive death, reciprocal murder and poisoning are not simply imperfection, not merely contrast, but contradiction of life; they constitute a hostile principle within Nature itself. We who believe in God and Creation, and acknowledge a Divine revelation in the Mosaic record of creation, cannot, and dare not, deduce all this confusion, all these graves, and all this murder from God. No, the disturbance must have originated in the Creation itself, in the free creation, in the created spirit-world. Only in spirit can Evil originate; and who will undertake to prove that spirit cannot also introduce disturbing energies into nature, seeing that nature is the extended body of spirit?
We cannot but hold that God established His Creation upon a double possibility—the possibility of a sinless, peaceful, harmonious evolution; and an evolution through sin and death. And the creation of the earth must be apprehended as a progressive manifestation of the Divine Will during its contest with an arresting and obstructing principle, which arresting and obstructing principle must itself be a Will. The World which thus comes into being must needs bear the stamp and signature of conflict, must possess, as Boehme says, the stamp of Love and Wrath; it must be a mixture of Glory and Terror. And the chief mystery, which also confronts us elsewhere in world-history, is the wide scope, the immense range that God has conceded to the power of the creature; for it sometimes appears to our feeble vision as if God had endowed His creatures with an overmeasure of freedom and independence. To this we can only, as Christians, reply, that it was the will of God that there should be a kingdom of freedom and love, and that this should be effected along the path of freedom. God was, accordingly, compelled, so to speak, to agree to the double possibility, to consent to all the misuses of freedom—knowing that, through the whole process, He would bring to victory the kingdom of light and love, because, in relation to the misuse of freedom, Omnipotence reserved to itself its "Thus far, and no farther?"

This interpretation of the Mosaic history of Creation as a history of renovation and new creation is met with prior to Jacob Boehme, although it is of course far from being universal. Thus we find it in England, among the Anglo-Saxons. It is said in a document of King Edgar, in the tenth century, that, because God had banished the angels from the earth after their fall, which had reduced the earth to chaos, He has appointed kings, in order that righteousness may reign. And in the seventh century, the celebrated Anglo-Saxon poet Caedmon (of Whitby), begins his scriptural poem by describing the earth as having become formless and void, in consequence of the fall of the angels. He must here have had some tradition to guide him; and this doctrine cannot have been so strange to the Church as many suppose. But in Jacob Boehme we find it stated with the greatest profundity and force, for the precise reason that in him it forms part of a rigorously coherent system. Through him and after him it has gained no small circulation, not only among theologians, but
also among philosophers and naturalists.

1 *Lucifer* (light-bringer) was the name given by the Romans to Venus, brightest of the stars. It occurs in Isaiah, ch. xiv. 12 of the Latin Bible (see our A.V.), which probably refers to the doom of Babylon and her king. The passage was interpreted to refer to the fall of the rebel angels and their prince, and so, strangely enough, the name became a general one for the devil, recalling his unfallen brightness.

2 J.B. uses *turba* (lit. crowd, cp. disturb) to express the resulting state of things, when the *principle* of Fire or Wrath has broken loose from its proper, harmony as foundation of Light and Love, so as to create widespread confusion, suffering, and disaster.

3 Modern scholars (see Moffat in Gen. and Jer.) explain the Hebrew *bohu* as a vacuum emptiness, and *tohu* as much the same, with an element of waste, i.e., confused matter, in the vacant void.

4 Darwin in a letter lamented that his contemplation of the predatory habits of animals, e.g. the cruelty of cats and of loathsome parasites like the ichneumon fly had much shaken his faith in the existence of a beneficent God and Creator. The conception of the fall of the rebel angels, as a true "myth" of some corruption of the evolutionary process at its source, appears to the present editor as a reasonable explanation of the ugliness, cruelty, and waste in nature.

CHAPTER III

ADAM AND HIS FALL—THE PRESENT WORLD—
THE THREE PRINCIPLES IN MAN AND NATURE—COSMIC
SIGNIFICANCE OF MAN AND CHRIST

MAN is a *microcosm*, a little world, an epitome of the
great universe. Man is created in the image of God, and consists of three principles, soul, spirit, and body. The soul descends from the dark fire-principle, and points back to the Father as the Bearer or Conveyer of this principle. The spirit descends from the light principle, and points back to the Son. The body descends from this world of the senses, which is the third principle. Boehme also accepts this third principle in another sense, viz., as the union of Fire and Light in God, which is fashioned by the Holy Spirit, and perfected in the Corporeity (or Essentiality) of God, of His Uncreated Heaven. But he most frequently means by the third principle the created, visible, physical world, which is destined to become a copy of the Heavenly Glory of God. Occasionally, also, he interprets the whole man from the standpoint of the soul. The soul is tripartite, although there are not three souls, but only one soul. The soul, in its strictest and most literal sense, is the Man himself, the individual, the contrast to spirit as the universal. The soul, viewed apart from the spirit, is darkness and fire, natural "Self-ness." In the soul is the glowing "Triangle," the "Worm," the restlessness of the Ego, with its passions and lusts and its dark torture-chamber. But there is also in the soul a yearning after the light, after the "idea," or God. The soul has an aptitude or native turn for the idea, and is destined to receive into itself the idea and God. So far the soul is spirit, angelic. When the soul, which is endowed with free-will, sets its desire and imagination upon the Light, and wholly surrenders itself to it, it is truly spiritual. The austere and savage elements are appeased and tranquillized by the Light; the Ego sacrifices itself in love, and the soul is blessed. Truth or falseness of spirituality depends upon truth or falseness of imagination. For Boehme, spirit and idea, spirit and eye, spirit and vision, are inseparable. So also are spirit and word, spirit and voice. Dumb spirits are half dead spirits. The body of man is destined to become the temple of the spirit, the spirit's instrument for its activity in the external world. In so far as the soul is the principle of corporeity, it is designated as the "rational soul in the bestial life" or as the "bestial soul." (Mysterium Magnum, xv. 15).

Thus, there are three Principles in Man, and three Kingdoms. "When thou seest a man stand before thee, thou mayest say, 'Here stand now the three worlds!'" -the dark
Fire-World, the heavenly Light-World, and this World of the Senses. With the soul, man stands in the abyss of Hell; with the spirit, he reaches upward into Heaven; and in his body he has an extract of this whole world of the senses. To whichever of these three worlds thou dost surrender thyself, this comes to rule in thee: and thou takest on (or dost receive) its properties. Take heed to thyself, therefore! for what we make of ourselves, that we are; what we awaken in us, that lives and moves in us." (Six Theosophic Points, viii. 21).

If we now return from this psychological analysis to the first man, Adam, whom God had fashioned out of the dust, into whom He had breathed the breath of life, and who had become a living soul, we learn how in him the three principles stood in temperature, i.e., in perfect concordance. Certainly, he had in himself the dark Fire principle, that principle which had become kindled in Lucifer, and for which Lucifer had sought to procure the supremacy; he had also the principle of the sense-world; but neither of these was independent. They were both, so to speak, quenched and illuminated by the Light-principle, and were in unqualified subordination to it. He had a clear apprehension alike of Divine, human, and natural things. He understood the speech of God and of the angels, just as he understood the language of nature, as is shown by the fact that he gave names to the creatures. He apprehended the sense-world in quite another manner than we do; for, to him, all the visible was illuminated by the invisible. By looking at animals, trees, and plants he could discern the figures (signatures) of their internal properties, and the outward did not reveal itself to him, as it does to us, in a false independence, but always in unity with the inward. (Signatura Rerum, vii. 2). His body had not the gross and coarse materiality of ours. It may rather be compared with the body of Christ after the Resurrection, when He passed through the closed doors. His dominion over nature was not mechanical, but magical. In this paradisiacal state, Adam knew nothing of time.

Since Adam's life was a disintegrable life, it was needful that he, like the angels, should be tempted and tried, in order that by the conquest of temptation he might acquire indissolubleness, imperishableness, and blessedness. It was a severe conflict; for all three
principles contended for mastery over him. Each of them sought to have dominion and to exercise government over him. The Heart of God desired to keep him in Paradise and to dwell in him, for it said, "This is My likeness and similitude!" Likewise, the kingdom of cruelty and darkness (the principle of Lucifer) sought to have him, for it said, "He is mine, and ha; issued forth out of my fountain-source, out of the eternal temper of darkness (out of the three first Natural Properties); I will be in him, he shall live under my dominion, I will display through him great and mighty power!" Finally, the kingdom of the World said, "He is mine, for he bears my likeness, lives in me, and I in him; he must obey me! I have all my members in him, and he in me; and I am stronger and greater than he. He shall be my steward, and shall display my strength and my marvels." (Three Principles, xi. 33).

Then Adam permitted himself to be excited by the devil into false lust, and set his desire and imagination upon the great world. He became foolishly fond of the world of the senses and its glory. The World and the spirit of the World grew mighty in him. And as he became foolishly fond of the earthly visions, he set himself upon an evil course. For he desired to ascertain how it was when the temperature was dissolved; how the properties, the wet and the dry, the hard and the soft, the bitter and sweet, tasted in their diversity from each other. He fell; and the temperature was dissolved. Then the Maiden, the heavenly Idea, departed from him. The Divine Image in him grew pale; and he became earthly.

The Fall of Adam, however, is very different from that of Lucifer. Lucifer placed himself in direct opposition and hostility to God, man only in indirect. Man did not wish to oppose himself to God, he only wished for earthly enjoyments and possessions; but, in order to secure these, he certainly was compelled to yield to the devil and became disobedient to God. But, precisely because his opposition to God was indirect, he can be saved. In comparison with Lucifer, the sinful fall of man is simply an indecision; and we note here the prelude of that indecision which is a peculiar characteristic of man, whether we study the history of the world or of the individual. Man's relation to God and to the devil is that of indecision; for man is inclined to serve two
masters. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." Certainly, he inevitably ends by wholly surrendering himself either to the Light or to the Darkness. But no man goes to Hell in a straight and vertical line. He is attracted on two sides; but the tendency towards hell or towards heaven becomes increasingly predominant.

And now for the first time, after all our discussion on themes that lie beyond the region of experience, we have reached this present world, of which we have experimental knowledge, this world with men and women, with sin and death and all kinds of miseries, but the world also into which Christ has come to redeem us. Boehme, in harmony with the Apostle (Romans viii), teaches that the creature and the creation were subjected to the bondage of corruption, and sigh after redemption; and that this is a consequence of the Fall both of Lucifer and of Adam. By the dissolution of temperature, Nature has become materialized. The physical world has assumed the character of the gross, coarse, and material, the hard and impenetrable; and it has assumed too the character of the fluid and volatile, of that which evaporates and vanishes like smoke; and this contrast has not been brought into actual harmony. The four elements, Fire, Air, Water, and Earth, which, previous to the Fall, were only one element, appearing only in harmonious contrasts, now stand against one another in painfully eager desire. In anxious desire to return to unity, they are yet compelled to fight with each other in an empty, resultless circle; while, at the same time, God sustains them by a powerful bond to which they are subjected—by natural law. Everything in this earthly nature is exposed to great changefulness. Now there are storms of rain and snow, now there is dead calm; it is hot, and again cold; and nothing is permanent.

"The whole of Nature," writes Boehme, "is pervaded by anguish, a birth-pang, a death-pang, an agony of silent expectation, and everywhere thou dost find thyself in a world of unreconciled contrasts. Throughout all nature runs a discord between life and death, fire and light. We behold at once the manifestation of the wrath of God and of the love of God. Thou dost behold monstrous and desolate rocks and stones, which testify to the power of death and darkness and the might of the kingdom of death; but thou seest also noble and precious stones,
carbuncles, rubies, and emeralds, which cannot but have descended from the kingdom of Light. Thou beholdest in the vegetable world curse and corruption, but dost also behold the power of blessing which brings forth the most beautiful verdure and the most delicious fruits. In the animal world thou seest venomous and savage animals; seest also useless fantastic beasts, which the nature-spirit has fashioned out of the kingdom of phantasy, monkeys and strange birds which do nought else but torment and vex other creatures; but thou seest also friendly, tame, and useful animals." (Three Principles).1

When simple men regard this nature subjected to vanity, they say:

"All this has God created out of nothing, the one thing with the other!"

But they know not what occurred before all this came into being.

What has been said of nature repeats itself in the world of man.

Man has sunk, through sin, into a false dependence upon nature, and the human body has become materialized. It is not a willingly obedient instrument, but is, in many respects, a burden, which occasions us sufferings and troubles. With this immersion in nature and dependence upon natural instincts is closely connected the fact that the animal world, in a certain sense, projects itself, so to speak, into the human world. For, by Adam's most lamentable Fall, man has become the property of the nature-spirit and has acquired a tendency towards the bestial, which presents a glaring contrast to the dignity for which he was designed. Every man has, as it were, an animal in his life, a wolf, fox, serpent, toad, ape, or vain peacock. There are also men who have within them some good and gentle animal or other. The animal form does not manifest itself in their body, but is figured in their disposition. Boehme can here appeal to Holy Scripture, inasmuch as Christ calls Herod a fox, and the Pharisees vipers; the prophet Daniel and John (in the Apocalypse) call the tyrants and the kingdoms of this world by the names of wild animals, bears and leopards. They thus
suggest to us that, in this world, the human is strongly tainted with the bestial, and, indeed, that it sometimes totally assumes the character of bestiality, as will be particularly seen in the times of the Antichrist, when the beast will arise from the sea and the abyss. But we are all to

1 The same principle appears to underlie the delightful herbal discourse of Friar Lawrence in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

Within the infant mind of this weak flower
Poison has residence and medicine power;
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part,
Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
Two such opposed foes encamp them still
In men as well as herbs, grace and rude will.

Compare also the homoeopathic use of deadly poisons, in very minute quantities, as drugs potent to heal.

take heed lest the beast-image in us (the greedy hound, the crafty fox, the lustful goat, the deceitful cat, the venomous toad, the foolish monkey, etc.) gain the mastery and wholly quench the human in us b; and are to make it our aim that the beast-image may be brought to vanish entirely in penitence and conversion, and may thus give place to the Divine image, the maiden wisdom.

For we are to give good attention to this fact, that all three principles are active in this world, and that what every man is and how it will fare with him in the life to come depends upon which of the three principles it is that has dominion over him. The majority of men are ruled by the third principle, by this phenomenal world, which wholly engrosses their ambition, and in which they live for their daily provision, for enjoyments and luxuries, honour and distinction. Some devote themselves to worldly arts, and sciences, and politics, and are enabled hereby to win great power, reputation, and celebrity. Still, this great world is, in comparison with the heavenly light-world which is behind it and shines into it, only like vapour and mist. Other men have entirely surrendered themselves to the dark Fire principle; they live in arrogance, envy, and evil scheming, and some of them
aspire to become tyrants, who exercise a fire-government. Others again, but by far the fewest, stand in the Light principle. For although man, by the sinful Fall, lost communion with the Light, there is still in the human heart a yearning for the Light, a hunger and thirst after the Living God. The law is written upon man's heart, and there are pagans who have striven to live in purity (Aurora, 20, 22, 23). Boehme has conceptions of heathenism which are far higher than those current in his time. Mythology is not to be unceremoniously regarded as the work of the devil, as many regard it who incessantly say "Devil! devil!" and know neither what God nor devil is (Mysterium Magnum). It is true that the heathen worship the powers of nature and adore natural properties, fragments of the Glory of God, since they forget God Himself; but when they are animated by strong faith, God sometimes speaks to them through nature.

As Time began with the dissolution of Temperature, so must it end with its restoration. Consequently, the essential importance of history is that it is a history of Redemption. That it is the will of God to redeem and regenerate the world was manifested immediately after the Fall in the promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head!" (Genesis iii. 15). It was manifested in the covenants with Abraham and Moses; and by the fact that "God spoke at sundry times and in divers manners by the prophets." Moreover, a succession of children of God and of the Light passed through time from the beginning, and had its contrast in that succession of children of the world which began with Cain. But when the fulness of the times had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman. In Christ, the Word which was in the world from the beginning and which spoke to Adam and Eve concerning that Bruiser of the Serpent who was to come, has become man. The Lord has entered into the form of a servant, whereat all the angels marvel; and this is the greatest miracle that has happened from all eternity; for it is against Nature: it must then indeed be Love. (Three Principles, xviii. 43).

Boehme's view of the world is thus conditioned by the sinful Fall. His pessimism and optimism depend upon this contrast. We must particularly emphasize his conception of man's lofty destiny and of man's significance, not
only for the earth, but for the universe, for the whole creation. For Boehme, man is the central creature in God's world, the all-concluding creature, at whose advent the whole creative work first reached its goal; the being who ideally and in design is the first, although in the order of execution he comes last. It can, therefore, be viewed as merely accidental when it appears from some isolated passages as if it were Boehme's opinion that man was created only to fill the place that had become void by the Fall of Lucifer. Boehme's fundamental view is obviously that which is also found in other theosophists, especially in St. Martin and Baader, that man was destined to be the mediator between heaven and earth, between spirit and nature, the creature in whom, after the completion of the creative work, God might find His Sabbath rest, and into whom God might enter with His whole "fulness"; and in this way the conception of man points forward to the conception of the Incarnation. It is true that this exaltation of man was not yet firmly established in the first Adam; he was to be developed into it; it was possible for him to lose it—and he lost it! It is in consequence of this that the whole present world, not only the human world, but nature, which by the Fall of Man became again subject to corruption, reveals so painful a contrast to its true destiny. And man, when his eyes are opened to his actual state, cannot but view himself as a dethroned king, who by his fall has drawn his whole kingdom with him into misery, a king in exile. It is in Christ, the second Adam (I Cor. xv. 45), that man's dignity is first re-established, and this completely. For Boehme Jesus Christ has not simply an ethical, but a cosmical significance; Christ is not only the Head of the human race, but of the whole creation, by whom and for whom all things are created, that in Him they may all be gathered together into one; to whom also the angelic world is made subject (so, too, St. Paul, see Col. i.; Eph. i.; also Heb. i.). By Him not only the human world but nature also is to be redeemed; for, through Him, at His second coming, shall arise new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Peter iii. 13).

Boehme represents Christ primarily as the Atoner and Redeemer, whose coming is occasioned by sin, for he lives and breathes in the Reformation-period consciousness of sin and grace. But his conception of Christ's cosmical significance, which is his all-pervading postulate,
leads necessarily to the theory that, even if sin had not occurred, Christ would yet have come, not indeed as the Saviour who was crucified, but as the Consummator of man and of the whole creation.

This ancient theological deduction, occurring as early as Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202), and more copiously developed by many of the mediaeval theologians, is repeated by no small number of modern thinkers, although many, with great inconsistency, as it seems to us, decline to accept it.

But how does this view of the cosmical significance of man and of Christ, which is also, in the main, the view of Scripture, and the recognition of which no theologian will be able to evade without doing violence to Scripture (Eph. i., Col. i)—how does this view stand against the so-called modern view of the world? Is it consistent with the Copernican system of our universe, which is said to be so dangerous to the Bible and to the Biblical view? With regard to Boehme, we remark that he is acquainted with, and accepts the theory of Copernicus (1473-1543). "The Sun," he says, "has its own royal place to itself, and does not go away from that place where it came to be at the first, although some suppose that it runs round about the globe in a day and a night. But this opinion is false" (Aurora, xxv. 65). He is not, however, in the slightest degree affected by this, as if it imperilled the Biblical view of man's central position in the universe. Nor is there really any contradiction between the Bible and the Copernican system.

But there is a contradiction between the Bible and a certain application which has been made of this system, a certain argument which some have fancied that they could construct upon it, but of which the system itself is absolutely innocent.

Because the Copernican System has given us a view of the world and opened to us the vista of an outward infinity, there are those who have supposed that they could prove, from the insignificance of the earth, the untenableness of the Biblical view. This earth, they say and with it also man and Christ, is only a vanishing point in this immensity; and it is highly immodest of man to ascribe such importance to himself and to the earth! The
revelation which confirms man in such immodesty cannot, therefore, be true.

The retort, however, is obvious, that this rationalistic-fantastic argument from the insignificance of the earth depends upon a confusion between the quantitative and the qualitative, between external and internal greatness, outward and inward infinity. The fact is overlooked that, although physical centrality does not belong to man and to the earth, it is very possible that metaphysical and invisible centrality may. In so far as we are capable of tracing the wisdom of God in Nature and Revelation, we return to the discovery that God preeminently reveals His glory, not in the outward infinity, but in the inward; that His path proceeds from outwardness to inwardness, from the externally great to the small and outwardly insignificant, which, in internal respects, is the fullest of meaning, and has the whole of God's fullness intensively concentrated in its apparent smallness. That which is despised by the world, by those who judge everything according to the outward appearance, that hath God chosen. (I Cor. i. 28). These words may also be applied to the earth, this Bethlehem of the universe. But, because man has sunk into false dependence upon nature, he is readily disposed to estimate the spiritual according to an external and material standard. He allows himself to be overawed by material mass, by that which is great to the man of the senses. He forgets that when the question arises as to what is the greatest in value, the world of thought and speech is infinitely higher than the silent and unconscious natural worlds; and hence he falls into self depreciation by reason of his false modesty and servility to nature. With great truth does St. Martins say to man: "Dost thou dare to measure thy being and thy destiny with thy bodily eye? Beware, lest this awe-inspiring, seductive and terrible spectacle of immeasurable space and the countless bodies that float in it crush thy thought, showing thee thy body as if wholly vanishing! Step into thy rights and separate thyself from these frightening but dumb existences by the superiority of thy thought and speech!"