



**AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE STUDY OF
JACOB BOEHME'S WRITINGS**

A. J. PENNY

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A. J. PENNY**

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Returning from this digression to the point chiefly in view — if the will is the factor of creaturely existence, all that exists having proceeded, by however many gradations, from the One Holy Will — two deductions appear to me to be inevitable. First, that no human creature can be a manifestation of the sum of all beings."

For even in numbers no one can have for its product a unit of equal value.

Secondly, since every derivative fraction of the all-comprehending One, such as angel or man, is energised by the will of God⁴⁸⁴ its will cannot be amenable to compulsion.

To this may be objected the common fact of one human will being subdued by the force of another, and so in our own minds may one form of volition conquer another; but this is not equivalent to destroying a faculty which, if such things can be brought into comparison without profanity, would be similar to the Holy Will of God annihilating the will of a human creature. Besides, even between man and man or man and woman, where the will seems to be conquered, we may be sure that the semblance, of selfinterest led to the surrender: after which a kind of hypnotism prolongs defeat. Again, the hopeless slavery of habit, which seems to hold people fast to follies and vices they abhor, is often taken for proof that human will is not free.

Might we not as well say that limbs have no power of movement because many are paralysed, and some can be made rigid and incapable of self-direction by mesmeric art?

I have no doubt that thousands of human beings are hypnotised by evil spirits to whose incitements they have yielded while yet free. In a very terrible degree proving the truth of the saying, "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey."⁴⁸⁵ To conclude, honesty obliges me to confess that since I firmly believe that after slow and tremendous discipline, at last the most violently and discordant fractional will is to be brought into divine harmony, it may fairly be said, why, then, need you doubt God's ability to do now at once what by more slowly working influences is to be affected? and if that is possible must not the Holy One design and promote the discords of sin?⁴⁸⁶

If nothing already alleged prevents this inference I can only answer — by what may seem a weak evasion — that as all created beings in the strictest sense inhabit the life of the supreme source of life, it is necessarily impossible for us, minutest atoms of that life, to conceive aright of its modes of action: that, therefore, the attitude of thought prescribed by the Father of Spirits must be our nearest approach to wisdom. Now the tenor of Scripture from beginning to end is deceptive if man has not freedom of choice.

⁴⁸⁴ in nature

⁴⁸⁵ Rom. 6: 16.

⁴⁸⁶ *Incarnation*, part 1, chap. 5, pars. 132, 133.

