

2015

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Recommended Citation

Spencer, Carole Dale (2015) "James Nayler and Jacob Boehme's "The Way to Christ";" *Quaker Religious Thought*. Vol. 125 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt/vol125/iss1/7>

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JAMES NAYLER AND JACOB BOEHME'S *THE WAY TO CHRIST*

CAROLE DALE SPENCER

One of the longest ongoing debates among Quaker historians on Quaker origins concerns the question of the influence of the sixteenth century German Lutheran speculative mystic, Jacob Boehme, on the formation of the early Quaker movement. The debate began as early as the nineteenth century in Robert Barclay's *The Inner Life of the Society of Friends*... (London, 1876) when he compared passages from Fox's Journal with similar extracts from Jacob Boehme (p. 213).

William Braithwaite's monumental *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (1912) brought the question to the fore by framing George Fox's famous "flaming sword" passage with the observation that "In reading it, we are reminded of the similar Familist and Boehmist teaching with respect to perfection." (p. 38) Rufus Jones explored the question in more depth in the same period and concluded that Boehme must be considered as a significant influence on the thought of George Fox:

...there are so many marks of influence apparent in the Journal that no careful student of both writers can doubt that there was some sort of influence, direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious. (Spiritual Reformers, 1914, p.220)

Like Braithwaite, Jones cited the famous example of Fox's vivid description of being taken up "in Spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God." And further that "creation was opened to me." (p. 27-8) Jones compared the passage to a similar account of an experience described by Boehme that has many of the same elements, most notably Fox's statement of a "Word of wisdom that opens all things," so that we can know "the hidden unity in the eternal being." (28) Boehme too, had "nature opened to him" and discovered their virtues and came to know "God's eternal being." (*Aurora*, 19:13) And for Fox and Boehme both, the sword with fire became icons of symbolic significance — a return to the pre-fall state of perfection.¹ The metaphor of the flaming sword was used by James Nayler, as well, in a passage to be examined further on.

In recent research on Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers, Ariel Hessayon, reassesses previous work, and concludes that early Quaker engagement with Boehme was more extensive than acknowledged. Although only a minority of Quakers may have been familiar with Boehme, those that were included some significant Quaker leaders (Hessayon 2005). Hessayon refers to Nayler only once in his article, but his study sparked my continuing interest in origins of the Quaker movement and the possibility of Boehme's incarnational Christology and perfectionism as one source of Nayler's theology, a theology so embodied that it prompted his ride into Bristol to 'set himself as a sign' in a reenactment of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Nayler's early Quaker theology is significant because he was the most articulate and prolific of the earliest Quaker apologetists. He was often tagged as the 'principle spokesman' or 'chief person' among the early Quakers until he became the center of a rift within the movement in 1656 shortly before the Bristol affair.

This paper will be a preliminary attempt to begin an exploration of possible connections between the writings of Jacob Boehme and James Nayler. A further analysis may help bring new light to the meaning of Nayler's Bristol ride, the formation of the early Quaker movement, the tensions that erupted by the late 1650s and its evolution towards greater uniformity after Nayler's so-called "fall."

Boehme's doctrines may have been the catalyst for Nayler's strange ride into Bristol, though such a case can never be finally determined, but I will cautiously propose that Boehme's *The Way to Christ* may have been the direct inspiration for much of his post-Bristol "confessional" writings. And in addition, that Nayler's connections to schismatics who were Boehme admirers and disciples may have contributed to the rejection of Boehme by Quakers in the 1670s.

Most of Quaker's seventeenth century opponents, ranging from the Puritan Richard Baxter, the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, to the radical Lodowick Muggleton, assumed Quakers were an English offshoot of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme. (Gibbons, p. 126) For example, in the 1660s Cambridge philosopher Henry More wrote a lengthy treatise examining Boehme's theology and chief errors, touching on the connection between Boehme, Familists and Quakers. (More, 1675-79)

Naturally anti-Quaker diatribes in the seventeenth century would relish linking Quaker genealogy with the heretical and "occult"

Boehme. Richard Baxter was perhaps the first to make explicit connections in 1654 identifying Nayler as “chief Leader” of the Quakers who “acted the part of Christ at Bristol” and noting his inclinations to Behmenism. (Nuttall, 3)

Other opponents found the same obscure “canting language”² and “newcoyn’d” Quaker phrases such as “the *Seed* in captivity³” in Boehme’s works, and suggested that Quakers learned their doctrines at “*Jacob Behmen’s* Theosophick School of *Pentecost*”⁴ (Thomas Comber, *Christianity No Enthusiasm*, 1678, p 43).⁵

What we know for certain is that between 1645 and 1662 most of Boehme’s writings and letters were translated from German and printed in English, during the exact period when the Quaker movement arose in England. Giles Calvert, one of the main publishers of Boehme’s works also printed most of the early Quaker pamphlets. Calvert was considered a trusted friend of Quakers and was known to attend Quaker meetings. Nayler considered him “exceedingly tender and loving towards us” (qtd in Hessayon, p. 202). Calvert was also the brother of Nayler’s closest female disciple, Martha Simmonds. That Nayler with his acute theological and literate mind would not have sampled this flood of new mystical literature coming from his own publisher seems unlikely.

Nayler may have been indebted to Boehme for many of his ideas, but he appropriated Boehme selectively and overlooked his cosmological, sophianic, and hermetical strands. (Boehme was exceedingly eclectic.) Quaker plain style simplified Boehme’s language, and eventually it became the preferred manner of writing and speaking over Boehme’s obscure and opaque style, and his rampant symbolism.

Boehme’s biblical and more orthodox perspectives found in *The Way to Christ* seem to correspond the closest to early Quaker Christology. Although B. J. Gibbons claims *The Way to Christ* is among the “least characteristic of Boehme’s writings,” (p. 123) I would regard it as the most fundamental, and the pivotal core of Boehme’s teaching.

Nayler was essentially a lay preacher, an itinerant evangelist who read Boehme through a seventeenth century English Puritan lens. He appropriated the biblical, apostolic, pietist, anabaptist strands in Boehme, and sifted out the hermetical, alchemical, and mythical aspects. Boehme was appropriated differently by all the groups that read him, from Oxford philosophers to Rosicrucians and Philadelphians. Nigel Smith seriously asks “Did anyone understand Boehme in seventeenth

century England?” (Hessayon and Apetrei, 2013, p. 98). Even today a contemporary scholar claims that “Boehme is simply one of the most difficult reads in the history of Christian Thought” (O’Regan, Cyril, 2001.)

Some Quakers considered Boehme to be divinely enlightened in much of his work, but naturally differed with his more Lutheran understanding on the matter of the sacraments. And yet, Boehme’s view of the inward light that mirrored Quaker views, challenged the authority of priest or church as the mediator between God and the individual person, and undermined the need for sacraments.

As Quakers established doctrinal uniformity in the later seventeenth century, reading Boehme or any non-Quaker writings was discouraged, yet many Quakers continued to read Boehme well into the eighteenth century, including John Woolman, who had a copy of Edward Taylor’s *Jacob Behmen’s Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded* (1691) in his library. William Law, the puritan Anglican who retreated for years to study Boehme, produced a volume called *Spirit of Prayer* (reprinted by Quaker Anthony Benezet in 1780), an interpretation of Boehme’s writings that was reproduced and widely read by eighteenth century Quakers. And even, John Wesley, despite borrowing some significant ideas from Robert Barclay, claimed that many expressions used by Barclay were taken from Boehme, such as “the holy birth, and the inward seed.” (Wesley’s Works, 1831, Vol. X. 179, 184)

The only research to date, that has suggested Nayler’s possible Behmenism is Geoffrey Nuttall’s 1954 article in which he labels Nayler a Familist, or at least one who shared their milieu. Henrik Niclaes was the Dutch founder of the Familists, also called Family of Love, a heterodox mystical movement that arose in Holland in the sixteenth century. In Nuttall’s earlier, now standard work, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1947) he had largely denied any Behmenist influences among Quakers, and challenged Rufus Jones’ theory of Quaker origins among the continental mystics. But in his 1954 article, Nuttall had second thoughts. He claimed Nayler was diverted from “Apostolic Christianity by Familist teaching. (p. 9) And the “high-flying Familist Christology and perfectionism” prompted his acting the part of Christ at Bristol. (p. 15-16) Nuttall further claimed that after Nayler’s arrest and torture and repudiation by Fox and other Quaker leaders, “he changed and enlarged his theology” (p. 16) bringing it nearer to “Apostolic Christianity.” Thus, while Nuttall does not connect Nayler directly with the Behmenists, his linking

of Nayler with a Familist milieu indicates significant contact with a heterodox group permeated by a reading of Boehme.

B. J. Gibbons, in a more recent 1996 study of Behmenism and its development in England, claims “the Behmenists seem to have been the authentic heirs of the Familist tradition.” (p. 11) The Familist tradition resurfaced in the proliferation of mystical thought in the Interregnum, which included the republication of Hendrik Niclaes’ works. (p. 103)⁶ Familism like Behmenism shares some central ideas found in Nayler’s works. For example, divine indwelling, in which they claimed that the ‘fiery deity of Christ mingles and mixes itself with our flesh,’ (Nuttall, 1954, 5) as well as hell, heaven, resurrection as present realities, and, a doctrine of perfection through divinization, “godded with god.”

Other themes strongly evidenced in Nayler which are also primary motifs in Boehme, include the duality of opposites, the metaphor of the seed, (especially the “two seeds”) and the word of wisdom. One of Nayler’s early pamphlets with the strongest echoes of Boehme on these themes is *A Discovery Of The Wisdom which is from Beneath, And The Wisdom which is from Above: Or, The Difference between the Two Seeds, The One after the Flesh, the other after the Spirit*, printed in 1653. The two seeds and the two wisdoms are both prominent themes in Boehme. The pamphlet begins with the image of the flaming sword which is equated with the experience and the path of true wisdom, the “Word of wisdom and power.”⁷ Nayler writes:

And the flaming sword is to this wisdom [the wisdom from the spirit] : therefore turn your minds within, and wait for a wisdom from above ; which once coming to hear the voice of Christ, it is raised from death to life; And then that Scripture is fulfilled, *The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live*. And this being once restored to life, is that which has fellowship with the Father and the Son; yea, it is one with them. (Works, Vol. 1, p. 44)

Common themes developed in both Boehme and Nayler, that can only be mentioned in this short paper are: the new birth, which is always a death and resurrection, (as in the above passage,) and which results in becoming one with God; an incarnational Christology, the doctrine of the inward light, the necessity of silent waiting, and opposition to war, to university-bred clergy, and to “stone churches” (equivalent to Quaker’s steeple houses).⁸ But the core, kernel of Boehme, as with

Nayler is “divine becoming” or perfection, the belief that divinity itself will become realized in humanity.

Boehme expressed perfection in this simple way: “When the self-will dies to self, it is free of sin.” (Boehme, *Way to Christ*, 1978). This statement reflects the essence of Nayler’s understanding; it is the fully yielded will, true yieldedness. One is perfect ‘in measure’ to the extent that one has died to self. And the extent that one has died to self is the extent that Christ is revealed in measure.

One explanation of Nayler’s motivation for his ride into Bristol may be found in a fundamental idea of Boehme’s in *De Signatura Rerum* (1651, Ellistone),⁹ summarized by Jones: (1914, p. 36) “that the outward and visible world is a parable and symbol of the spiritual world within, and that by a spiritual experience which carries the soul down to the inner, hidden, abysmal Centre, the secrets and mysteries of the outward creation may become revealed.”

Such a fusion between sign and signified may have been the catalyst for Nayler’s dramatic entry into Bristol as he identifies himself as “the man who set himself as a sign.” He felt called to make himself a sign that Christ lived within him and that he would be obedient even unto death like Christ. Was Nayler compelled to show how words, symbols, signs can become real in his entry into Bristol?

Boehme expressed his idea of “signatures” in *Signatura Rerum*: “God’s signature lies beneath all words, things, soul itself.” Each person exhibits innate, specific properties that proves this signature or sign. (Hessayon, 2013, p. 128) In behaving like Christ Nayler was bearing a “holy sign,” embodying a holy signature. The purpose and meaning of his ride was to signify the paradox of the ‘Word becoming flesh,’ the cosmic in the particular, the divine in the human, a prominent theme in Boehme’s writings. But Nayler took the idea of the sign further in a literal and dramatic fashion through an embodied form of public theology. Thus it is suggestive that Boehme’s idea of “real signatures” or body being a sign (as Nayler understood it), may have played a part in Nayler’s entry into Bristol in literal imitation of Christ.

Finally I will suggest that as Nayler wrestled with the devastating outcome of his entry in Bristol, not only his own suffering and his sense of betrayal by Fox and the Quakers, he turned to Boehme’s *The Way to Christ*,¹⁰ as a way to interpret and understand his experience. And the impact of Boehme’s thought, inspired his most elegant and

revered works. His post — Bristol tracts are much more personal than his earlier works, and focus on repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation in a way unique in Quaker writings.

But did Nayler actually read Boehme? Or are the similarities in thought merely serendipitous, ideas that were simply ‘in the air’? Could reading Boehme’s *The Way to Christ* have helped Nayler to process and interpret his experience at Bristol?

One fact of significance is that Nayler’s closest friend and ally, the wealthy merchant, Robert Rich (d. 1679), who supported Nayler throughout his ordeal, and in the remaining four years of his life, especially admired Boehme for his spiritual insights. Rich had an extensive library of mystical texts. He lists Boehme among the select circle of authors of books he recommended to others.¹¹ Rich and Nayler had a particularly close relationship, so the likelihood that they discussed Boehme’s ideas, and Rich passed on his books to Nayler seems highly probable. And thirdly, Nayler’s group of friends in addition to Rich, who remained loyal to his memory, John Perrot,¹² Ralph Fretwell, and Robert Bacon were all known readers of Boehme.¹³ (Nuttall, ‘The Last of James Nayler,’ 527-34, and Hessayon, ‘Jacob Boehme.’ 191.)

In 1674 an *Epistle to the Behmenists* by Ralph Fretwell was sent to the London Morning Meeting of ministers for publication. It was read and debated, and rejected as “not safe” for Friends to read, as it gave too much encouragement to Behmenists. Fretwell was living in Barbados where the schismatic Quaker mystics John Perrot and Robert Rich both emigrated. Did he feel sympathy with them? And did his appeal to the Behmenites represent a rapprochement? Could that be the real reason why his epistle was not published? The question of why the leadership censored Boehme continues to be debated.¹⁴ (Hessayon, *Early Quakers*, p. 191, and Introduction to Boehme, p. 89.)

One curious sidelight that is worth noting concerns one of Nayler’s followers, Dorcas Erbery, a member of his Bristol troupe, who claimed that Nayler had raised her from the dead (adding exponentially to his messianic image—especially with a name like Dorcas!)¹⁵ Dorcas was the daughter of the radical Welsh seeker, William Erbery, (1604-1654) an Oxford educated priest who had been ejected from his parish in the Church of England, and became an army chaplain during the civil wars. Dorcas’ mother, Mary Erbery, became a Quaker preacher, and Dorcas followed in her mother’s footsteps. A strong Boehme presence

is evident in William Erbery's mystical writings, though he only alludes to Boehme by name in one instance (Smith, p. 187). Nayler's relationship with William Erbery is not known, but he is the kind of uncompromising, non-conformist whose radical social principles would have great appeal to Nayler, and resonances with Nayler's writings are especially strong. It seems highly likely that through his daughter, Dorcas, he would have known Erbery, and become familiar with his writing, perhaps even looking to him as a mentor. It may be that Boehme's ideas were filtered through Erbery to Nayler. Erbery's grand theme, the indwelling Christ in the flesh, was also Nayler's. Both expressed an explicit incarnational eschatology. Erbery proclaims:

...Look upward and within at once, and a highway, the Way is found, Christ in us, God in our flesh. Wait here a while for that Spirit and power from on high to appear in us, walking in the Spirit of holiness, love, and peace; and at last,... we shall be lead forth out of this confusion and Babylon, wherein we yet are not clearly knowing Truth nor Error, Day nor Night; but in the evening there shall be light [Zech. 14:7] (Testimony, 17-18)

And again Erbery claims a union of God in the flesh, "to know the hypostasis or substance of the Son, is to know the Son in your self, that is, God even the Father, in our flesh as in his..." (*Testimony of William Erbery*, 1658, p. 107) Both Erbery and Nayler in their works seem to repeat this one key idea over and over again (also a circular theme in Boehme).

In Robert Rich's *Epistles*, William Erbery and Mary Erbery are among those listed by Rich (along with James Nayler) and Jacob Behmen and other radicals and mystics as "Friends to the Bridegroom" (*Love without Dissimulation*. P. 6) Rich also recommends a list of writers and writings to the recipients of his letters. Nigel Smith calls the list compiled by Robert Rich "an anatomy of the radical spiritualist milieu and its reading matter" (Smith, 17). Three Quaker works are included, Nayler's "Love to the Lost" (1656) and "Salutation to the Seed of God in all" (1655), and a tract by Perrot, along with Boehme and other continental mystical and English radicals such as the noted Behmenist, John Pordage. These were the "Friends of the Bridegroom," the "Church of the First-Born," which does not appear to be an actual church or sect, but may possibly represent a spiritual network, an inner church rather than external one, made up of those who had experienced the birth of Christ within.

Robert Rich was disowned by Quakers after the Bristol affair. He is the one who most publicly stands by Nayler as he is tortured, even to the degree of kissing his wounds. Perhaps the Quakers not quite willing to disown their most gifted and admired leader, considered by some as equal to Fox, instead disown Rich who became the scapegoat, as Rich laments, “my Brethren the Quakers sold me into Aegypt.” (Letter to Lady Vane, 1678).

Nayler's post-Bristol writings, are so eloquent they are considered prime evidence that Nayler has repented, and so he is tentatively accepted back. But most of the four years after Bristol were spent in prison, and none of his writings were published until George Whitehead finally, and perhaps courageously, does so in 1716, over 50 years after Nayler's death.¹⁶

In his post-Bristol “confessional” writings, Nayler displays his vulnerability and human frailty, aspects of self rarely found in early Quaker writings written after conviction. His public confession follows in style and substance Boehme's treatise ‘On True Resignation’ in *The Way to Christ*.¹⁷ in which he describes “giving way to the reasoning part” and “letting creatures into his affections” so that “His light He withdrew and His judgment took away.”¹⁸

The reality that the light can be lost, is rarely alluded to in early Quaker writings, but Nayler admits to this hard truth, that one can fall from Light back into the darkness of self. A passage from Boehme's, ‘On True Resignation’ again sheds light on Nayler's experience:

And when the willing spirit of the creature swings up with the rational light of reason into the *centrum*, as into the self, and enters into its own delusion, it once again leaves God's light. Now the devil finds an open door into it [the will] and a beautifully decorated house, a rational light, as a dwelling...¹⁹

Nayler admits that having “in a great measure lost my own Guide’ (IV, 262) his own arrogance has led him into the darkness, so that he has lost his condition.

Although he repents for bringing division into the ‘children of light’ (Boehme similarly uses ‘enlightened children of God’), Nayler never retracts his going forth as a sign the meaning of which continues to unfold for him as he reflects upon it:

As he now reflects in retrospect, the sign has a further apocalyptic meaning, that Christ ‘is come and coming’ to judge transgressions, to

judge the judges themselves, as well as a nation and a church that had lost its first love, a sin in which he includes himself. He seems to imply that he was a sign of repentance to all including his own self-delusions. The sign was his own necessary suffering. He confesses that ‘all the evil hath been from self.’²⁰

He repented for allowing his followers to worship his outward person (the creature), rather than the Christ within. His sign was pure, but when he allowed his followers (creatures) to exalt him, he succumbed to “adultery in his heart.”

When the self is fully emptied, (kenosis) then Christ is fully revealed, incarnated within (pleroma).

Nayler willingly followed the way of the suffering Christ, to embrace humiliation and become a fool for Christ. He did not simply reenact, in the sense of playing the part of Christ, but participated in the suffering and crucifixion of Christ, despised, rejected, and mocked by the world, just as Christ was, and to be made perfect by suffering, even to his own martyrdom as Boehme implies: “so that if it would so happen, he might forsake all the earthly, yes, even the external life, for the sake of sonship.”²¹

Just before his death a few years later in 1660, a chastened, humbled, and fully yielded James Nayler, poetically described ‘true resignation’ in what has become in the annals of Quaker history, one of the most powerful and moving testimonies to the spirit of holiness as true yieldedness, as a non-dual experience.²² It has become the piece for which he is most remembered, though not always understood at its deepest level. The piece was first published by Robert Rich, his most loyal follower, immediately after his death in 1660. It became known as his deathbed ‘testimony’ “There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things.”²³

In it he eloquently described perfection as a growing process of compassionate awareness, that transcends all pain, shame, and evil, a tranquility, equanimity and letting-be-ness, which comes through suffering and death of the egoic self, all strong echoes of Boehme.

One can only suggest when tracing influences, and in a time when citing sources was rarely done, how much of Boehme’s ideas filtered into the formation of the Quaker Movement. While it is true that many of the themes and motifs found in Nayler’s work can also be traced to other native mystical writers and Interregnum spiritualists

in the wide diffusion of radical ideas in that era, Boehme may be the wellspring for them all. Without pushing the evidence too far, I propose that Boehme is part of Nayler's genealogy, and thus formative in early Quaker theology. But when Nayler made divine indwelling too explicit, too literal, Quakers drew back from the full implications of an incarnation theology, a mystical theology of recapitulation of the manifesting divine, the apocalyptic, the erotic, the kenotic, and settled into a more mainstream, but still alternative Orthodoxy. Nuttall (following Henry More) describes it as an early struggle between the Apostolic and Familism, a tension that has in various forms continued throughout the evolution of Quakerism. The mystical, esoteric inner Christianity continues to vie with exoteric evangelical Protestantism in contemporary forms of Quakerism.

While this paper only provides a preliminary study, A more thorough examination of Nayler's writings will help explain why Boehme continues to be a figure of importance and influence within the contemporary Quaker movement, a figure in whom some contend, can be found the true roots of early Quaker mystical consciousness.

In the twentieth century, the two leading Quaker philosophers and historians, Rufus Jones and Howard Brinton, were both fascinated by Boehme, and published interpretations of his philosophy. In that tradition, Michael Birkel recently produced new translations of Boehme, published with Jeff Back, called *Genius of the transcendent: Mystical writings of Jacob Boehme* (2010). Some deep mystic insight in the writings of this Lutheran mystic in continual tension with post-reformation Orthodoxy informed James Nayler's writings, and reverberated within early Quakerism, that deep mystic insight continues to attract and intrigue many modern and postmodern Quakers.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The flaming sword was an image on Fox's seal, and a sword and fire on a bookplate image of Boehme's, though they are not identically represented.
- 2 Ralph Farmer, *The Great mysteries of Godliness and Ungodliness*, 1655, p. 75
- 3 John Faldo, XXI. *Divine (Whose Names are here-under affixed) Cleared* (1675), p. 25
- 4 Thomas Comber, *Christianity No Enthusiasm*, 1678, p 43.
- 5 See Hesseyon, "Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers," 2005, for a complete overview of all the early anti-Quaker literature linking Quakers to Behmenists. In Quaker responses to these diatribes we naturally find strong hostility to Boehme expressed in defense.
- 6 Giles Calvert was also instrumental in the revival of Nicolaes and Familists writings.
- 7 In addition one finds in Nayler as in Boehme, a strong validation of the feminine. Though he never writes of divine wisdom as Sophia, the divine feminine, as in Boehme,

- wisdom as a divine reality is common in Nayler's writings. For Nayler Sophia-wisdom is Christ.
- 8 Boehme's doctrine of the Trinity, which is far from Orthodox Lutheran would be a topic worth exploring in relation to charges that Quakers were anti-trinitarian.
 - 9 *Signatura rerum, or the signature of all things : shewing the sign, and signification of the severall forms and shapes in the creation ...* (London : Printed by John Maccock, for Gyles Calvert, 1651), trans. by John Ellistone.
 - 10 *The Way to Christ* was one of the earliest of Boehme's works to be translated into English in 1648 by John Sparrow.
 - 11 Robert Rich, *Love Without Dissimulation or, The Letter & Directions of Robert Rich to M. John Raynes, for the Distributing His Benevolence to the Seven Churches in London.* (London, 1667) 6, *Epistles of Robert Rich*, (London, 1680) 64.
 - 12 Although Nayler died prior to the 'hat controversy' his name was often linked to that later schism and to Perrot.
 - 13 Coincidentally Rich, Perrot, and Fretwell all moved to Barbados.
 - 14 Throughout the 18th century a tendency to narrow reading to the Bible and Quaker writings developed. Some Quaker ministers claimed to read nothing but the Bible.
 - 15 Nayler denied the claim, commenting that only God had the power of life and death.
 - 16 *A Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles, and Papers Written by James Nayler, Some of Which Were Never Before Printed: with an Impartial Relation of the Most Remarkable Transactions Relating to His Life*, published twenty-five years after the death of George Fox.
 - 17 Jacob Boehme, 'On True Resignation' in *The Way to Christ*, 114-136.
 - 18 'To the Life of God in All,' *Works*, Vol. IV, 261-2
 - 19 Boehme, 117
 - 20 Ibid, 264.
 - 21 Ibid, 135
 - 22 The term used for 'resignation' is the German word '*Gelassenheit*' which can be translated yieldedness, submission, resignation, releasing, and surrender.
 - 23 Whitehead, 1716, 696