

**MILTON AND JAKOB BOEHME.
A STUDY OF GERMAN
MYSTICISM IN SEVENTEENTH-
CENTURY ENGLAND**

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Milton and Jakob Boehme. A study of German mysticism in seventeenth-century England by
Margaret Lewis Bailey

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MARGARET LEWIS BAILEY

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BY

MARGARET LEWIS BAILEY

(A.B. Cornell University 1908; A.M. University of Illinois 1910)

THESIS

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE present study is the first of a series of monographs on Germanic literature and culture. As the title indicates, the plan of the series does not limit its scope to German literature, but includes also the literatures and civilizations of the peoples of kindred origin.

While literature is usually considered the most perfect expression of national genius, it is, after all, but a portion of that full, pulsating life of a people which manifests itself in the entirety of their civilization. To understand literature one must take into account not only the resolves and innermost strivings of the intellectual leaders of the time, but also the immediate and permanent effect of their work upon the life of the people. Nowhere does the close relationship between literature and culture present itself more clearly than in the great intellectual movements which weave, like the Earth Spirit in Faust, the living garment of Teutonic civilization. The present monograph is an attempt to trace one of these mighty though little noticed movements, which, starting in Germany during the seventeenth century, subsequently, by devious ways, returns to its source.

The science of literature should strive to comprehend and appreciate human life both present and past. Moreover, a general and live appreciation of literature is essential to progress in higher civilization. Or, as Carlyle has it, "to apprehend the beauty of poetry clearly and wholly to acquire and maintain a sense and heart that sees and worships it, is the perfection of all human culture."

America's joint heritage of English and German culture

would seem to make this country a particularly suitable one in which to study sympathetically and broadly, but without national bias, English and German literature in their multiple and complex relations. Certainly it is in this field of comparative literature that American scholarship may hope to develop independence and originality.

J. G.

PREFACE

THE following pages contain the dissertation offered for the doctorate at the University of Illinois in June, 1912, and the results of the work accomplished under the Illinois Traveling Research Fellowship, 1912-1913.

Through a study of the part played by Gottfried Arnold's *Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* in Goethe's intellectual life, my interest in mysticism and the Neoplatonic movement was aroused. I found that in the mysticism of Goethe I was considering only one slight manifestation of a tremendous world-power reaching far into all the spiritual realms open to the mind and heart of man. The conclusion seemed forced upon me, however, that the grave importance of the relation of the Neoplatonic movement to literature had been decidedly overlooked in our literary histories, both English and German. Especially did it seem incomprehensible that a mystic who had such ardent admirers and so pronounced a following as did Jakob Boehme, from the time of the first appearance of his writings down to the new edition that is even now being published, should have had practically no accredited influence on the literary life that mirrored the great spiritual movements rising about the time of his activity.

During my work in England, I found that the relationship of mysticism and literature had not been so unnoted as I had thought. I found Miss Spurgeon's illuminating chapter on "Law and the Mystics" in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (chap. xii, vol. ix), published in the autumn of 1912. Miss Spurgeon herself called my atten-

tion to her *Mysticism in English Literature* just as it was appearing in the spring of 1913, for which I wish here to thank her, as also for several very kindly suggestions. In the main, however, the growing interest in mysticism seems, as in the *Studies of Mystical Religion* by Rufus M. Jones, 1909, and *Mysticism* by Evelyn Underhill, 1910, to be along lines of religion, psychology, and history, rather than of literature. A systematic treatment of the connection between literature, and Neoplatonism as a carrier of mystical thought, has not yet been made. It seems not too bold a statement to make that we have here a most remarkable instance of an international and intellectual relationship, an eminently worthy subject for the study of comparative literature.

The suggestion of a relationship between Milton and Boehme was made by Dr. Julius Goebel. To his unflinching inspiration and guidance I owe what results these pages have to show.

The method I have tried to follow has little in common with the old method of careful and detailed comparison of the works of each author for possible resemblances, although some such comparison must of course be used as a checking up of any other method; it is rather an attempt to lay hold of the spirit of the time that produced natures so sympathetic and complementary as those of the simple, uneducated Görlitz shoemaker and the cultured man of the world, friend of a rising republic. This method may best be characterized in the words of Dilthey: "It is the comparative method," he says, "through which the positive, the historical, the distinctly individual, in short, the individuation itself becomes the object of scientific research. Even the scientific determination of the single historical event can be completed only through the method of comparison on the basis

of universal history. One phenomenon explains another; taken all together, all phenomena explain each individual. Since the far-reaching results arrived at by Winckelmann, Schiller, and the romanticists, this method has continually gained in fruitfulness. It is a scientific procedure that was developed from the comparative methods of philology, and then transferred to the study of mythology. It follows logically that every systematic mental science must, in the course of its development, sooner or later, arrive at dependence upon this same comparative method."

In the course of my studies in England, I was greatly indebted to courtesies extended by officials of the British Museum, Dr. Williams's Library (London), the Bodleian Library, the libraries of Queen's, Christ Church, Worcester, and Manchester Colleges of the University of Oxford, the collections of Magdalene, Trinity, and Peterhouse of the University of Cambridge, and the Library of the University of Cambridge. Particularly, I wish to thank Champlin Budge, M.A., B.Litt., librarian of Manchester College, Oxford, for many valuable suggestions and Dr. Frederick W. C. Lieder of Harvard University for his kind assistance in reading proofs.

M. L. B.

January, 1914.

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION | iii |
| PREFACE | v |
| I. INTRODUCTION | i |
| II. ENGLISH MYSTICISM BEFORE BOEHME | 31 |
| III. BOEHME IN ENGLAND | 57 |
| IV. MILTON AND BOEHME | 115 |
| V. SIMILARITY BETWEEN MILTON AND BOEHME IN RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND PO- LITICAL IDEAS | 137 |
| VI. ROMANTICISM | 170 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 183 |
| INDEX | 195 |