

**LIGHT, LIFE AND LOVE:
SELECTIONS FROM
THE GERMAN MYSTICS
OF THE MIDDLE AGES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649635962

Light, Life and Love: Selections from the German Mystics of the Middle Ages by W. R. Inge

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W. R. INGE

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SELECTIONS FROM
THE GERMAN
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MIDDLE AGES BY

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METHUEN & CO.

36 ESSEX ST. W.C.

LONDON

1904

RVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

1784, 447
11-18-54

Seuls jusqu' ici les mystiques ont réalisé l'union de l'esprit religieux et d'une entière indépendance intellectuelle. Un mysticisme sain, accessible aux simples puisqu'il délaisse les dogmes, susceptible pour la même raison de s'allier à l'esprit scientifique le plus rigoureux, ne voilà-t-il pas la religion la plus individuelle et la plus humaine à la fois ?

MURISIER.

ὁ τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἀνθρώπον· οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶν οὕτω βιωσεται, ἀλλ' ἡ θεῖόν τι ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει.

ARISTOTLE.

Ms. 810. 4
8-26-54

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INTRODUCTION

§ 1. THE PRECURSORS OF THE GERMAN MYSTICS

TO most English readers the "Imitation of Christ" is the representative of mediæval German mysticism. In reality, however, this beautiful little treatise belongs to a period when that movement had nearly spent itself. Thomas à Kempis, as Dr Bigg has said,¹ was only a semi-mystic. He tones down the most characteristic doctrines of Eckhart, who is the great original thinker of the German mystical school, and seems in some ways to revert to an earlier type of devotional literature. The "Imitation" may perhaps be described as an idealised picture of monastic piety, drawn at a time when the life of the cloister no longer filled a place of unchallenged usefulness in the social order of Europe. To find German mysticism at its

¹ In his Introduction to the "Imitation of Christ," in this series.