

‘To make such things knowne in my Native Language’: acquiring,  
translating and disseminating Böhme's writings in England and Wales \*

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*It is significant that between 1645 and 1662 most of Jacob Boehme's treatises and the majority of his letters were printed in English translation at London. Moreover, two shorter pieces were rendered from English into Welsh in 1655. Yet the reasons for why Boehme's writings were translated into English and the mechanisms behind this process have never been adequately explained. Among Boehme's followers there circulated a garbled story that Charles I had been the main patron of the venture before his execution on 30 January 1649. Some also maintained, probably correctly, that after the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy the remaining works were brought out under the auspices of Philip Herbert, fifth Earl of Pembroke. In their eyes this tradition of royal and aristocratic support gave the undertaking prestige. Yet it simplifies developments, obscuring the involvement of a number of people with common aims. Actually there were three overlapping phases. Firstly before the outbreak of Civil War in August 1642 certain English speakers, who could also read Latin and sometimes German and Dutch as well, obtained Boehme's writings both in manuscript and print through their associates in the Dutch Republic and Holy Roman Empire. Then manuscript translations were made primarily from German and to a lesser extent Dutch and Latin versions of Boehme's works. Most of these texts were available in editions published at Amsterdam. These English translations, a few of which are anonymous, circulated privately in much the same way as did other mystical and prophetic writings during the period. Finally, there was an organised scheme for publishing the extant corpus in English. While some of the cost was met by the translators themselves, it is clear that Samuel Hartlib and members of his circle acted as intermediaries by using agents to purchase books, subsequently shipping them to England.*

On 4 August 1653 Samuel Herring of Swan Alley in Coleman Street, London petitioned Barebone's Parliament to consider thirty propositions for the good of the nation. The second proposal was that two colleges at Oxford and Cambridge should be devoted to the study of 'attaining and enjoying the spirit of our Lord Jesus'. Few books would be needed besides the Bible and English translations of 'Jacob Behmen, and such like, who had true revelation from the true spirit'.<sup>1</sup> This proposal was not

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\* Parts of this essay first appeared as "The Teutonicks writings": translating Jacob Boehme into English and Welsh', *Esoterica*, 9 (2007), pp. 129–65, <<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIX/EsotericalIX.pdf>>. All precise continental European dates are given according to the Julian and Gregorian calendar; all English dates according to the Julian only.

adopted, nor is there evidence for how much support it attracted among Herring's fellow parishioners or in Parliament. Though he may have acted alone, it is equally possible that Herring represented the public face of a group promoting the dissemination of English versions of the German Lutheran mystic's writings. Indeed, it is significant that between 1645 and 1662 most of Böhme's thirty or so treatises and the majority of his roughly eighty-four extant letters were rendered into English. Altogether twenty different books – some containing several titles – by the 'Teutonic Philosopher' were published in English versions at London during this period. Moreover, two shorter pieces were translated from English into Welsh in 1655.

Despite several modern scholarly studies on the reception of Böhme's ideas in the British Isles, the reasons for why his writings were translated into English and the mechanisms behind this process have never been adequately explained.<sup>2</sup> Among Böhme's followers there circulated a garbled story that Charles I had been the main patron of the venture before his execution on 30 January 1649. Some like Francis Lee (a nonjuror and co-founder of the Philadelphian Society) also maintained, probably correctly, that after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in May 1660 the remaining works were brought out under the auspices of Philip Herbert, fifth Earl of Pembroke. In their eyes this tradition of royal and aristocratic support gave the undertaking prestige. Yet it simplifies developments, obscuring the involvement of a number of people with common aims. Actually there were three overlapping phases.

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The year is taken to begin on 1 January. I am most grateful to Susanna Åkerman and Leigh Penman for their helpful comments but remain responsible for any shortcomings.

<sup>1</sup> Society of Antiquaries of London, MS 138 fol. 155v, printed in John Nickolls (ed.), *Original Letters and Papers of State, Addressed to Oliver Cromwell* (London: William Bowyer, 1743), p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme: A study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford UP, 1914); Reginald Maxse, 'The reception of Jacob Boehme in England in the XVII and XVIII centuries', Unpublished Oxford University B.Litt., 1934; Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, trans. G.E. Björk (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri Ab, 1948); Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Denoël, 1960); Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 185–225; Brian Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

Firstly, in the period between Böhme's death in November 1624 and the outbreak of Civil War in August 1642 certain multilingual English speakers, all of whom could read either Latin or German and Dutch, engaged with Böhme's writings. These had been obtained both in manuscript and print through associates in the Dutch Republic and Holy Roman Empire. Unsurprisingly these English-speaking readers of Böhme were – with one known exception – foreigners, emigrants or those who had travelled abroad. Among them were John Dury (1596–1680), Theodoricus Gravius (c.1600–fl.1658), Theodore Haak (1605–1690), Samuel Hartlib (c.1600–1662), Joachim Hübner (1611–1666), Richard Napier (1559–1634), Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669), Justinus van Assche (1596–1650) and Hendrik van Steenwijck the younger (c.1580–1640?). So far as is known, not a word of Böhme had yet been translated into English.<sup>3</sup> Then from 1644, or possibly even 1643, English manuscript translations were made primarily from German and to a lesser extent Dutch and Latin versions of Böhme's works. Most of these texts were available in editions published at Amsterdam financially supported initially by Johannes von Sack (fl.1618–fl.1631), and thereafter particularly by Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland (1587–1648). These English translations, a few of which were anonymous, circulated privately in much the same way as did other prophetic, spiritual and mystical writings – notably excerpts or complete works by Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Nicholas of Cusa, Hendrik Niclaes and Johannes Tauler; not to mention the 'Theologia Germanica' and 'The Divine Cloud of Unknowing'.<sup>4</sup> Finally there was an organized scheme for publishing the extant corpus in English. While some of the cost was met by the translators themselves, it is clear that Samuel Hartlib, a Prussian émigré resident in London since 1628, and members of his circle acted as intermediaries by using agents to purchase books, subsequently shipping them to England.

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<sup>3</sup> A. Hessayon, "'Teutonicus': Knowledge of Boehme among English Speakers before the English Civil War', *Daphnis*, 48 (2020), pp. 1–25.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Hunt, 'John Everard: A Study in his life, Thought and Preaching', unpublished University of California Ph.D., 1977; T.W. Hayes, 'John Everard and the Familist Tradition' in Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (eds.), *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 60–69; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 110–43; David Como, *Blown by the spirit: puritanism and the emergence of an antinomian underground in pre-civil-war England* (Stanford, CA, 2004), pp. 219–65; A. Hessayon, 'John Everard (c.1584–1640/41), alchemist, author, translator, copyist' (forthcoming).

The son of a successful merchant based at the Baltic port of Elbing (modern Elbląg, Poland), Hartlib assiduously cultivated international correspondents – especially the loose community of Protestant refugee scholars forced into exile by plundering armies marauding through central Europe during the Thirty Years' War. As is well known, his circle promoted reconciliation between the Protestant churches and planned to establish a University in London with a College for Oriental studies to assist with the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. They also advocated educational and medical reform as well as disseminating the Moravian exile Johannes Amos Comenius's theories concerning universal knowledge (pansophy) and the importance of translation as a first step towards establishing communication through a common tongue.<sup>5</sup> Although it had gone unheeded by many of his compatriots, Böhme's announcement of the dawn of a new reformation thus chimed with their vision of universal reformation. Similarly, Böhme's foremost English translator John Sparrow (1615–1670) hoped his endeavour would be rewarded with the settlement of religious controversies and the disappearance of sects and heresies.<sup>6</sup> And though he feared making such things known in his native language to 'so many various minds, as are now sprung up', Sparrow nonetheless contented himself with the knowledge that his public-spirited efforts might provide 'much comfort' to 'troubled doubting' souls, enabling them to attain that 'inward Peace which passeth all understanding'.<sup>7</sup> It was, however, to prove a vain hope. Instead of the promised 'Day of Pentecost', when the 'true sence and meaning of all Languages' would be united into one tongue, there was a new Babel.<sup>8</sup> Instead of doctrinal unanimity there was discord. Indeed, Böhme's readers responded in largely unforeseen ways: sometimes with enthusiasm but on

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<sup>5</sup> George Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius. Gleanings from Hartlib's papers* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1947); Charles Webster, *The great instauration: science, medicine and reform, 1626–1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib & Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> A. Hessayon, 'Jacob Böhme's foremost Seventeenth-century English translator: John Sparrow (1615–1670) of Essex', in Bo Andersson, Lucinda Martin, Leigh Penman and Andrew Weeks (eds.), *Jacob Böhme and His World* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 329–57.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Boehme, *XL. Qvestions Concerning the Soule*, trans. J[ohn] S[parrow] (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1647), 'To the Reader'.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Signatura Rerum*, trans. J[ohn] Elliston (London: Giles Calvert, 1651), sig. A3<sup>r2</sup>.

other occasions with exasperation, ambivalence and even revulsion. A handful were convicted of blasphemy, others formed spiritual communities, while still others fulminated against what they regarded as Böhme's incomprehensible nonsense and vile falsehoods. All the same, engagement with Böhme's teachings was more extensive at this crucial moment in English history than has usually been recognised. Nor was his influence either straightforward or always easy to untangle from the wider tradition of continental mystical, prophetic and visionary writing that he epitomised.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter, however, is mainly concerned with the diffusion of Böhme's writings rather than their reception. Locating these translations within the broader framework of the propagation of continental alchemical, astrological, millenarian and mystical writings during a turbulent period of English history, it focuses upon the contribution of intermediaries, patrons, translators, biographers, printers, publishers and booksellers. It shows how Böhme's texts were copied, transmitted, translated and issued in a predominantly volatile environment which witnessed major upheavals in the publishing trade – including the temporary breakdown of pre-publication censorship. Furthermore, by drawing upon a number of manuscript sources unknown to or unused by previous scholars it uncovers the translators' social networks; revealing their ties through kinship and friendship, as well as shared professional and commercial interests. Indeed, these extensive connections largely explain why Böhme's works were acquired so readily in printed English translations and later selectively rendered into Welsh.

## I

Between 1641 and 1660 an estimated 32,238 titles were published in the British Isles or by English speakers elsewhere in the world; that is roughly 26% of the total

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<sup>9</sup> A. Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme's writings during the English Revolution and afterwards: their publication, dissemination and influence', in Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei (eds.), *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception* (New York & London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 77–97.

amount of such publications between 1475 and 1700.<sup>10</sup> Although the number of English translations of continental European writings printed or reissued during this period has yet to be established, this heterogeneous corpus of material consisted of writings by more than 220 non-native authors (both genuine and pseudonymous), as well as a handful of anonymous titles. This included texts by or attributed to Greeks, Romans and Church Fathers, as well as alchemists, anti-Trinitarians, astrologers, astronomers, cardinals, geographers, grammarians, heralds, herbalists, heresiographers, historians, lawyers, librarians, linguists, magicians, millenarians, monarchs, mystics, novelists, occultists, philosophers, physicians, physiognomists, poets, politicians, popes, prophets, satirists, soldiers, theologians and travellers. Furthermore, there were a number of English translations that remained unpublished but nonetheless circulated in manuscript during the period. In addition, there were prose and verse English paraphrases rather than translations. As to the translators of these works, more than eighty-five have been identified to date. At the same time, it should be stressed that several works by continental authors continued to be printed or reprinted in the original Latin. A number of English authors, perhaps most famously John Milton (1608–1674), also published in that language.

Despite Christopher Hill's claim that the English Revolution was a short-lived age of 'freedom' when relatively cheap and portable printing equipment may have made it easier than ever before for new and sometimes radical ideas to see the light of day, the desire to censor – as is widely recognised – remained in many quarters.<sup>11</sup> There were three effective ways in which this could be achieved: through pre-publication, post-publication and self-censorship. Pre-publication censorship, particularly of religious

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<sup>10</sup> J. M. Bell and J. Barnard, 'A provisional count of Wing Titles, 1641–1700', *Publishing History*, 44 (1998), pp. 89–97; John Barnard, D.F. McKenzie and Maureen Bell (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Book. Vol. IV. 1557–1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), pp. 779–85, 789; A. Veylit, 'Some statistics on the Number of Surviving Printed Titles for Great Britain and Dependencies from the Beginnings of Print in England to the year 1800', <<http://estc.ucr.edu/ESTCStatistics.html>>.

<sup>11</sup> C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume One. Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Brighton: Harvester, 1985), pp. 34, 40, 51; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1984 edn.), p. 17; Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat. Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 21.

literature, which had been used to increasing effect during the 1630s, became a lost cause after 1641. For in that year the secular court of Star Chamber and the ecclesiastical court of High Commission were abolished by act of Parliament, leading to a disintegration of the London Stationers' Company monopoly. With the collapse of pre-publication censorship, the licensing system upon which it had been built became increasingly used to protect the publisher's copyright rather than to indicate official approbation. Despite initial Parliamentary attempts at reasserting control by examining those considered responsible for committing abuses in printing and licensing, and subsequently through legislation, without an equivalent to the Papal Index of prohibited books pre-publication censorship appears to have been almost entirely at the licenser's discretion. As such it was utterly ineffective. Indeed, during the later 1640s licensing was characterised by inconsistent practice and the absence of a universally agreed strategy.

By contrast, post-publication censorship and a range of severe punishments remained. Legislation empowered civil and military officials to punish those involved in producing unlicensed material. Doubtless, this prompted strategies to avoid detection: spurious imprints, anonymity, pseudonymity and varying degrees of self-censorship. All the same, post-publication censorship proved most effective when implemented by those with intimate knowledge of the printing trade. And in exceptional circumstances its outcome could be dramatic. For although no one had been burned at the stake for heresy in England since 1612, the published writings of blasphemers and seditious were still consigned to the flames in public book burning rituals that resembled Protestant *Autos da Fé* by proxy.<sup>12</sup>

As well as being conducive for the production of unprecedented quantities of scandalous, seditious, libellous and blasphemous pamphlets, these upheavals in the publishing world facilitated the dissemination of printed English translations of continental European writings. Among the numerous works issued at London during the 1640s were Sebastian Franck's *The Forbidden Fruit: or, a treatise Of the Tree of*

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<sup>12</sup> A. Hessayon, 'Incendiary texts: book burning in England, c.1640–c.1660', *Cromohs – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, 12 (2007): 1–25, <[http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/12\\_2007/hessayon\\_incendtexts.html](http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/12_2007/hessayon_incendtexts.html)>.

*Knowledge of Good and Evil* (printed by T.P. and M.S. for Benjamin Allen, 1642); Benet of Canfield's *A Bright Starre, Leading to, & Centering in, Christ our perfection* (printed by Matthew Simmons and sold by Henry Overton, 1646); Nicholas of Cusa's *Ophthalmos aplois or The single Eye* (published by John Streater, 1646); the anonymous *Theologia Germanica* (published by John Sweeting, 1646, 1648); Valentin Weigel's *Of the Life of Christ* (published by Giles Calvert, 1648); pseudo-Weigel's *Astrology Theologized* (published by George Whittington, 1649); *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (printed by Robert White and published by Thomas Brewster and Gregory Moule, 1649); and a number of works by the Family of Love's founder Hendrick Niclaes including *Revelatio Dei* (published by Giles Calvert, 1649), *An Introduction to The holy Understanding of the Glasse of Righteousnesse* (published by George Whittington, 1649), and *Terra Pacis* (published by Samuel Satterthwaite, 1649). In addition, several titles were printed at Cambridge by the University printer Roger Daniel; the sixth edition of Johann Gerhard's *Meditations* (1640, 1644); Gerhard's *The summe of Christian Doctrine* (1640); Juan de Valdés's *Divine considerations treating of those things which are most profitable* (1646); and Johann Valentin Andreae's *A Modell of a Christian Society* together with his *The Right Hand of Christian Love offered* (1647).

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On 8 November 1644 the London bookseller George Thomason acquired a copy of *The Life of one Jacob Boehmen* (printed by L.N. for Richard Whitaker, at the King's Arms in Paul's Church-yard, 1644).<sup>13</sup> Its author was the Silesian nobleman Abraham von Franckenberg (1593–1652). I have suggested elsewhere that the translator was John Sparrow and that his source was the prefatory material to the German version of *Mysterium Magnum* published at Amsterdam in 1640, although Michael Kurtz's verses praising Böhme were omitted.<sup>14</sup> Possibly the pamphlet was issued to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of Böhme's death on 7/17 November 1624. While

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<sup>13</sup> [Abraham von Franckenberg], *The Life of one Jacob Boehmen* (London: Richard Whitaker, 1644) [Thomason E 16(16)]. This translation differs from that contained in Jacob Boehme, *Forty Questions of the Soul*, trans. John Sparrow (London: Lodowick Lloyd, 1665).

<sup>14</sup> Hessayon, 'John Sparrow', pp. 347–48.



some of Böhme's followers regarded him as a prophet of the Thirty Years' War, Franckenberg had praised his 'profound' and 'deepe-grounded' writings, believing that they hinted at the great wonders God would perform in future generations.<sup>15</sup> So it is significant that the publication of Franckenberg's *Life of Boehme* signalled the beginning of a loosely co-ordinated project to issue English versions of the Teutonic Philosopher's writings.

The following year saw the publication of Böhme's *Two Theosophicall Epistles: Wherein the Life of a true Christian is described*. The title page relates that the letters were "printed by M[atthew] S[immons] for B[enjamin] Allen, and are to be sold at his shop, at the Crown in Popes-head Alley, 1645". The work was also described as 'Lately Englished out of the German Language'. The bookseller Thomason dated his copy 2 May 1645.<sup>16</sup> Werner Buddecke (1887–1967) suggested that this edition was based on an interesting mixture of sources, including both printed German editions and Dutch translations, and perhaps also German manuscript material.<sup>17</sup> In order to access this material the English translator must therefore have had a direct or indirect contact in the United Provinces who knew Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland, who possessed the manuscripts. Elsewhere I have shown that within two weeks of the English publication of Franckenberg's *Life of Boehme*, Sparrow was using his association with Hartlib to purchase what were most likely editions of Böhme's works printed at Amsterdam and that, by way of John Dury, then in Rotterdam, the agent for this transaction was the millenarian and student of mystical theology Petrus Serrarius.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it can also be demonstrated that in October 1636 Serrarius, along with his friend Justinus van Assche, had been requested to purchase a copy of Böhme's recently published *Drievoudigh leven des Menschen* from van Beyerland at

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<sup>15</sup> *A reall and unfeigned Testimonie, concerning Jacob Beme* (London: Giles Calvert, 1649), p. 6 [usually bound with Jacob Boehme, *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*, trans. John Elliston (London: Giles Calvert, 1649)].

<sup>16</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Two Theosophicall Epistles* (London: Benjamin Allen, 1645), title-page [British Library, Thomason E 1170(1)]

<sup>17</sup> Werner Buddecke, *Die Jakob Böhme-Ausgaben. Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis* (2 vols., Göttingen: Ludwig Häntzschel & co., 1937–57), vol. 2, pp. 171–72.

<sup>18</sup> Sheffield University Library (hereafter SUL), HP 3/2/77A; Hessayon, 'John Sparrow', p. 351.

his house on the Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam.<sup>19</sup> With these links established, it can be confidently maintained that following *The Life of one Jacob Boehmen*, Sparrow translated Böhme's *Two Theosophicall Epistles*.

Besides these two printed translations, Sparrow was very likely responsible for further English versions of Böhme's writings preserved in manuscript. These were finished anonymously before the end of the First English Civil War. One was dated 1644 and variously entitled 'The most Remarkable History of IOSEPH Mystically expounded & interpreted' or 'The most excellent Historie of Joseph, with morall and mystical expositions'. This survives in two known copies in different scribal hands – one in the British Library Harleian collection, the other in the Bibliothèque Mazarine.<sup>20</sup> The Harleian version lacks the final two paragraphs and is without ownership inscription. It may have been a fair copy by Sparrow himself. By contrast, the undated Mazarine copy was made 'for the Lord Phillip Herbert' who would accede to Earldom of Pembroke on 23 January 1650.<sup>21</sup> The text itself consisted of a translation of Böhme's *Mysterium Magnum* 'beginning at y<sup>e</sup> 36<sup>th</sup> Chapt<sup>r</sup> of Genesis and continuing to y<sup>e</sup> end of y<sup>t</sup> booke'. The translator's source was chapters 64 to 78 (pp. 537–704) of the German version of *Mysterium Magnum* published at Amsterdam in 1640.<sup>22</sup> It is noteworthy that this manuscript translation is quite similar in style and structure to *The Third Part* of the English version of Böhme's *Mysterium Magnum* which was published with a separate title-page as *The most excellent history of Joseph* at London in 1654. While Sparrow's cousin John Elliston the younger (c.1625–1652) translated more than half this text (presumably at least 40 of the 78 chapters), Sparrow was probably responsible for the third part since Elliston would have been about nineteen at the time of the manuscript's completion. It can therefore be assumed the manuscript

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<sup>19</sup> Uppsala University Library, Waller Ms benl-00852. I am most grateful to Helmer Helmers for translating the Dutch.

<sup>20</sup> British Library, London, MS Harleian 1821; Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris, MS 4581.

<sup>21</sup> Ariel Hessayon, *'Gold Tried in the Fire': The prophet Theaurau John Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 320–23.

<sup>22</sup> These chapters of Böhme's *Mysterium Magnum* had been previously issued as a separate publication entitled *Iosephus Redivivus, das ist, Die Vberaus Lehr vnd Trostreiche Historia von dem Ertzvatter Joseph* (Amsterdam: Veit Heinrichs, 1631).

represents an earlier version of Sparrow's translation which, much like scribal copies of *Theologia Germanica*, circulated among aristocratic or wealthy patrons.<sup>23</sup>

Another manuscript contains several more treatises by Böhme, namely 'The Way to Christ Comprehended' (consisting of 'True Repentance' and 'True Resignation'); 'The third booke of regeneration that is the new Birth'; 'The 4. Booke being a dialogue betweene a master and a schollar, of the super-sensuall life'; 'A short discourse of the key opening the divine misteryes vizt of Repentance'; 'Of the mixt world and its wickednesse'; 'A letter of Jacob Bohmen to a good friend of his' dated 10/20 April 1624; and 'An exposition of some words' used in Böhme's writings. Dated 11 December 1645 – whether by the translator or a copyist is unclear – this collection was based on *Der Weg zu Christo* (Amsterdam, 1635). It can be connected with another carefully transcribed translation of Böhme's 'The Way to Christ Comprehended' which likewise derived from the same German edition printed at Amsterdam in 1635. Although these manuscripts are in different scribal hands the translation is the same except for some minor scribal variants. While the former copy is dated, it lacks an ownership inscription. The latter, on the other hand, is undated but was once in the possession of William Clopton.<sup>24</sup> This name, however, was not uncommon thus precluding definite identification.<sup>25</sup> In addition, there may be a third manuscript copy of 'The Way to Christ'. In the mid-twentieth century it was in the possession of Charles Muses (1919–2000), founder of the Jacob Boehme Society. He informed Buddecke that it was dated '1643'.<sup>26</sup> It has not yet been traced but is hopefully still extant.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Scribal copies of John Everard's translation of *Theologia Germanica* were in the possession of Edmund Sheffield, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Mulgrave and Henry Rich, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Holland.

<sup>24</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Rawlinson C 763; Bodl., MS Eng. Th.e.103.

<sup>25</sup> There was William Clopton (c.1614–c.1685), of Liston Hall, Essex admitted pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge on 6 March 1628; William Clopton (fl.1662), of Essex admitted pensioner at Emmanuel College, Cambridge on 12 March 1630, a clergyman who was ejected after the Restoration; and William Clopton (c.1618–1666) of Groton, Suffolk admitted pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge on 18 October 1636.

<sup>26</sup> Buddecke, *Böhme-Ausgaben*, vol. 2, p. 234.

<sup>27</sup> The bulk of Muses library was auctioned by Thompson Rare Books of Hornby Island, British Columbia, Canada.

Significantly, these manuscript copies of 'The Way to Christ' are fairly similar to the published version and doubtless represent an initial translation of the text. Copyright was entered in the Stationers' Register on 13 April 1647 and the work was subsequently issued as *The Way to Christ Discovered. By Iacob Behmen. In these Treatises. 1. Of true Repentance. 2. Of true Resignation. 3. Of Regeneration. 4. Of the Super-rationall life. Also, the Discourse of Illumination. The Compendium of Repentance. And the mixt World, &c.* (printed by M[atthew] S[immons] for H[umphrey] Blunden, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1648). There were two printings initially, with Thomason acquiring one version on 25 October 1647.<sup>28</sup> Doubtless the translator was Sparrow again.

One more surviving English manuscript translation of Böhme's writings, probably copied by the grammarian and physician Joseph Webbe (fl.1612–fl.1642), is preserved in the papers of the antiquary, astrologer and botanist Elias Ashmole (1617–1692).<sup>29</sup> This is an extract from a letter written to the physician Christian Steinberg (c.1581–fl.1624) of Fürstenwalde in which Böhme commended a treatise attributed to Johann Siebmacher (fl.1607–fl.1618), alchemist of Nuremberg, entitled *Wasserstein der Weysen [Water-Stone of the Wise Men]* (Frankfurt, 1619). Following Buddecke, Mike A. Zuber has recently shown that Böhme's letter dates not from 1622, as was commonly thought, but late May 1624.<sup>30</sup> The translation itself somewhat resembles the version printed in *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen aliter, Tevtonicvs Philosophvs* (printed by Matthew Simmons in Aldersgate Street, for Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread Eagle, 1649).<sup>31</sup> This translation was done by John Elliston the younger, of whom more shortly.

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<sup>28</sup> G.E. Briscoe Eyre, H.R. Plomer and C.R. Rivington (eds.), *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers from 1640 to 1708* (3 vols., London: privately printed, 1913–14), vol. 1, p. 268; Thomason E 1130(1).

<sup>29</sup> W.H. Black, *A descriptive, analytical, and critical catalogue of the manuscripts bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole* (Oxford, 1845), cols. 1398–99; F. Watson, 'Dr. Joseph Webbe and Language Teaching (1622)', *Modern Language Notes*, 26:1 (1911), pp. 40–46.

<sup>30</sup> Mike A. Zuber, 'Jacob Böhme and Alchemy: A Transmutation in Three Stages', in Andersson, Martin, Penman and Weeks (eds.), *Böhme and His World*, pp. 279–82.

<sup>31</sup> Bodl., MS Ashmole 1499, fol. 279r–v: 'As concerning y<sup>e</sup> Philosophycall worke of y<sup>e</sup> Tincture, it is not so easye to goe about it: though I my selfe have it not in y<sup>e</sup> practice: the seale of god lieth before it, to keepe it & its true ground in silence (or secrett) upon paine of Eternall punnishment, unlesse a man

II

On 15 October 1646 the copyright of another work by Böhme was entered in the Stationers' Register. This was subsequently published in two editions as *XL. Qvestions Concerning the Soule* (printed by Matth[ew] Simmons for H[umphrey] Blunden, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1647).<sup>32</sup> Both editions contain an address 'To the Reader' by 'One of the unworthiest of the Children of Men, J[ohn] S[parrow]'. This self-effacing claim was perhaps inspired by van Beyerland's customary sign off 'V.L. Mede-Borgher van dese wereldt' ['fellow citizen of this world']. It also marks the first English translation of Böhme's writings, either in manuscript or print, publicly acknowledged by Sparrow. Moreover, one edition includes an additional preface directed 'to the earnest lovers of wisdom'. Here Sparrow claimed that Böhme was a divinely inspired author whose writings reached into '*the deepest Mysteries of Nature*' that would '*lead to the attaining of the highest powerfull naturall wisdome*'. Accordingly he compared him to the '*ancient Philosophers*' – Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Plato – together with 'modern' alchemical authors – the fictional Bernard Trevisan, Ramon Lull, Paracelsus and Michael Sendivogius. Moreover, Sparrow positioned Böhme among certain contemporary thinkers who had endeavoured to reform scholarship, philosophy, linguistics, mathematics and science: John Selden, Francis Bacon, Johannes Amos Comenius, John Pell and René Descartes. In short, readers of Böhme's writings, each according to their '*condition, propertie, and inclination*', would be able to reconcile all important scholarly differences, even those between the most profound magical, mystical and alchemical writers and the experimental physicians, philosophers, astrologers and

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knew y<sup>l</sup> it should not be misused ... Sir, you may reade y<sup>e</sup> water=stone of ye wise men, which is printed, in it is much truth; & also plaine, the labour is little, & y<sup>e</sup> charges very small ...'. Cf. Jacob Boehme, *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*, trans. John Elliston (London: Giles Calvert, 1649), 23.15–18, pp. 170–71: 'Also concerning the Phylosophicall worke of the *Tincture*, its progresse is not so bluntly and plainly to be described; albeit I have it not in the Praxis, the Seale of God lyeth before it to *conceale* the true ground of the same, upon paine of eternall punishment, unlesse a man knew for certaine, that it might not be mis-used ... Read the *Water-Stone of the Wise men*, which is in Print; therein is much truth; and it is moreover *cleare*, the worke is *easie*, and the Art is *simple* ...'.

<sup>32</sup> Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 1, p. 248.

mathematicians. Finally, and crucially, '*differences in Religion*' might also be reconciled:

*that the minds, and Consciencs of all doubting persons may bee satisfied about Predestination, Election, Creation, corruption, Salvation, and Restoration, so cleerely, that all will love one another.*<sup>33</sup>

Continuing this theme in his address 'To the Reader', Sparrow declared that he had:

*taken in hand to put this Treatise into English, which I chose to doe rather out of the Originall then out of any Translations, because they many times come short of the Authors owne meaning, and because I found many errours in some of them, and he is so deep in his writings, that we have need to desire that our soules may be put into such a condition as his was in, else they cannot be fully understood.*<sup>34</sup>

Appended to both 1647 editions of *XL. Qvestions Concerning the Soule* and issued with a separate title-page was *The Clavis, or Key. Or, An Exposition of some principall Matters, and words in the writings of Jacob Behmen* (1647).<sup>35</sup> This closely followed, albeit with some typographical errors, van Beyerland's Dutch version *Clavis ofte sleutel* (Amsterdam: Nicolaes van Ravesteyn, 1642). Moreover, for Sparrow's translation of *XL. Qvestions*, Buddecke suggested that Sparrow drew on an assortment of sources, including a Latin version entitled *Ψυχολογια [Psychologia] vera I[acobum] B[öhmen] T[eutonicus]* (Amsterdam: Johann Janssonius, 1632) by Johannes Angelius Werdenhagen (1581–1652); some German manuscripts; and a partial rendering into Dutch by van Beyerland.<sup>36</sup> Certainly van Beyerland was aware of Sparrow's English translation. Thus on 16/26 August 1647 the physician Heinrich Appelius (*fl.* 1648) wrote to Hartlib from Purmerend in the United Provinces informing him that van Beyerland, 'M<sup>r</sup>. Dureys friend', wanted '2 coppies of J.

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<sup>33</sup> Jacob Boehme, *XL. Qvestions Concerning the Soule*, trans. J[ohn] S[parrow] (London: printed by M.S. for H. Blunden, 1647), sigs. (a)–(a2)<sup>v</sup>, reprinted in Jacob Boehme, *Forty Questions of the Soul*, trans. John Sparrow (London: Lodowick Lloyd, 1665), 'To the Earnest Lovers of Wisdom'.

<sup>34</sup> Boehme, *XL. Qvestions*, trans. S[parrow], 'To the Reader'.

<sup>35</sup> However, *The Clavis* was omitted from the 1665 edition of *Forty Questions of the Soul*.

<sup>36</sup> Buddecke, *Böhme-Ausgaben*, vol. 2, pp. 129–32.

Bohmens XL questions of y<sup>e</sup> Soule, M<sup>r</sup> Johannes et Samuel who are by M<sup>r</sup> Serrarius can deliver them unto him'. Appelius was Dury's brother-in-law and also acquainted with the alchemist Johann Rudolph Glauber (1604–1670). In the same letter he added that treatises by the so-called 'German Lazarus' Hans Engelbrecht (1599–1642) were being printed in Dutch and that 'Behm hath much written of y<sup>e</sup> times of Wonders, wherein wee live or come, y<sup>e</sup> Lord fitt us for him'.<sup>37</sup> These Dutch translations of Engelbrecht were probably by van Beyerland, who may additionally have subsidised their publication. Interestingly, some contemporary English translations by an unknown hand also circulated in manuscript.<sup>38</sup> But it is not known if van Beyerland obtained his desired copies of Sparrow's printed translation.

One man who did possess a copy of a 1647 edition of Böhme's *XL. Qvestions* was Major-General John Lambert (1619–1684).<sup>39</sup> Lambert's opinions of Böhme are unrecorded, but his continuing interest in mystical theology was confirmed while on campaign in Scotland in December 1651, for his agent recorded that he had received a little bag containing copies of Jean d'Espagnet's *Enchyridion Physicæ Restitutæ* (London: W. Shears & Robert Tutohein, 1651), a book by Juan de Valdés – probably *Divine considerations treating of those things which are most profitable* (Cambridge, 1646) – and *Theologia Germanica. Or, Mysticall Divinitie* (printed for John Sweeting, at the Angell in Popes head Alley, 1648).<sup>40</sup>

Another likely reader of Sparrow's translation of *XL. Qvestions Concerning the Soule* (1647) was Charles I. In his preface to a new edition entitled *Forty Questions of the Soul* (printed for L[odowick] Lloyd, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1665), Sparrow related:

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<sup>37</sup> SUL, HP 45/1/33B–34A; see also, SUL, HP 45/1/47A.

<sup>38</sup> BL, MS Sloane 2569, fols. 91–125, Hans Engelbrecht, 'Account of a Divine Vision'; BL, MS Sloane 2555, Hans Engelbrecht, 'A Christian writing to the learned', translated from German into Dutch in 1643 by 'M.D.B.G.V.D.W.'. This approximates to van Beyerland's usual tag; i.e. M[e]D[e]-B[ur]G[her in de] D[rie] V[ermenghde] W[ereldt]. The latter translation was based on Hans Engelbrecht, *Een Christelijck Geschrift Aen de Geleerden* ([Amsterdam?], 1643).

<sup>39</sup> Cambridge University Library, Syn.7.64.145, flyleaf.

<sup>40</sup> BL, Add. MS 21, 426, fol. 349r.

When this Book was first Printed, I endeavoured by a Friend to present one of them to his Majesty King *Charles* that then was, who vouchsafed the perusal of it; about a Month after was desired to say what he thought of the Book, who answered, that the Publisher in English seemed to say of the Author, that he was no Scholar, and if he were not, he did believe that the Holy Ghost was now in Men, but if he were a Scholar, it was one of the best Inventions that ever he read.<sup>41</sup>

Sparrow's account appears trustworthy, for it suggests that Charles I was given an edition of Böhme's work during the period of his confinement by the New Model Army and its allies on the English mainland (4 June – 11 November 1647).

Nevertheless, passed around by word of mouth the story became embellished. After staying some months in London in 1676 a foreign traveller enthused how some trustworthy Englishmen had told him:

It is but too true, that the King of England, *Charles I*, before his martyr-death not only gave the means for the printing of Jacob Böhme's writings, especially of the *Mysterii Magni*, but also that he was astonished, after having read A°. 1646 the '40 Questions of the Soul', and called out: Praise be to God! that there are still men to be found, who are able to give a living witness of God and his word by experience. And this caused him to send a habile person to Görlitz in Lusatia, to learn there the German language, and thus to become more able to understand better Jacob Böhme's style in his own mother-tongue, and to translate his writings into English. At the same time he was ordered to note down all and everything he could learn at Görlitz of J. Böhm's life, writings and circumstances; which things all have been executed and done.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Boehme, *Forty Questions*, trans. Sparrow, 'Preface'.

<sup>42</sup> 'De vita et scriptis oder historischer Bericht von dem Leben und Schriften Jacob Böhmens', in Johann Wilhelm Ueberfeld (ed.), *Theosophia Revelata. Das ist: Alle göttliche Schriften des Gottfeligen und hocheleuchteten Deutschen Theosophi Jacob Böhmens* ([Leiden], 1730), p. 105, translated as 'VI. Of the old and new editions and impressions of these writings; also of the Dutch, English, Latin and French translation of the same' in Dr Williams's Library, MS 186.17 (15), 'Introduction to Philosophy' (1858), fols. 60–61. Cf. Johann Georg Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica* (7 vols., ed. J.W. Ueberfeld, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., [Leiden], 1722), vol. 7, endnotes, with an English translation of an 'Appendix of Particulars concerning Jacob Böhm and his Writings' at DWL, MS I.1.62, p. 176; partly printed in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 52 (July 1782), p. 329, and Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme*, p. 196 n. 24.



This anecdote is probably attributable to the 'learned' poet and prophet Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651–1689) of Breslau who, while in London in October 1676, 'defended Jacob Boehmen against the Academicos (regarding philosophy) in published writings'.<sup>43</sup> Evidently it had an enduring appeal for about 1701 Francis Lee (1661–1719), former Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, nonjuror and co-founder of the Philadelphian Society, wrote to Pierre Poiret (1646–1719) in Holland, informing him:

Forty Questions on the Soul came out here in England a little before the martyrdom of King Charles the First, and was put into his hands and read by him with great admiration, for he quickly perceived that something remarkable was concealed under the enigmas of the writer.<sup>44</sup>

Accepting his source without question, Poiret incorporated a summary of Lee's epistle in *Bibliotheca Mysticorum Selecta* (Amsterdam, 1708), remarking that the 'pious King Charles I and several nobles from his court' thought highly of Böhme – 'even when they had read only very little from his writings'.<sup>45</sup> This tradition was also preserved in an anonymous account sent from London after 1715 and published in Johann Wilhelm Ueberfeld's complete edition of Böhme's works entitled *Theosophia Revelata* ([Leiden?], 1730). According to this version some said that Charles I had supplied the funds for the publication of Böhme's writings and that 'therefore they had been printed *royal*'.<sup>46</sup> The truth was that Sparrow had stipulated in his contract

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<sup>43</sup> *Unschuldige Nachrichten von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (Leipzig, 1706), section VIII p. 439, printed in English translation by Eduard Bernstein as 'Letters of Hilary Prach and John G. Matern', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 16 (1919), p. 5; see also, A. Hessayon, 'Lead's Life and Times (Part Two): The Woman in the Wilderness', in Ariel Hessayon (ed.), *Jane Lead and her transnational legacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> DWL, MS 186.18 (1), p. 4, translated from the Latin by Robert Jenkins; printed in [R.C. Jenkins], 'Miracles, Visions, and Revelations, Mediaeval and Modern', *The British Quarterly Review*, 58 (1873), p. 182 (with a slightly different translation), and Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme*, pp. 195–96 n. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Pierre Poiret, *Bibliotheca Mysticorum Selecta* (Amsterdam: Wetstein, 1708), p. 169; translated in S. Hutton, 'Henry More and Jacob Boehme', in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614–1687): Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), p. 156.

<sup>46</sup> Ueberfeld (ed.), *Theosophia Revelata*, p. 104, translated in DWL, MS 186.17 (15), fol. 60. Cf. Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, vol. 7, endnotes, translated in DWL, MS I.1.62, p. 175 and printed in Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme*, p. 195 n. 22.

with the publisher and bookseller Lodowick Lloyd (*fl.* 1649–1676) that four copies of *Several Treatises: of Jacob Behme Not printed in English before* (printed for Lloyd, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1661) were to be on 'Royall paper'.<sup>47</sup>

Lee's letter to Poiret also stated that Böhme's remaining works were 'brought out under the auspices of the Earl of Pembroke'.<sup>48</sup> Philip Herbert (1619–1669), fifth Earl of Pembroke, acceded to his titles in January 1650, inheriting a fortune estimated at £30,000 per annum, but also rumoured debts of £80,000.<sup>49</sup> We have seen that he was the intended recipient of what was very likely Sparrow's manuscript translation of Böhme's 'The most excellent Historie of Joseph' (presumably copied between 1644 and 1649). Indeed, his continued interest in the Teutonic Philosopher is evident in *Of the Internal and Eternal Nature of Man in Christ* (printed by John Macock, 1654). Issued anonymously but attributed by Thomason to the 'Earle of Pembrok', this finely printed treatise indicates his engagement with some of Böhme's teachings – notably on the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>50</sup> At an unknown date Pembroke joined a Behmenist community established at Bradfield, Berkshire by the rector John Pordage (1607–1681).<sup>51</sup> These ties endured, for Pordage was to be received 'most friendly' at Pembroke's country seat in Wilton, Wiltshire as was Thomas Bromley (1630–1691) another member of the community.<sup>52</sup> According to the antiquary John Aubrey (1626–1697), the Earl of Pembroke had:

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<sup>47</sup> Bodl., MS Rawlinson Essex 23, fol. 294v, printed in Ariel Hessayon and Leigh Penman (eds.), *Extracts from the diary of John Sparrow (1615–1670) of Essex, made by the antiquarian William Holman (1669–1730)* (forthcoming). Royal paper, called 'great sheets' during this period, referred to a paper size measuring at least 570 x 420 mm. It is possible these were intended for distribution as presentation copies to wealthy patrons.

<sup>48</sup> DWL, MS 186.18 (1), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Hessayon, 'Gold', p. 320.

<sup>50</sup> [Philip Herbert, fifth Earl of Pembroke], *Of the Internal and Eternal Nature of Man in Christ* (1654), title-page [Thomason E 734(1)]. Thomason dated this copy 29 April 1654. He also acquired a second copy dated 8 June 1654 [Thomason E 740(6)].

<sup>51</sup> Bodl., MS Rawlinson D 833, fol. 64r; Ariel Hessayon, 'Pordage, John (*bap.* 1607, *d.* 1681)', *ODNB*.

<sup>52</sup> DWL, MS 186.18 (1), p. 5; Marjorie Nicolson (ed.), *The Conway Letters. The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642–1684* (1930; revised Sarah Hutton, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), p. 280; Ariel Hessayon, 'Bromley, Thomas (*bap.* 1630, *d.* 1691)', *ODNB*.

an admirable Witt, and was contemplative but did not much care for reading. His chiefest Diversion was Chymistrie, which his Lordship did understand very well and he made Medicines, that did great Cures.<sup>53</sup>

Pembroke's reputation as a devotee of this 'most Divine and Mysterious Art' was indeed widespread. Hartlib, for example, recorded in his ephemeris that Pembroke had paid the alchemist Johannes Banfi Hunyades the younger (c.1621–1696) a pension of £100 and created a medicine which cured 'dropsies and other incurable diseases'.<sup>54</sup> Nor was his patronage confined to this sphere. In 1654 the heresiarch John Reeve (1608–1658) addressed 'An Epistle from the Eternal Jehovah' to Pembroke hoping that if he found it 'worthy of the press' he would support its publication.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, a Quaker woman was apparently given £20 by Pembroke, using some of it to finance the printing of books.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Pembroke employed John Milton's elder nephew, student and biographer Edward Phillips (1630–c.1696) to help interpret 'some of the Late Teutonike Philosophers, to whose Mystic Theology his Lordship ... is not a little addicted'.<sup>57</sup>

In 1660 Sparrow loaned Pembroke his manuscript translations of four treatises by Böhme; 'An Apologie Concerning Perfection' (completed 31 December 1659); 'Of the Four Complexions'; 'Of the Earthly and of the Heavenly Mystery' (completed 6 February 1658); and 'The Exposition of the Table of the Three Principles' (completed 18 March 1658). The first two would appear in *The Remainder of Books written by Jacob Behme* (London, printed by M[ary] S[immons] for Giles Calvert at the Black Spread Eagle, 1662), while the latter would be printed in *Several Treatises: of Jacob*

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<sup>53</sup> Oliver Dick (ed.), *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (1949; reprinted, Boston: David R. Godine, 1999), p. 146.

<sup>54</sup> Afonso V *et al.*, *Five Treatises of the Philosophers Stone*, trans. H[enry] P[innell] (London: John Collins, 1651), sigs. A2r–A3r; SUL, HP 28/1/69A; Bodl., MS Aubrey 26, fol. 7v; SUL, HP 29/4/4B; F.S. Taylor and C.H. Joston, 'Johannes Banfi Hunyades 1576–1650', *Ambix*, 5 (1953), pp. 44–52, 115.

<sup>55</sup> John Reeve, *Sacred Remains, or, a Divine Appendix* (3rd edn., London: Joseph Frost, 1856), pp. 53–68.

<sup>56</sup> Friends House Library, London, William Caton MS III no. 74, fols. 181–85.

<sup>57</sup> BL, Add. MS 78,298 fol. 166r, printed in Douglas Chambers and David Galbraith (eds.), *The Letterbooks of John Evelyn* (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 2014), vol. 1, p. 443; cf. William Bray (ed.), *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn, F.R.S.* (4 vols., London: Henry Bohn, 1859), vol. 3, pp. 197–98.

*Behme* (1661).<sup>58</sup> Presumably it was these two publications that Lee afterwards claimed were issued with Pembroke's backing.

### III

Besides Pembroke's patronage, Sparrow also received support from the regicide Colonel Richard Deane (1610–1653). Moreover, both his father Colonel John Sparrow (1592–1664) and Elliston's father were investors in a scheme to colonise the islands of Eleutheria (modern Bahamas).<sup>59</sup> As I have discussed both Deane's relationship to the Sparrow family and the Eleutheria plantation elsewhere, here I will focus instead on Sparrow's further connections, collaboration with Elliston and remaining Böhme translations. Thus on 20 December 1647 copyright of Böhme's second work was entered in the Stationers' Register. This was subsequently published in two editions variously entitled *A Description Of the Three Principles of the Divine Essence* (printed by M.S. for H. Blunden, 1648) and *The Second Booke. Concerning The Three Principles of The Divine Essence* (printed by M[atthew] S[immons] for H[umphrey] Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill, 1648).<sup>60</sup> The latter was augmented with a preface by Sparrow in which he answered the complaints of readers who found Böhme difficult, advising them to peruse his writings carefully so that what they considered 'hard at first' would become 'easie at last'. He also explained that he was reluctant to epitomise Böhme's writings since they would be misunderstood, adding that in some places he had chosen to retain Böhme's German vocabulary both to convey the author's 'Excellent Notions' in a manner close to the original and because the strangeness of the words would give English readers pause.

As a lawyer, Sparrow also stressed the necessity of legal reform. In his view, this would facilitate reconciliation with 'every Obstinate rebellious Member in the Kingdom'. Indeed, these defeated Royalists should be treated in the same way as an

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<sup>58</sup> Bodl., MS Rawlinson Essex 23, fol. 294r, printed in Hessayon & Penman (eds.), *Extracts from Sparrow's diary* (forthcoming).

<sup>59</sup> Hessayon, 'John Sparrow', pp. 338, 339–45.

<sup>60</sup> Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 1, p. 281. Its forthcoming publication was announced in Charles Hotham, *Ad Philosophiam Teutonicam Manuductio* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1648), dedicatory epistle.

authoritative father dealt with a disobedient child – with punishment extending to exile for those former enemies who refused to live ‘quietly and peaceably at home’ among their ‘Brethren’. Yet if reformation of the law were accomplished so that people were governed by the ‘most briefe, plaine & easie’ laws, then:

all Hearts will blesse the Hands of such Reformers, and Love will cover All the Ends of the Earth, and the God of Love will give us his blessing of Peace all the world over, and then the King of Glory will dwell with Men, and All the Kingdomes of the Earth will be his.<sup>61</sup>

For this translation Buddecke suggested that Sparrow had used a German manuscript but supplied his own unique title.<sup>62</sup> Doubtless he had obtained a copy of the text through Beyerland by way of intermediaries. Although van Beyerland died in 1648 Sparrow would later receive more Böhme material from another ‘lover of the divine wisdom’. This was the Frankfurt-born Hermetic engraver, art dealer and diplomatic agent of the Swedish crown at Amsterdam, Michel le Blon (1587–1656).<sup>63</sup> A ‘very intimate acquaintance and fellow-labourer’ of van Beyerland’s,<sup>64</sup> known to Rabbi

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<sup>61</sup> Jacob Boehme, *The Second Booke. Concerning The Three Principles of The Divine Essence*, trans. John Sparrow (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1648), ‘To the Reader’. Within five years of writing this preface Sparrow would be appointed to the Parliamentary Committee to consider reformation of the law (17 January – 23 July 1652).

<sup>62</sup> Buddecke, *Böhme-Ausgaben*, vol. 2, pp. 121–23.

<sup>63</sup> P.R. Sellin, ‘Michael Le Blon and England, 1632–1649: with observations on Van Dyck, Donne, and Vondel’, *Dutch Crossing*, 21 (1998), pp. 102–25; P.R. Sellin, ‘Michael Le Blon and England, 1632–1649 II: Genesis and Fortunes of G.R. Weckherlin’s Elegaic Lament “Des Grossen Gustav-Adolfen Ebenbild”’, *Dutch Crossing*, 22 (1998), pp. 53–84; P.R. Sellin, ‘Michael Le Blon and England, 1632–1649 III: Gustavus Adolphus, Sir Walter Raleigh’s Gold Mine, and the Perfidy of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham’, *Dutch Crossing*, 23 (1999), pp. 102–32; M. Keblusek, ‘The Business of News: Michel le Blon and the transmission of political information to Sweden in the 1630s’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 28 (2003), pp. 205–13; B. Noldus, ‘A spider in its web: agent and artist Michel le Blon and his northern European network’, in Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Noldus (eds.), *Double agents: cultural and political brokerage in early modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 161–91.

<sup>64</sup> Ueberfeld (ed.), *Theosophia Revelata*, pp. 116–17, translated in DWL, MS 186.17 (15), fol. 69.

Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657),<sup>65</sup> and regarded by Hartlib as ‘a very curious man for Painting and all manner of Arts’,<sup>66</sup> le Blon also corresponded with several of Böhme's followers and readers. Among them were Abraham von Franckenberg; Heinrich Prunius (c.1602–1644), formerly a medical student and language teacher, afterwards secretary in Dresden at the court of the Prince-Elector of Saxony; and Christian Bernhard (d.1649), toll-collector of Sagan (modern Zagan, Poland).<sup>67</sup> In November 1646, while resident at Amsterdam, von Franckenberg, who was then living in Danzig (modern Gdańsk, Poland), sent him 25 of Böhme's autograph letters dating from about 1620 to 1624 that had originally been part of Bernhard's collection. Le Blon subsequently translated a dozen of the most important into Dutch while staying at Stockholm in 1647. They were eventually published together with Le Blon's translation of some other letters in van Beyerland's collection, amounting to a total of 23 epistles as *Vergaderinge Der noch resterende XXIII. Seer Geestrijcke Leer-en Stichtelijcke Brieven des van Godt verlichte Mans Jacob Böhme Teutonic* (1653).<sup>68</sup> At the same time, and using the same Gothic and Roman typefaces, printers' ornaments and paper, le Blon issued a Dutch version of Böhme's ‘Little Prayer-book’ entitled *Gulde kleyhoot eener Aendachtighe Ziele (Golden gem of a devout soul)* ([Amsterdam], 1653). Evidently they were conceived as a pair, although only one complete set is known to survive.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Universiteitsbibliotheek, Amsterdam (UvA), MS III E 9 (31, 37, 76), printed in C. De Bethencourt, ‘Lettres de Menasseh ben Israel à Isaac Vossius (1651–1655)’, *Revue des Études Juives*, 49 (1904), pp. 105–06.

<sup>66</sup> SUL, HP 28/1/59B.

<sup>67</sup> Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 67 Noviss. 4° fols. 99r–103v, 110v, partly printed in ‘Michael Le Blon: Kürzelverzeichnis von Böhme-Anhängern’, in Theodor Harmsen (ed.), *Jacob Böhmes Weg in die Welt. Zur Geschichte der Handschriftensammlung, Übersetzungen und Editionen von Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland* (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2007), pp. 451–56.

<sup>68</sup> Ueberfeld (ed.), *Theosophia Revelata*, pp. 109, 116–17, translated in DWL, MS 186.17 (15), fols. 67–68, 69–70; Buddecke, *Böhme-Ausgaben*, vol. 2, pp. 42–43; C. Gilly, ‘Zur Entstehung und Wirkung der Handschriftensammlung Abraham Willemsz van Beyerlands’, in Harmsen (ed.), *Böhmes Weg in die Welt*, pp. 125, 128–29. It was supplemented with some spiritual letters by Georg Preining (d.1526/27), weaver and preacher of Augsburg together with Christoph Wießner's well known account.

<sup>69</sup> There are two known copies of *Gulde kleyhoot*: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, KW 954 D 49; and Norrköpings stadsbibliotek, 2174. That held at Norrköping is bound with and precedes *Vergaderinge Der noch resterende XXIII*. I am most grateful to Ola Gustafsson of Norrköpings

On 10/20 April 1650 le Blon sent Sparrow an original letter by Böhme, most likely addressed to Christian Bernhard, which le Blon had received from von Franckenberg when the latter was staying with van Beyerland at Amsterdam. More than a decade later Sparrow eventually published this missive in German with his translation.<sup>70</sup> Evidently he considered possessing an example of Böhme's handwriting of such significance that he commissioned the calligrapher and arithmetician Edward Cocker (1631/2–1676) to reproduce it in an engraving together with the English version in Sparrow's hand so that 'the very Character of All Manuscripts may be Communicated and perpetuated'. This engraving was printed in the seventh part of *The Remainder of Books* (1662) entitled 'Theosophick Letters'. Yet of the sixty extant copies of this collection only one, to my knowledge, contains the engraving.<sup>71</sup> As for rest of Böhme's 'Theosophick Letters', which were translated in selection rather than their entirety and most of which consisted of epistles to Bernhard, Sparrow's source was evidently *Theosophische Send-schreiben* (Amsterdam: Hendrick Beets, 1658). Comprising 62 letters by Böhme, an account of 'Teutonicus' written in February 1651 by the Breslau physician Christoph Wießner (c.1600–1661) and a further treatise by von Franckenberg, this volume was carefully edited by le Blon, the publisher Hendrick Beets (1625?–1708) and, before his death in June 1652, von Franckenberg.<sup>72</sup>

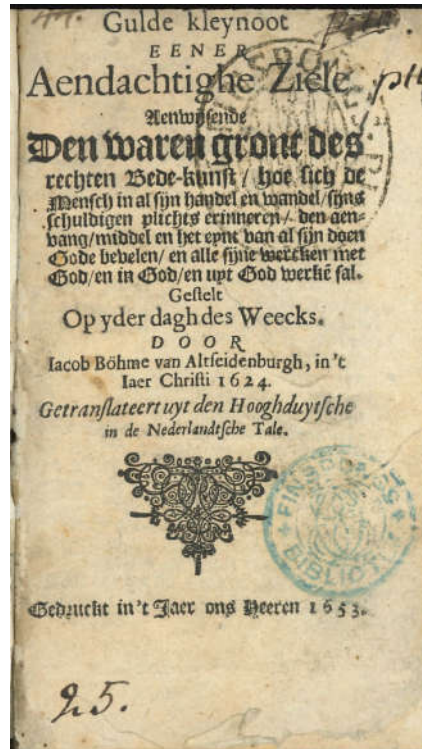
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Stadsbibliotek for providing me with high quality scans of the title-pages and to Leigh Penman for clarifying this point.

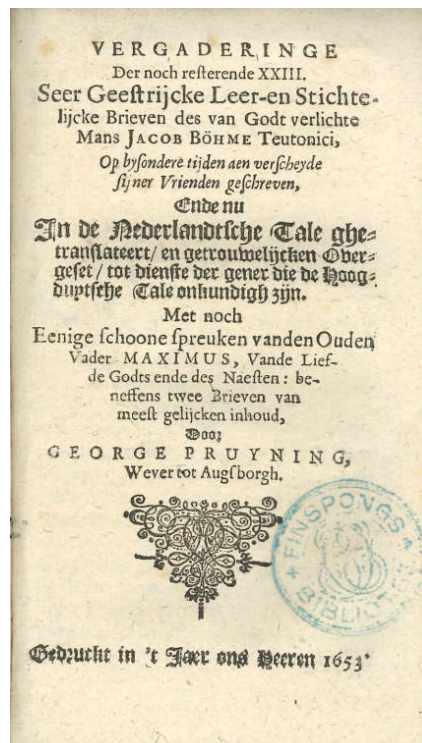
<sup>70</sup> Jacob Boehme, 'Theosophick Letters or Epistles' pp. 31–32 [second pagination] in *The Remainder of Books written by Jacob Behme*, trans. John Sparrow (London: Giles Calvert, 1662).

<sup>71</sup> Cambridge University Library, G.11.63.

<sup>72</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Theosophische Send-schreiben* (Amsterdam: Hendrick Beets, 1658); W. Heijting, 'Hendrik Beets (1625?–1708), publisher to the German adherents of Jacob Böhme in Amsterdam', *Quaerendo* 3 (1973), pp. 250–80.

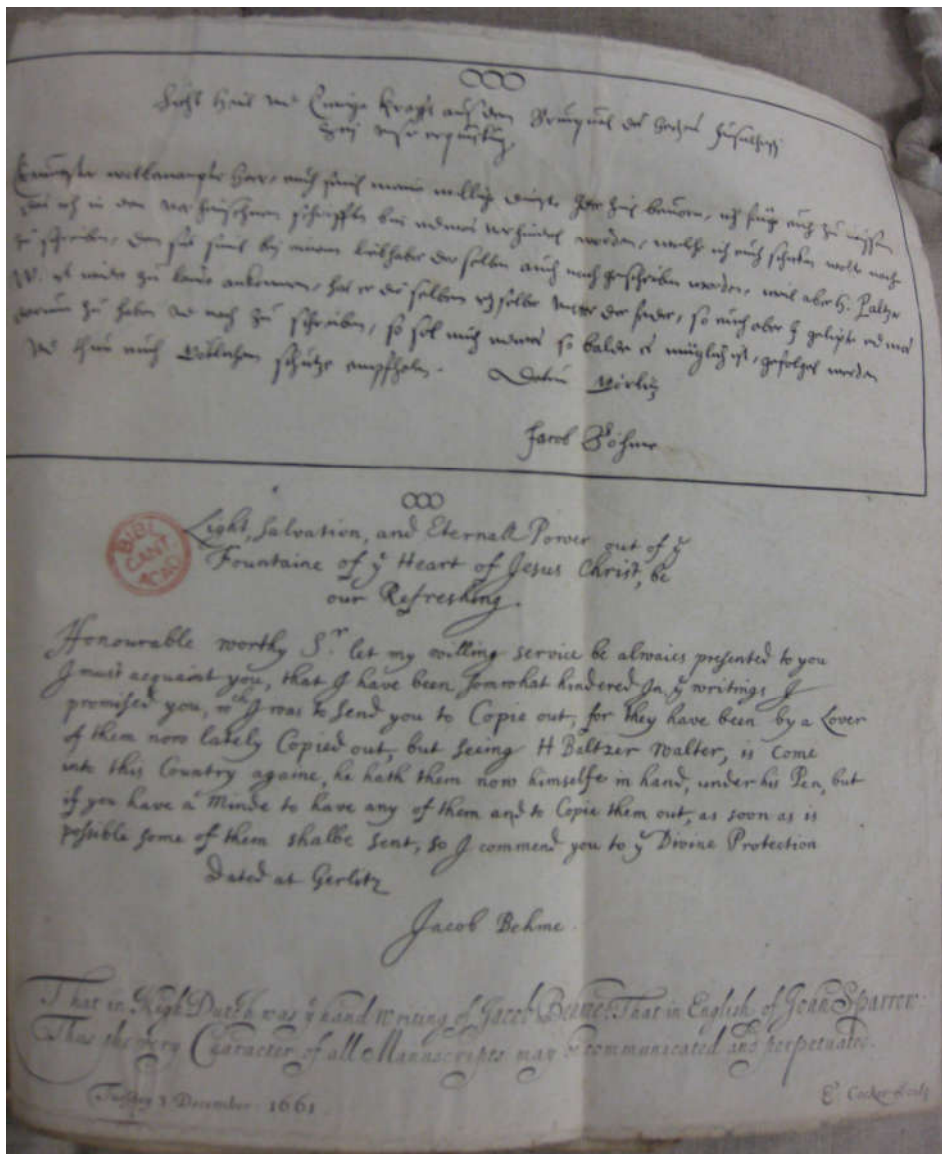


Jacob Boehme, *Gulde kleynoot eener Aendachtighe Ziele*, trans. Michel le Blon ([Amsterdam], 1653)



Jacob Boehme, *Vergaderinge Der noch resterende XXIII. Seer Geestrijcke Leer-en Stichtelijke Brieven des van Godt verlichte Mans Jacob Böhme Teutonici*, trans. Michel le Blon ([Amsterdam], 1653)





Jacob Böhme to [Christian Bernhard?] (c.1620), with English translation by John Sparrow.

Böhme's and Sparrow's handwriting was accurately reproduced here in an engraving by

Edward Cocker dated 3 December 1661

[*The Remainder of Books written by Jacob Behme*, trans. John Sparrow (London: Giles Calvert, 1662),

from an apparently unique copy held at Cambridge University Library, G.11.63]

For his part, von Franckenberg translated some Böhme material into Latin, which he published pseudonymously in the second part of his *Trias Mystica* (Amsterdam: George Trigg, 1651) as 'Metapsychica de Terrestri & Coelesti Mysterio, ex Cognitione Mysterii Magni Concepta, Contemplatio'.<sup>73</sup> He also had an extensive

<sup>73</sup> A. Franciscus de Monte. S. [pseud. = Abraham von Franckenberg] (ed.), *Trias mystica: in qua 1. Speculum Apocalypticum: 2. Mysterium Metapsychicum: 3. Epistolium Chronometricum* (Amsterdam:

epistolary network and among his correspondents was Hartlib, to whom he wrote several letters from Danzig between August 1646 and August 1648.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, some of von Franckenberg's work was translated into English – notably, as we have seen, his brief biography of Böhme. Yet there were pieces that remained in manuscript too, such as most of 'Oculus Sidereus, or a new opened starre-light and farre-sight' (from the German edition printed at Danzig, 1644) and what may have been an edited work entitled 'A Theologicall argument against the use of the materiall sword in a Christian Commonwealth' (from an undated Latin edition of 1646).<sup>75</sup> In addition, von Franckenberg's letter of 11/21 October 1641 to 'D.O.B.J.O.S' was printed in *A Reall and unfeigned Testimonie, concerning Iacob Beme of Old Seidenberg*, a work that sometimes appeared separately but was usually bound with *The Epistles of Jacob Behme* (1649). Joachim Telle identified the source as Böhme's *Von Christi Testamenten 2. Büchlein* (Sonnenburg: Anastasio Morgenroth, [1642]) and suggested that the recipient may have been Heinrich Prunius.<sup>76</sup> The translator was Sparrow's cousin John Elliston the younger.

The eldest son of John Elliston the elder (c.1599–1652), lord of the manor of Overhall in Gestingthorpe, Essex, Elliston the younger was admitted to Gray's Inn on 3 February 1644 and later married Winifred, daughter of Robert Barrington in October

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George Trigg 1651), pp. 65–95; Arlene Miller, 'Jacob Boehme from Orthodoxy to Enlightenment', unpublished Stanford University Ph.D., 1971, pp. 212, 232–33.

<sup>74</sup> BL, MS Sloane 648, fols. 89r–90v, with an English translation in Margaret Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme: A study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford UP, 1914), pp. 85–88 n. 3; Joachim Telle (ed.), *Abraham von Franckenberg. Briefwechsel* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995), pp. 195–202, 219–20; SUL, HP 1/33/14A.

<sup>75</sup> BL, MS Sloane 648, fols. 101r–40v; Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg, Cod. Theol. 1911, fols. 33r–58r; *Bibliotheca Uffenbachiana universalis sive catalogus librorum* (4 vols., Frankfurt-am-Main: J.B. Andreae and H. Hort, 1729–31), vol. 3, pp. 737–38, no. 68. *Argumentum Theologicum* was purportedly by 'Valerio Nigrino' but the English translation, perhaps by Benjamin Furly, was attributed in a later hand to 'Abrah. von Franckenberg'. The date derives from the library catalogue of the mathematician Benedikt Bahnsen. See *Catalogus Variorum ... Petri Serrarii ... den 9 April 1670* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Velfsen, 1670), p. 10 no. 61 [second pagination].

<sup>76</sup> Jacob Böhme, *Von Christi Testamenten 2. Büchlein* (Sonnenburg: Anastasio Morgenroth, [1642]), sigs. Yxi<sup>r</sup>–Ziii<sup>r</sup>; Telle (ed.), *Abraham von Franckenberg*, pp. 137–42.

1650.<sup>77</sup> Working from *Von Christi Testamenten*, Elliston translated not only von Franckenberg's letter of October 1641 but also a letter dated 23 September / 3 October 1641 from Johann Theodor von Tschesch (1595–1649), a Silesian nobleman and formerly privy councillor of Liegntiz, to Heinrich Prunius. This too appeared in *A Reall and unfeigned Testimonie*. There then followed *A Warning from Iacob Beem the Teutonique Phylosopher* (1649), of which the first four paragraphs likewise derived from *Von Christi Testamenten*.<sup>78</sup> As for Böhme's *Epistles* with which *A Reall and unfeigned Testimonie* and *A Warning from Iacob Beem* were usually bound, these appeared in two editions printed by Matthew Simmons. The title-page of both editions declared that these letters were translated from German and this seems to have been the case in several instances. Yet the 35<sup>th</sup> epistle which Böhme wrote to the physician Tobias Kober (1587–1625) from Dresden in June 1624, concluded with the statement that it was translated into English from a Dutch version based on Böhme's 'owne hand-writing'.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, van Beyerland had initially published 14 of Böhme's letters in a Dutch translation entitled *Eenighe schoone brieven* (1641), which he then expanded into an edition of 21 letters with the same title (1643). All of these letters, albeit in a different sequence, also appeared in Elliston's English translation

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<sup>77</sup> John Elliston the elder had married Elizabeth (*d.* 1632), a younger sister of John Sparrow the elder, father of the Böhme translator. See Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/P 85/1/1; Joseph Foster (ed.), *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521–1889* (London: Hansard, 1889), p. 238; Essex RO, D/Y 1/3/65 (ii); Essex RO, D/Y 1/3/68 (ii, iii); Bodl., MS Rawlinson Essex 22, fols. 220r-v, 246r-49r; Thomas Wright, *The History and Topography of the county of Essex* (2 vols., London: George Virtue, 1836), vol. 1, p. 537; R.R.A. Walker, 'John Elliston and John Sparrow, the English translators of Jacob Behmen', *Notes & Queries*, 14th series, 167 (1934), p. 312; Anon., 'The Sparrow Family of Gestingthorpe', *Essex Review*, 48 (1939), pp. 214–16.

<sup>78</sup> Boehme, *Von Christi Testamenten*, sigs. Yii<sup>v</sup>–Yvi<sup>r-3</sup>, Aaii<sup>r</sup>–Aaiii<sup>v</sup>; *A reall and unfeigned Testimonie, Concerning Iacob Beme Of Old Seidenberg, in upper Lausatia. Or The letters of two Learned Germans, both acquaintance, and Lovers of this Authour; called Teutonicus. The first is an Epistle of H[ans] D[ietrich] V[on] T[schesch] to H[enricus] P[runius] V[on] H[irschfeld] Dated the 3. of Octob. Stilo novo, Anno 1641. The second is an Epistle of A[braham] V[on] F[ranckenberg] to D.O.B.J.O.S. the 21 of Octob. Anno. 1641. Translated out of High Dutch, for Benefit and Information to those that read his Writings* (London: Giles Calvert, 1649) [usually bound with Jacob Boehme, *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*, trans. John Elliston (London: Giles Calvert, 1649)].

<sup>79</sup> Boehme, *Epistles*, trans. Elliston, p. 215.

suggesting that he may have consulted the 1643 edition of van Beyerland's *Eenighe schoone brieven*.<sup>80</sup>

Altogether the 1649 English edition of Böhme's correspondence consisted of 35 letters, including some addressed to various customs officials, patrons and physicians. Since 21 of these corresponded to those available in Dutch, added to which was the letter to Kober, it appears therefore that more than a dozen were based on German manuscript copies. Elliston may thus have accorded these epistles greater importance than had some of their recipients. Moreover, in his preface to *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen* Elliston defended their author, claiming that his language was neither 'trimmed up' in the scholastic 'pompe, and pride of words' nor savoured of 'a *Sectarian* spirit of Hypocrisie and affectation; arrogancy and *Pedantick* presumption'. For in these epistles there was:

much seasonable and wholesome Doctrine, Instruction, and Counsell, for a Christian resigned Soule; much Consolation for the afflicted under Christs Crosse ... Exhortation to Truth, Love, and righteousness: Dehortation from all evill, pride, envy, covetousnesse wrath, malice, falshood, and Cain-like Hypocrisie; likewise many Propheticall Passages, and Predictions concerning the punishment, and severe *judgements* that are and shall be upon Babel, and the Antichrist, and all false, and wicked Oppressours.

Like Sparrow, Elliston too hoped that all 'Sects' and 'Controversies in Religion' would be settled 'on the true ground' so that 'we may come to serve God aright in the true unity of the Spirit'.<sup>81</sup>

It also seems likely that Sparrow and Elliston collaborated in translating a compilation of Böhme's prophetic writings under the title *Mercurius Teutonicus; or, A Christian information concerning the last Times* (printed by M[atthew] Simmons, for H[umphrey] Blunden, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1649). This had been heralded the previous year by Sparrow in his preface to *The Three Principles of The Divine Essence* as 'a little Treatise of some Prophecies concerning these latter times'

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Buddecke, *Böhme-Ausgaben*, vol. 2, pp. 69–71, 169–70. I am grateful to Leigh Penman for discussing this point and sharing his table of Dutch and English translations of Böhme's epistles.

<sup>81</sup> Boehme, *Epistles*, trans. Elliston, sigs. a<sup>v</sup>–a2, a2<sup>r-2</sup>.

collected out of Böhme's writings by 'a Lover of the Teutonick Philosophy'.<sup>82</sup> The address 'To the Lover of Peace and Truth' in *Mercurius Teutonicus* may have been by Elliston since it lacked Sparrow's customary sign off, while the excerpts from a letter to the Liegnitz toll-collector Paul Kaym (c.1571–1635) were almost identical to those printed in Elliston's translation of Böhme's *Epistles*.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, passages from chapters 30, 31, 32 and 40 of *Mysterium Magnum* closely match those that would be published in 1654.<sup>84</sup> Since we have seen that Sparrow probably translated chapters 64 to 78 of this work while Elliston was responsible for more than half (i.e. possibly chapters 1 to 40 if not more), the selection from *Mysterium Magnum* was probably also by Elliston. Significantly, copyright of *Mercurius Teutonicus* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 2 February 1649 – just days after the execution of Charles I.<sup>85</sup>

Thereafter, Sparrow translated *The Third Booke of the Author being The High and Deepe Searching out of The Threefold Life of Man* (printed by M[atthew] S[immons] for H[umphrey] Blunden, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1650). This was advertised as a 'long expected book' by that 'famous German author *Jac. Bemen*' in mid-May 1650.<sup>86</sup> For his part, Elliston next translated Böhme's *Signatura Rerum: or the Signatvre of all Things* (printed by John Macock, for Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread Eagle, at the West end of Paul's Church, 1651) from an 'Original Copy' in his

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<sup>82</sup> Boehme, *Three Principles*, trans. Sparrow, 'To the Reader'.

<sup>83</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Mercurius Teutonicus; or A Christian Information concerning the last Times*, [trans. John Sparrow and John Elliston?] (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1649), pp. 1–3; cf. Boehme, *Epistles*, trans. Elliston, pp. 51–53.

<sup>84</sup> Boehme, *Mercurius Teutonicus*, [trans. Sparrow & Elliston?], pp. 24–39; cf. Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum. Or An Exposition of the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, trans. John Elliston and John Sparrow (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1654), pp. 181–85, 189, 190–91, 193, 195, 199–202, 277–81

<sup>85</sup> Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 1, p. 309. See also, *A Perfect Diurnall* No. 288, 29 January – 5 February 1649, p. 2319; *Perfect Occurrences of Every Daies iournall in Parliament* No. 110, 2–9 February 1649, p. 830; *A Perfect Summary* No. 3, 5–12 February 1649, p. 21. Thomason dated his copy 5 February 1649.

<sup>86</sup> *A Perfect Diurnall* No. 22, 6–13 May 1650 p. 256; *Several Proceedings in Parliament* No. 33, 9–16 May 1650 p. 486.

possession.<sup>87</sup> Elliston's premature death, however, necessitated that Sparrow completed the work of his 'Deare Kinsman', subsequently finishing and issuing their joint endeavour *Mysterium Magnum. Or An Exposition of the First Book of Moses called Genesis* (printed by M[atthew] Simmons for H[umphrey] Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill, 1654). On 21 August 1652, some nine days after the death of his father John Elliston the elder, Elliston the younger drew up his will. Sparrow was one of three witnesses and also appointed one of three supervisors. The next day Elliston died at Gestingthorpe about 1 o'clock in the morning and 'so went into the Mystery, where his soule enjoyeth the fruits of his labours of Love'.<sup>88</sup>

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A few months before Elliston's death, Sparrow published another Böhme translation, *Of Christs Testaments, viz: Baptisme and the Supper* (printed by M[atthew] Simmons, to be sold by George Eversden at the Golden Ball in Aldersgate Street, or by H[umphrey] Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill near the Exchange, 1652).<sup>89</sup>

Afterwards he continued issuing further translations of Böhme's works, including *Concerning the Election of Grace. Or Of Gods Will towards Man. Commonly called Predestination* (printed by John Streater, for Giles Calvert, and John Allen, and are to be sold at their shops, at the Black Spread Eagle at the West end of Paul's Church; and at the Sun Rising in Paul's Church-Yard in the New Buildings between the two North Doors, 1655);<sup>90</sup> *Aurora. That is, the Day-Spring. Or Dawning of the Day in the Orient* (printed by John Streater, for Giles Calvert, and are be sold at his shop at the Black Spread Eagle at the West end of Paul's Church, 1656);<sup>91</sup> *The Fifth Book of the*

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<sup>87</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Signatura Rerum*, trans. J[ohn] Elliston (London: Giles Calvert, 1651), p. 207.

Thomason dated his copy 2 July 1651.

<sup>88</sup> Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 1, p. 459 (28 October 1654); Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, trans. Elliston & John Sparrow, 'To the Reader'; TNA: PRO, Prob 11/225 fols. 218v-19r; Bodl., MS Rawlinson Essex 23, fol. 296r, printed in Hessayon & Penman (eds.), *Extracts from Sparrow's diary* (forthcoming).

<sup>89</sup> *A Perfect Diurnall*, No. 125, 3-10 May 1652 last page. Thomason dated his copy 22 May 1652 [Thomason E 665(4)].

<sup>90</sup> Thomason dated his copy 13 November 1655 [Thomason E 859(5)].

<sup>91</sup> Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 2, p. 91 (18 October 1656). Thomason dated his copy 17 October 1656 [Thomason E 890(1)].

*Authour, In Three Parts. The first; Of the Becoming Man or Incarnation of Jesus Christ The Sonne of God* (printed by J[ohn] M[acock] for Lodowick Lloyd, at the Castle in Cornhill, 1659);<sup>92</sup> *Several Treatises: of Jacob Behme Not printed in English before* (printed for L[odowick] Lloyd at the Castle in Cornhill, 1661); and *The Remainder of Books written by Jacob Behme* (printed by M[ary] S[immons] for Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread Eagle, at the West End of St. Paul's, 1662).

Sparrow's achievement was commemorated by the poet and future dramatist Samuel Pordage (1633–1691?) who penned an encomium on Böhme's foremost English translator.<sup>93</sup> An eighteenth-century writer likewise commended Sparrow as a man of 'true virtue', who seemed to have penetrated 'very deeply into the spirit of the author'. Nevertheless, he noted that while his translation was regarded as faithful and correct except for some of the most obscure passages, it was 'not the most beautiful'.<sup>94</sup> Wishing to justify the undertaking of a new translation of Böhme into English, the nonjuror and mystic William Law (1686–1761) was even less charitable:

The translators of J[acob] B[ehmen], Elliston and Sparrow, are much to be honoured for their work; they had great piety and great abilities, and well apprehended their author, especially Elliston; but the translation is *too much loaded with words*, and in many places *the sense is mistaken*.<sup>95</sup>

#### IV

According to Richard Baxter's edited memoirs, when aged about 18 he made the acquaintance in London of Humphrey Blunden (1609–*fl.*1661), 'a sober, godly, understanding' apprentice 'whom I very much loved', and who 'is since turned an

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<sup>92</sup> Thomason dated his copy 12 April 1659 [Thomason E 977(1–3)].

<sup>93</sup> S[amuel] P[ordage], *Mundorum Explicatio* (London: Lodowick Lloyd, 1661), sig. a4<sup>r-2</sup>.

<sup>94</sup> Ueberfeld (ed.), *Theosophia Revelata*, p. 104, translated in DWL, MS 186.17 (15), fol. 59; cf. Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, vol. 7, endnotes, translated in DWL, MS I.1.62, p. 175.

<sup>95</sup> DWL, MS I.1.43, pp. 173–78, William Law to Stephen Penny (8 April 1747) [copy], printed in Christopher Walton, *Notes and Materials for an adequate Biography of the celebrated divine and theosopher, William Law* (London: privately printed, 1854), p. 45 n.

extraordinary Chymist, and got *Jacob Behem* his Books translated and printed'.<sup>96</sup> Blunden's shop was at 'The Castle' in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange and during the latter half of the 1640s he entered into partnership to issue the writings of the astrologer William Lilly.<sup>97</sup> Blunden also published six works by the alchemist Thomas Vaughan and may be the H.B. who appended an encomium to 'his ever honour'd' friend's *Anima Magica Abscondita* (printed by T.W. for H[umphrey] B[lunden], 1650).<sup>98</sup> In his ephemeris for 1648 Hartlib remarked that Blunden had gotten 'an Instrument for curing deafness' from the alchemist Johann Rudolph Glauber; he apparently intended to apply it to his wife but was reluctant to pay £5 for it.<sup>99</sup> Blunden, moreover, queried some passages in Glauber's books – probably those translated as *A Description of New Philosophical Furnaces* (printed by Richard Coats for Thomas Williams, 1651), as well as reportedly corresponding with two men at Amsterdam: Petrus Serrarius and the Bohemian-born chiliast and visionary Paul Felgenhauer (1593–1661).<sup>100</sup> In addition, he published a number of works by or derived from the writings of Jacob Böhme, several in association with the printer Matthew Simmons. Indeed, such was Blunden's enthusiasm for that 'deep illuminated man of God' that he 'furnished' Durand Hotham with material for the latter's biography of Böhme.<sup>101</sup> He is most likely the H. Blunden who supplied a prefatory epistle to Böhme's *Four Tables of Divine Revelation* (printed for H[umphrey] Blunden, and sold at the Castle in Cornhill, 1654). This treatise was rendered into English by H.B. – a monogram that may be identified with Blunden; a namesake licensed to practise medicine; or Humphrey Blundell (c.1622–fl.1644), Shropshire educated and a former pupil of Charles Hotham (1615–1672).<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, and J. Dunton, 1696), part 1, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> Ariel Hessayon, 'Blunden, Humphrey (b. 1609, d. in or after 1654)', *ODNB*.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Vaughan, *Anima Magica Abscondita* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1650), last page.

<sup>99</sup> SUL, HP 31/22/4A; SUL, HP 23/6A; SUL, HP 60/14/39B–40A; SUL, HP 28/1/83B.

<sup>100</sup> SUL, HP 60/3/6A; SUL, HP 42/2/5A; John Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits* (London: D. Browne, 1705), pp. 321–23.

<sup>101</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Four Tables of Divine Revelation*, trans. H[umphrey] B[lunden?] (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1654), sig. H3; Durand Hotham, *The Life of Jacob Behmen* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1654), sig. B2.

<sup>102</sup> Boehme, *Four Tables*, title-page, 'To the Reader'; Jean Baptiste van Helmont, *Van Helmonts Workes* (London: Lodowick Lloyd, 1664), 'To the English Reader'.



The third son of Sir John Hotham of Scarborough by his second wife, Charles Hotham was educated at Westminster school, Peterhouse and Christ's College, Cambridge.<sup>103</sup> In June 1644 he was intruded Fellow of Peterhouse and was afterwards nominated as junior Proctor of Cambridge University. While holding this position from July 1646 to March 1647 Hotham engaged in a public debate before the Vice-Chancellor Thomas Hill (*d.*1653) on the topical question of whether the soul was transmitted from the parent or created by God out of nothing and infused into the body. Within about a year and with Hill's support this discourse was published, probably in a reworked and expanded version rather than from memory, as *Ad Philosophiam Teutonicam Manuductio* (printed by T[homas] W[ilson] for H[umphrey] Blunden, 1648). Interestingly, it contained a commendatory verse by Hotham's 'highly esteem'd' friend and contemporary at Christ's, the Platonist Henry More. An English rendering, possibly by Hotham's student Tobias Conyers (1630–1687), appeared around two years later as *An Introduction to the Tevtonick Philosophie* (printed by T.M. & A.C. for Nath[aniel] Brooks at the Angel in Cornhill, 1650). In his dedication to Hill, Hotham explained that he sought to make these 'abstruse Notions' more accessible by 'taking off the dark style' of Böhme's 'magick language', for:

*Whatsoever the Thrice-great Hermes deliver'd as Oracles from his Propheticall Tripods, or Pythagoras spake by authority, or Socrates debated, or Aristotle affirmed; yea, whatever divine Plato prophesied, or Plotinus proved; this, and all this, or a far higher and profounder Philosophy is (I think) contained in the Teutonicks writings.*<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> A. Hessayon, "Honest Jacob" Boehme, the Cambridge Platonists and their associates' (forthcoming).

<sup>104</sup> Charles Hotham, *An Introduction to the Tevtonick Philosophie*, trans. D.F. [= Tobias Conyers?] (London: Nathaniel Brooks, 1650), dedicatory epistle, prefatory material.

Afterwards Hotham translated Böhme's *A Consolatory Treatise Of The Four Complexions* (printed by T[homas] W[ilson] for H[umphrey] Blunden, and sold at the Castle in Cornhill, 1654).<sup>105</sup>

His brother Durand Hotham (c.1617–1691), sometime of Hutton Cranswick in the East Riding of Yorkshire, completed a biography of the Teutonic Philosopher on 7 November 1653 which was subsequently published as *The Life of Jacob Behmen* (printed for H[umphrey] Blunden, and sold at the Castle in Cornhill, 1654). This biography of that 'deep illuminated man of God' drew largely on Franckenberg's brief memoir supplemented with 'Authentick Information' from the tongues and pen of those who knew him. Addressing the reader, Durand conceded finding many 'obscure' things as well as 'highly honest, pious' and 'just' sentiments in Böhme's writings. Yet he trusted that this short relation would stir up more 'searching Spirits' to thoroughly weigh his publications. For it had pleased God to use Böhme as his instrument to 'bring so much Knowledge into the World'. After several digressions – on subterranean spirits in Iceland, rabbinical legends, the trial of a local white witch, and an anecdote told him by two Germans in London – Durand concluded by proposing Böhme's inclusion at the head of a new roll of 'Civil Saints', hoping that in these 'last generations' he would be joined by such as have:

cry'd out against, acted, and suffer'd, to redeem that part of mankind joy'n'd in the Communion of a nation with them, from the captivity of tyrannous usurpation, and pretence, to rule by servile and customary Lawes (made by some powerfull corrupt interest).<sup>106</sup>

## V

The diffusion of Böhme's texts from east to west, from Görlitz to Amsterdam and thence to London, Essex and the East Riding, continued with their translation from

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<sup>105</sup> The copyright of this work was entered in the Stationers' register by the publisher Humphrey Blunden on 28 October 1654; see Briscoe Eyre, Plomer and Rivington (eds.), *Transcript of the Stationers Registers*, vol. 1, p. 459.

<sup>106</sup> Boehme, *Four Tables*, trans. B[lunden?], sig. H3; Hotham, *Life of Behmen*, sigs. B2, C2–C2<sup>r</sup>, G2<sup>r-2</sup>–G2<sup>v2</sup>. Thomason dated his copy 29 September 1654 [Thomason E 1068(6)].

English into Welsh at Wrexham by Morgan Llwyd (1619–1659) of Gwynedd.<sup>107</sup> Regarded as the greatest Welsh prose-writer of the seventeenth century, Llwyd was probably educated at Wrexham grammar school – where according to tradition he heard the local curate Walter Cradock preach. During the Civil Wars he seems to have served as a chaplain and was associated with the Welsh army officers and regicides John Jones and Thomas Harrison, justifying the execution of Charles I with the lines ‘The law was ever above Kings’.<sup>108</sup>

By October 1651 Llwyd was pastor of the gathered church at Wrexham. He considered the Welsh preacher William Erbery (1604–1654) his ‘ever remembered friend’ and ‘once-dear School-master’; significantly, Cradock had been Erbery’s curate at St. Mary’s, Cardiff before he went to Wrexham.<sup>109</sup> Erbery knew Böhme’s *Mercurius Teutonicus* (1649), paraphrasing a prophetic passage that ‘the Turks shall yet turn to be true Christians, and that Christians shall all know the Truth as it is in Jesus’.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps he introduced Böhme to Llwyd, who by June 1651 was studying the Teutonic Philosopher. Llwyd was also known to some in London that waited for the ‘kingdome of God & the saluation of Israel’ and, emboldened by reading Michael Gühler’s *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1651), he wrote to Hartlib in December 1652 to ask about a rumour concerning the appearance of ‘the signe of the son of man’ in the clouds above Germany or Poland.<sup>111</sup> One of Llwyd’s earliest published works was an allegory on contemporary religious and political divisions entitled *Dirgelwch I rai iw ddeall Ac i ereill iw Watwar, sef Tri aderyn yn ymddiddan yr Eryr, a’r Golomen, a’r Gigfran* (*A Mystery for some to understand and others to mock at, that is to say, Three Birds discoursing, the Eagle, the Dove, and the Raven*) (1653). The title-page indicated that it was also a sign to address the Welsh ‘before the coming of 666 [anti-Christ]’ (Revelation 13:18).

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<sup>107</sup> Stephen K. Roberts, ‘Llwyd, Morgan (1619–1659)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>108</sup> National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, MS 11434 B, printed in Thomas Ellis and J.H. Davies (eds.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd O Wynedd* (2 vols., Bangor & London, 1899–1908), vol. 1, p. 55.

<sup>109</sup> William Erbery, *A Call to the Churches* (London, 1653), pp. 21, 22; William Scott and James Bliss (eds.), *The Works of ... William Laud* (7 vols., Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847–60), vol. 5, p. 329.

<sup>110</sup> William Erbery, *The Testimony of William Erbery* (London: Giles Calvert, 1658), p. 333; cf.

Boehme, *Mercurius Teutonicus*, [trans. Sparrow & Elliston?], pp. 36–38.

<sup>111</sup> SUL, HP 65/8/1A.

In July 1656 Llwyd wrote from Wrexham to the Baptist preacher Henry Jessey recommending that he peruse 'Jac. Behmens three-fold life, & especially his booke of Baptisme & lords supper'.<sup>112</sup> Another of Llwyd's correspondents was Richard Baxter, whose understanding of God's 'first and second will' he questioned:

None knowes the will before the revealed essence of God. Know wee him (as immanent), then all is plaine & the key is found, though philosophy could never well attend to the eternall word who is the only begotten Image and universall declaration of the wonderful everblessed Godhead & is God eternall.<sup>113</sup>

Baxter responded on 10 July 1656, complaining that he could not understand Llwyd's meaning. Furthermore, having looked into Sir Henry Vane's and Böhme's writings he was dissatisfied with their use of allegory and their obscure manner of revealing 'y<sup>e</sup> whole fabricke & systeme or body of truths w<sup>ch</sup> they p[ro]fess to have attained'.<sup>114</sup> Llwyd replied in December 1656 acknowledging that some things concerning God, paradise and the New Jerusalem were either impossible to comprehend, difficult to speak of, unlawful or inconvenient to have all made known. Indeed, the 'present writings of men' lagged far behind Paul for 'elegant expressions and depth of understanding'.<sup>115</sup> Yet Llwyd had turned to Sparrow's version of Böhme's *The Way to Christ Discovered* (1648, 1654), translating 'Of true Resignation' and 'A Dialogue between a Scholar and his Master, Concerning the Super-sensuall life' into Welsh as 'Yr Ymroddiad' ('Resignation') and 'Y Discybl ai Athraw O newydd' ('The Disciple and his Teacher, Anew') (1655). These were published in London together with two

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<sup>112</sup> NLW, MS 11438 D, Letter 86, printed in D.S. Katz, 'Philo-Semitism in the Radical Tradition: Henry Jessey, Morgan Llwyd, and Jacob Boehme', in J. van den Berg and E.G.E. van der Wall (eds.), *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), pp. 197–98.

<sup>113</sup> DWL, MS Baxter, Letters, I 52, printed in Ellis and Davies (eds.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, vol. 2, p. 271, and calendared in N. Keeble and G.F. Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vol. 1, pp. 209–10.

<sup>114</sup> DWL, MS Baxter, Letters, I 53, calendared in Keeble and Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of Baxter Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 217–18.

<sup>115</sup> Ellis and Davies (eds.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, vol. 2, p. 273; Keeble and Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of Baxter Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 234, 248–49.

works by Llwyd as *Yr ymroddiad neu Bapuryn a gyfieuthiwyd ddwywaith i helpu y cymru unwaith allan or Hunan ar drygioni (Self Resignation, or a Paper translated to help the Welsh out of Self and Evil)* (1657). His objective was explained in the preface: 'to bring the spirit of man into entire submission to God by subduing the natural self to the spiritual self'.<sup>116</sup>

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The dream of Böhme's principal English translators that his writings would put an end to religious strife proved to be illusory. Instead of a new reformation there was a new Babel. Condemned by some as a mixture of incomprehensible nonsense and vile falsehoods, the Teutonic Philosopher's ideas and vocabulary were appropriated and reworked into a variety of belief systems, ranging from the syncretism of the Cambridge Platonists to alchemists' experiments to discover the secrets of nature, and several early Quakers' notions of the unfolding of divine mysteries. Like other continental European works sold in English versions at London during the 1640s and 1650s, Böhme's texts were issued as a result of co-operation between translators, patrons, facilitators, printers and publishers. This was at a time when legislation empowered civil and military officials to fine or imprison the authors, printers, publishers and booksellers of unlicensed material. Indeed, while Böhme's writings were not suppressed (the copyright of seven books was entered in the Stationers' Register) a few of his readers were imprisoned for blasphemy or punished by authority. Their fate will be discussed in my forthcoming book, though it serves to emphasize the English translators' inability to control how Böhme would be interpreted.

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<sup>116</sup> Alfred Palmer, *A History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham and its Neighbourhood* (Wrexham: Woodall, Minshall & Thomas, [1888]), pp. 13–14; Thomas Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955), p. 246.

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