Spiritual Ways, Spiritual Faculties

*Mediaeval Spirituality in Early Modern Devotion: Texts and Practices*

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Abstract

This article investigates meditations (both Catholic and Protestant) that are considered relevant textual representations of the devotional culture in the Early Modern Age. Studying the reception and use of patristic and mediaeval texts of devotional character in the early modern period, the article states that a close connection may be observed between early modern devotional culture on the one hand, and the patristic and mediaeval tradition on the other. Through analysis of the sources, the researcher can observe that the breach between the mediaeval church and the churches of the Reformation is much less abrupt and definitive than is often assumed. Particularly, the devotio moderna forms an important bridge between the Middle Ages and the later Baroque age.

Keywords

Catholic and Protestant meditation – devotio moderna – history of spirituality

The multidisciplinary research of early modern spirituality, including the insights of social, ecclesiastical, political, and cultural history, or the ethnography of religion, has yielded valuable results during the last few decades. Thanks to these results, we now have valuable information about the individual and collective traditions and conventions of the experience of faith, the rules of

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the social stratification (or its absence) of spiritual life, the connections of 
spiritual practice and spiritual truth, and spiritual practice and power. In 
Germany, this multidisciplinary approach to the study of piety is aptly indicated as 
Frömmigkeitsforschung, a direction of research in which the present article is 
embedded when it investigates the Frömmigkeit of different European cultures 
expressed in various languages.

In the present contribution, I aim to investigate some aspects of the early 
modern practice of meditation as one of the possible textual representations 
of spirituality in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In my use of the term 
“spirituality,” I follow Philip Sheldrake’s definition in the context of what he 
calls “historic traditions such as Christianity,” namely, as “the exemplification 
in the personal and corporate life of believers of the fundamental teachings 
and values of Christianity.” My starting point is that of a literary historian: I am 
interested in matters of genre and text usage as well as in questions concerning 
philology.

As a direct result of the flourishing research of the history of spiritual life, 
the interest in the investigation and evaluation of early modern meditations 
as a type of applied literary texts has visibly increased lately all over Europe. 
This subject has been treated in exhaustive monographs by Klára Erdei, Gábor 
Túskés and Udo Sträter. These studies, together with other, shorter essays, 
not only contain productive points of view assisting the investigation of this 
topic, but also draw attention to the necessity of a further, textual analysis of 
both theoretical and practical sources.

1 Among the multitude of studies, I choose some examples: Anna Coreth, Pietas Austriaca. Österrei 

chische Frömmigkeit im Barock (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1982); Gerhardt Kapner, Baro 

2 Cf. Philip Sheldrake elsewhere in this volume: “Constructing Spirituality: The ‘Politics’ of 
Definitions and Historical Interpretations.”


4 Gábor Túskés, A XVII. századi elbesszélő egyházi irodalom európai kapcsolatai [The European 
connections of seventeenth-century ecclesiastical literature] (Budapest: Universitas, 1997); Gábor 

5 Udo Sträte, Meditation und Kirchenreform in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. Jahrhunderts 
(Tübingen: Mohr, 1995).

6 Two interesting collections of studies show the diversity of possible approaches to the theme: 
Gerhard Kurz, ed., Meditation und Erinnerung in der Frühen Neuzeit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck 
& Ruprecht, 2000); Karl Enenkel, ed. Meditatio: Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in 
Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
Due to reasons of methodology and length, the present study, instead of synthesizing statements, offers the presentation of representative examples with the help of a specific case study: Hungary and Transylvania. While the focus of this article is on devotional literature in Hungary and Transylvania in the early ages of the Reformation, examples of this "genre" from all over Europe are included in order to investigate those texts that were well received in early modern Hungary and Transylvania. The main aim of this contribution is to uncover and analyze cases of interconfessional relations (connected also to the Middle Ages) in the age of confessionalization. This approach regards the texts not just as texts, but focuses emphatically on their use.

1 Paratexts on the Methods of Text Usage

As stated by contemporary researchers on the peripheries of texts, the “space outside the book” (that is, authors’ or publishers’ prefaces or epilogues, indexes, appendixes, not to mention details such as title pages or colophons) is meant to be forgotten from its very creation. Yet, at the same time, the study of such paratexts has identified this part of a text as a framework for the reading material, making it visible while separating the world of the book from the “external” world.7 Thus, the study of paratexts makes clear that the forgetting of the text’s periphery is never complete, since by preceding, introducing, and framing the main text, the paratext is also integrated into the main text, guiding it, defining it, or even setting the expectations or prescriptions for the ways of reading what is “inside” the book.8 Following Gérard Genette, Philippe Lane examines this pragmatic function of paratexts with reference to modern and contemporary literary texts. Lane’s observations are increasingly valid for those types of texts in which reading is regarded not only as a possible way of acquiring knowledge or an entertaining-relaxing pursuit, but also as the catalyst, the starting point of some kind of “useful” (utilis) activity.

The adequate collective notion to indicate these types of texts may be applied literature. With this term, I refer to the body of texts, which, in accordance with their pragmatic orientation, serve the idea or practice about which they write, even if in doing so they display high rhetorical-poetical standards.

8 Cf. Philippe Lane, Periferia textului [The periphery of the text] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2007), 16; also 70–78.
Texts considered here as applied literature, then, do not constitute their subject; instead, their subject is defined by external purposes. The textual types analysed in the present paper correspond fully to these criteria. Of special importance in this approach is the study of the prefaces to the texts under consideration, in which we find information on the question of what writers, translators, or publishers consider as the function of their works, and what usage they recommend for these texts.

The addressees of authorial or publishers' prefaces are generally the patrons and/or the readers. As an expression of gratitude, patrons are usually noted to contribute to the publication of the given work "sparing no expenses;" financial support is considered as one form of the practice of piety and thus the obtaining of eternal salvation. It is in this context that the Franciscan János Kájoni (1629–1687), who published the work of Péter Ágoston (1617–1689), a Jesuit of Sekler origin, in Csíksomlyó (today Şumuleu Ciuc, Romania), pays tribute to the aristocrat István Apor, who:

proved such love from the very beginning ... for the Order of Seraphim Saint Francis ... that I think it would be great ingratitude to forget about it. Moreover, many churches and temples stand as evidence for your love and piety towards God, for which you spared no expenses only for them to exhort people to the love of God, ardent piety, and the search for the eternal heavenly treasure.

Another addressee is found in the person of Kata Bethlen, wife of Mihály Apafi II (1676–1713), the last Prince of Transylvania. She is addressed in the

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10 See for example Zsigmond Haller of Hallerkő, comes (high official, főispán) of Belső-Szolnok County, who financially supported the publication of Gergely Vásárhelyi's translation of Thomas à Kempis's work on the imitation of Christ, Gergely Vásárhelyi, Christus Iesus követéséről négy könyvek (Kolozsvár [Cluj, today Romania]: Typ. Heltai, 1622), 15.
11 Hungarian: “Eleitöl-fogva olly nagy szeretetit mutatta ... a’ Seraphin Szent Ferencz Szerzetethez, ... hogy azokról el-feletekni, nagy háládatlnságnak itilém lenni, a’ kegyelmed szeretetéről, és Istenhez-való buzgóságáról pedig sok Templomok, sok Szentegyházak bizonságot tehetnek, kikötő költéségét nem szánta, csak azért, hogy az Isteni szeretetre, lelki buzgóságra, és a’ Mennyei örökké meg-marandandó kincsnek keresésére indítsa az embereket” Edition: Péter Ágoston, Szívek kínce. Avagy Kristus Urunk szendvedésén, és Halálán fohászkodó Könyvecse [The Treasure of Hearts, or A Booklet Praying on the Suffering and Death of Christ Our Lord] (Csíksomlyó [Şumuleu Ciuc, today Romania], 1685), 1v–v [unnumbered].
authorial preface of István Huszti’s (1671–1704) translation of the German Lutheran theologian Johann Arndt’s (1555–1621) *Paradiesgärten*. Huszti expresses his gratitude in adding that in these “wretched times,” being burdened with “excessive expenses,” it is a sign of “piety intended for collective use” to support book printing and the translator’s subsistence, which will in turn yield plenty of rewards and use for the generous patron.\textsuperscript{12}

Prefaces often contain information on the modes of reading. Some of them may therefore serve as guidelines for the “sociological” research of the history of spirituality. The work of the English Puritan author Lewis Bayly (1565–1631) is a case in point, even if it is not in the preface that Bayly elaborates on the practice of reading but in one of the sections of the treatise. When Bayly deals with the practice of piety at home, he discusses in detail the spiritual responsibilities of the host, whose control of the household members’ spiritual life as a divine command\textsuperscript{13} weighs just as much as his personal practice of piety.\textsuperscript{14} The formulations with a general character end with a concrete instruction:

As therefore if thou desirest to haue the blessing of God vpon thy selfe, and vpon thy Familie, either before or after thy owne priuate devotion, call evry morning all thy Familie to some convenient roome; and first, either reade thy selfe vnto them a Chapter in the Word of God, or cause it to be reade distinctly by some other. If leasure serue, thou mayest admonish them of some remarkable good notes.\textsuperscript{15}

In the following, the book guides the reader through concrete situations by model prayers\textsuperscript{16} and topics for meditation mixed with texts of prayers\textsuperscript{17} connected to the various parts of the day and customary activities.

\textsuperscript{12} István Huszti, *Keresztyéni jóságos tselekedetekkel tellyes Paraditsom Kertetske, Melly ... egybe-foglaltatott és elkészített Arnd János, A’ Lüneburgumi Fejedelemségnek Püspöke ... által* [The Garden of Paradise Filled With Good Christian Deeds] (Kolozsvár, 1698), 2–3.

\textsuperscript{13} “And God himself gies a speciall charge to all House-holders, that they doe instruct their Familie in his Word, and train them vp in his feare and seruice.” Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie Directing a Christian how to Walke that He May Please God* (London, 1631), 337. Bayly refers to Deut 6, 6–7 (*The Practice of Pietie*: 338–339).

\textsuperscript{14} “If thou be called to the gouernment of a family, thou must not hold it sufficient to serve God, and liue vprightly in thine owne person: vnlesse thou cause all vnder thy charge to doe the same with thee,” Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie*, 338.

\textsuperscript{15} Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie*, 343.


\textsuperscript{17} Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie*, 353–377.
The examples mentioned above highlight the practice of spiritual reading in a communal setting. However, there are other kinds of instructions, suggesting a personal, individual kind of usage. In the preface to the work *Manuductio ad coelum* by the Italian Cistercian monk Giovanni Bona (1609–1674), the author states that he writes “as if I were talking to myself.”\(^\text{18}\) The Hungarian translator of this work, the Jesuit István Tarnóczi (1626–1689), instructs his reader “not to read this reluctantly or speedily, but with a quiet, peaceful, and sober mind.”\(^\text{19}\) He justifies this with a comparison presented as an *exemplum*: “Just as a shower of rain does not much good for the crop of the earth, the dewing of the quiet, soft, and warm skies is more fruitful and joyous to everything: such is the reading of these.”\(^\text{20}\)

Similarly, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Jesuit Gergely Vásárhelyi (1560–1623), active alternately in various places of the Principality of Transylvania, the territory under Turkish occupation, and the Kingdom of Hungary, also addressed the preface of his translation of Thomas à Kempis’s *De imitatione Christi* to the reader. In it, he commends the work as “a sure path to the salvation of your soul,”\(^\text{21}\) and exhorts to read it “with good silence and a quiet mind.”\(^\text{22}\) Vásárhelyi’s collection of meditations following the pericopes of the ecclesiastical year addresses the reader in second person singular as a person in need of penitence and assistance or as someone who is not used to serious spiritual activities.\(^\text{23}\) Henceforth, he continues with instructions as to

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\(^\text{21}\) “Lelked üdvösségére valo bizonjos utat,” *Christus Iesus követéséről való könyvek*, trans. Gergely Vásárhelyi (Kolozsvár, 1622), 15r.

\(^\text{22}\) “Jo halgatassal es csendes elmenel,” *Christus Iesus követéséről*, 15r.

\(^\text{23}\) “I do not doubt, Christian reader, that at first sight this book may seem difficult, perhaps even above the spirit of many, or tasteless for the wisdom of many, because it contains the instructions of these short meditations, unusual among the Hungarians: but if you take its contents better in your mind, it will be your useful guide to self-knowledge, the repentance of sins and the pursuit of true, godly deeds” (“Nem ketelkedem kérésztény oluaso, ez könyvek első tekintetébe, hogy valamire nem lattassak neheznek, netalam sokaknak ertekek felettis, auagy bölcsesegek tekintue, izetlennek, hogy ily rövid es Magyar nemzet
the ways of efficient reading, requesting a relaxed, quiet reception, mobilizing the affects (affectus) and imagination alike in leading to individual consideration. Vásárhelyi also asks for the personal completion of the material that has been read, in the form of “frequent prayers and hearty calls to God,” as well as thanksgivings and individually oriented self-addressed calls.

2 Confessionalism and the Tradition of the History of Spirituality

From the perspective of the present day, it is not easy to avoid the pitfall of interpreting the dogmatic, cultural, ecclesiastical-historical, or organizational and social characteristics and attributes in a way that makes us think that the confessional borders as we know them today had already been formed by the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Due to our position in history, we are easily preoccupied with these lines of demarcation – with the breaches – in the first place. However, reading early modern devotional literature as part of the spiritual culture of a confessionalizing Europe inevitably makes one ask whether we should not reckon with a much greater number of

közöt zokatlan elmelkedeseknek oktatasual irattatot legyen: de ha jobbadon magadba még tekinted, mit foglalyon magaba, magad meg ismérétre, bünöknek él taozatatasara, es az igaz, jozagos czelekedeteknek követesere, haznos igazgatod lezen.

24 "And so that you may use it well, it requires the quietness of your mind, and even more, the silent reading of all words; so that, what your tongue reads or if you see the thoughts of your mind, may they only contain such affects of your heart that both the person offered to you to meditate about, and the thing or action that you have to think about be in front of your spiritual eyes as if you saw them with your bodily eyes or heard them with your ears" (”Hogy kediglen haznát vehessed, élmédeként ezendessegé kevantatik, es töbire, minden igének, halkal valo oluasasat; ugy hogy, a’ mit nyelued oluas, auagy ezekbe élmé gondolatiba tekint, azon belső züuednek oly indulati, auagy affectusi forogyanak hogy mind az zémely, ki elődbe élmelkedesre adatik, mind a’ dolog, auagy czelekedet, Kiröl gondolzodod kelletik, vgy lelki zemeid elöt legyenek, mint ha testi zemeiddel latnad, avagy füleiddel hallanad”), Vásárhelyi, Esztendő, *7r–v.

25 Vásárhelyi, Esztendő, *7r–8r.

textual and structural contacts as well as parallels in the handling of sources – aspects that function rather as bridges – than we would admit at a first sight. For simplicity’s sake, I will give these bridges the name *interconfessional conjunctions*, being aware of the fact that these conjunctions are far from being the signs of early ecumenism. In order to check this supposition, a brief survey concerning source handling, matters of language, and symbolism in the literature under consideration will follow here.

3 What do Source References Disclose?

József Bodonhelyi’s monograph on Puritanism focuses on English-Hungarian literary and spiritual relations, among other topics. Bodonhelyi refers in a number of instances to the Puritan reception (that is, the application according to the Puritan spiritual ideals) of the Cistercian mystic theologian Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). For instance, when Bodonhelyi discusses the work of Jakab Csúzi Cseh, he states that Csúzi applies William Perkins (1558–1602) in a Calvinist Puritan spirit and he mentions “the mysticism of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, coupled with similarly deep and live piety.” Some pages later, Bodonhelyi elaborately discusses Bernard’s mysticism as a necessary theological background for understanding the Puritan practice of piety. As a starting point for all this, Bodonhelyi gives a short reference on the first pages of his book, stating that the topics concerning the practice of piety can also be found in mediaeval sources.

The abundant reception of Bernard in Puritan circles is also attested elsewhere. In the first place, I analyzed the marginal notes of Pál Medgyesi’s Hungarian translation of Bayly’s *The Practice of Pietie*, which is, as we know,

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28 Jakab Csúzi Cseh (1639–1695) was a Calvinist bishop, educated at Heidelberg, Franeker, and Groningen. He wrote his theological and spiritual works in Hungarian and Latin.
31 Bodonhelyi, *Az angol puritánizmus*, 11. The Puritan (or more generally: Calvinist) reception of Bernard of Clairvaux is also recorded in more recent discussions: the monograph of Géza Nagy on the seventeenth-century history of the Calvinist Church repeatedly mentions Bernard and other mediaeval authors in this context, Géza Nagy, *Fejezetek a magyar református egyház 17. századi történetéből* [Chapters from the Seventeenth-century History of the Hungarian Calvinist Church], (Budapest, 1985): 48, 77, 162–163.
32 Pál Medgyesi (1605–1663), a Calvinist preacher, was educated in Frankfurt an der Oder.
a Puritan devotional manual. Among these marginal notes, there are plenty of references to Bernard (naturally, authentic and pseudo-Bernardian references should not be differentiated here; what is important is that they are marked as Bernard’s works). Some only mark the title of the work, others only the name of the *doctor mellifluus* (honey-tongued doctor, as Bernard of Clairvaux used to be nicknamed). At a closer examination of the marginal source references, one might be surprised at the frequency of other mediaeval names: not only does the author (both of the English original and of the Hungarian translation) cite the Benedictine monk and later archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) in the work’s theological introduction, but also Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fifth to sixth century), the Franciscan Bonaventure (1217/18–1274), and often the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), whose formulations in the *Summa theologiae* accompany the train of thought exposed in the main text. All this happens exactly at a time when an ardent debate is going on among Catholic theologians, reconsidering whether, in a time of confessional changes initiated by Humanism and the Reformation, Petrus Lombardus’s *Liber sententiarum* or the Thomist inheritance can still be regarded as a theological foundation of true faith, or must be utterly rethought. The Jesuits undertook a crucial role in this debate. As their name emerges in this context, it should not be left unmentioned that the basic Christological chapter of the *Practice of pietie* also approvingly cites the Jesuit scholar Robert Bellarmine (1542–1625) in the discussion of the *unio hypostatica*.

Lest I should seem to suggest that the *Practice of pietie* only refers to mediaeval sources, I must hurry to add that it also comprises the wise sayings of the church fathers from Tertullian to Augustine, Pope Saint Gregory the Great, or Saint Leo the Great, as well as the representatives of the various directions of Reformation, from Martin Luther and Jean Calvin to Johann Heinrich Alsted and Leiden. He, was one of the first promoters of Puritanism in Transylvania, and wrote his large number of spiritual and theological works mostly in Hungarian.

and Bartholomäus Keckermann, or Joseph Justus Scaliger and Theodore Beza. In its dedication to Charles, Prince of Wales, the English edition of 1631 explains this unexpectedly emphatic presence of the patristic and the mediaeval tradition. Bayly claims that, for the sake of the salvation of the entire community and especially the addressee, and amidst the chaotic and endless religious disputes of the present, he strove to show the old practices of true piety before the division of Christianity.\(^{40}\)

Another bridge between confessional strands is traced in Udo Sträter's study on seventeenth-century meditation literature. This work offers a confusing piece of evidence: the *Practice of Pietie* enjoyed great popularity in Lutheran Germany as well in this period, and the repeated German editions always contained as an appendix an anonymous author's guide to meditation. This guide, however, was none other than a part of the second book of the Dominican monk Ludovicus Granatensis's (1504–1588) treatise on meditation, *Liber de oratione et meditatione*.\(^{41}\) It is worthwhile then, so it seems, to look at other texts and confessions as well, and to investigate the modes of their source handling. Therefore, I will turn to the meditations of the "Lutheran Church Father"\(^{42}\) Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), considered a bestseller in its time, translated into many European languages and available in two separate Hungarian adaptations.\(^{43}\) One of the three volumes of meditation\(^{44}\) of Gerhard, who was

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\(^{40}\) Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie*, a.v.


\(^{43}\) The earlier translation is the work of Boldizsár Zólyomi P.: *Ötven Szentseges Elmélkődezsek ... Gerhard Ian. Deák Irásából Magyarrá fordítatták*, [Fifty sacred meditations ... from the writing of J. Gerhard, translated into Hungarian] (Bárta [Bardejov, today Slovakia], 1616); 18th century reworking: *Lilomok vilgye* [Valley of Lillies], trans. József Inczédy; Nagyszeben [Sibiu, today Romania], 1745.

\(^{44}\) I cite the works from a colligate of the Reformed College collection of the Academy Library of Kolozsvár: Johann Gerhard, *Enchiridion consolatorium morti ac tentationibus in
a professor of theology at Jena, namely, the *Meditationes sacrae* that were first published in 1606, names its sources of inspiration as *Augustini, Bernhardi, Anshelmi, Tauleri, et aliorum*. Since Gerhard uses works that are attributed to Augustine but that are written in the twelfth century, we may say that Gerhard put his material together making use mainly of the authorities of mediaeval mysticism. In addition, from the names mentioned by Gerhard himself, Johann Anselm Steiger identified a great number of references to other mediaeval writers in the *Meditationes sacrae*, among which were Thomas à Kempis, Juan Luis Vives, Denis the Carthusian, and several church fathers.⁴⁵

Gerhard’s second volume of meditation, the *Enchiridion consolatorium*, first published in 1611, is a dialogue between the tempted man fearing death (*Tentatus*) and the consoling man (*Consolator*). This text, in the tradition of the *ars moriendi* literature, refers similarly to a great number of mediaeval sources, particularly Bernard of Clairvaux, but also the mystical theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429). Taking into account the applied function of the textual type of the meditation, one may say that the understanding of this 1611 work is assisted also by the fact that it is connected to two deaths in the author’s family: it was written following the death of the writer’s first child, and somewhat later of his wife.⁴⁶

The third volume, *Exercitium pietatis* (1612), has a similar kind of source handling: references to the writings of the *doctor mellifluus* are many here as well, as are also citations of Bonaventure, references to Gregory the Great’s *Cura pastoralis*,⁴⁷ and even a quotation of the writing that contains the essence of Jewish hermeneutical tradition, the *Haggada*.⁴⁸ Apart from these late-antique and mediaeval authors, other, more recent sources of inspiration can be detected, such as the work of Ludovicus Granatensis, a Dominican monk of the previous

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**46** Steiger, “Johann Gerhard,” 55.

**47** For example, Gerhard, *Exercitium*, F2; G14; H10; K1; M2.

generation who was highly influential in Catholic circles both in practices of piety and homiletics. He also appears in the list of sources: once with a citation from the *Vita Christi*, and elsewhere with a quotation from a sermon for Lent.\(^49\)

The linking to mediaeval traditions in the work of Johann Gerhard has been qualified as an attempt of Lutheranism's "church father" to adapt the spiritual inheritance of the Middle Ages, especially the heritage of mysticism, to the needs of the Reformed faith. Furthermore, alongside an assessing-interpretive instance, Johann Anselm Steiger's study pays attention to Gerhard's interest in rabbinic tradition.\(^50\) The *Meditationes sacrae* did not, however, only function as a reservoir of traditions from the (more or less) recent past, but they were in themselves spread in a variety of traditions. The *Meditationes sacrae* gained high popularity in Calvinist, Roman Catholic, and even Orthodox environments.\(^51\)

Naturally, any source reference – even including anonymous, more extensive citations – may be only a superficial connection. More relevant is the question of into what kind of value system and mentality the mediaeval or early modern author is embedded. Let us therefore take a further look at the bridges between the early modern and the mediaeval material.

### 4 Mental Structures, Language, Symbolism

In order to investigate the topic of this section, I refer once more to some German Lutheran collections, first to Martin Moller's *Soliloquia de passione Iesu Christi* (1587).\(^52\) Martin Moller (1547–1606) had translated many mediaeval meditations into German before he wrote this work as a continuation of the mediaeval passion meditations,\(^53\) drawing on, of all available patterns, the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure's (1221–1274) *Lignum vitae*. But other early

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\(^49\) Gerhard, *Exercitium*, f.4, f.5. According to Steiger, in the entire *Meditationes sacrae* fourteen quotations can be identified as from the work of Ludovicus, Steiger, "Meditatio sacra," 40.

\(^50\) Steiger, "Johann Gerhard," 59. The interest in rabbinic tradition is connected to the birth of the Christian discipline of Hebrew studies and the dialogue with Jewish exegesis.

\(^51\) Steiger, "Meditatio sacra," 38; 48–50.

\(^52\) The book was edited in Görlitz.

Lutheran authors as well, such as Philipp Kegel (†1614) and Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608), reworked medieval material in their devotional works, particularly pseudo-Augustinian material. Something similar happened in Hungarian Calvinist circles towards the end of the century: in 1689 János Erdődi translated and edited the *Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum liber*, a mystical devotional booklet from the Middle Ages attributed to Augustine.

The genre of the dialogue between the soul and Christ can be a further example of adaptation of medieval constructions with Augustinian roots. The third book of *The Imitation of Christ* contains a widely read and imitated example of this pattern, as does the penultimate chapter of the *Practice of Pietie*. The two texts can also be linked because of the dialogue form. Kempis’s text reads: “*Audiam, quid loquatur in me Dominus Deus*,” and the conversation is obviously conducted by this “internal” God, preparing contemplation by His consolations and exhortations; conversely, in Bayly’s text, Jesus answers “from the outside” the Soul’s questions following the Passion of Christ part-by-part, asking for the interpretation of various instances. Bayly’s chapter reflects the influence of the patristic tradition, continuous throughout the Middle Ages, in the fields of allegorical, symbolical, and partly also typological exegesis, the traces of which appear here in the form of moral teachings. Good examples are found in formulations such as:

*Soul*: Lord, wherefore wouldest thou begin thy Passion in a Garden? (John xviii. 1.) *Christ*: Because that in a Garden thy sinne tooke first beginning (Gen. 3. 3.).

In this passage, Bayly interprets a New Testament event from the point of view of the Old Testament in one single word and relying on one single motif, but in a way, that also emphasizes the catechetical purpose. Another instance reflects the symbolic theology that reminds us of the *patres*:

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55 János Erdődi (year of birth and of death unknown), teacher in the Reformed College in Debrecen.
57 *De imitatione Christi* 111, 1.
Soul: Lord, why wouldst thou have thine arms nailed abroad? Christ: That I might embrace thee more lovingly, my sweet soul.60

These formulations visibly display symbolic theology as a constant form of religious thinking, revealing in part the essence of God.

The previous example also stands as evidence for the presence of the metaphor of the betrothed, so widespread in devotional literature, and of other allegorical structures, such as the correspondence of a life task or situation to a part of the day,61 or the linkage of a spiritual attitude to a biblical motif.62

The same part of the text also contains another widespread method of the diverse text forms of devotional literature, namely, the “personification” of a generally valid statement, for example, that Christ suffered and died for the sinful. Here is another example from the Practice of Pietie: “O Lord, I am the cause of these thy sorrowes; my sinnes wrought thy shame, mine iniquities are the occasion of thy injuries.”63 Or a similar example from Johann Gerhard’s Exercitium pietatis:

He was born on my behalf; therefore, He was also conceived on my behalf. For me He has become sanctification and justice, therefore for me He has also become purification and cleansing.64

A similar feature is found in the work of Thomas à Kempis (this time not from The Imitation of Christ, but another, less known meditation), now in the imperative mood and second person singular: “Behold now Christ, who has suffered on behalf of you.”65

60 Bayly, The Practice of Pietie, 797.
61 In the chapter Things to bee meditated vpon, as thou art purting off thy clothes the bed allegorically stands for the coffin, sleep for death, the quilt for the tomb, and of course the morning awake for resurrection, not opposed, of course, to mediaeval tradition, Bayly, The Practice of Pietie, 335–336.
62 A characteristic example for this in the morning meditations is the instruction that the believer, on hearing the cock’s morning call, should think of Peter the Apostle, and follow him in his conversion; at the same time he/she should also be reminded of the trumpet of the Last Judgment, Bayly, The Practice of Pietie, 240.
63 Bayly, The Practice of Pietie, 805.
65 “Nunc ergo attende […] Christum, qui pro teista patitur,” Thomas Kempis, Conciones et meditationes triginta-sex utilissimae, in Vener. viri Thomae A Kempis’ cvm docti tvm religiosissimi viri, ordinis Canonicorum Regularium D. Augustini Opera Omnia ad autographa
If one regards the popular late-medieval and early modern theoretical texts on meditation from the point of view of their assessment and mobilization of traditional spiritual abilities (intellectus, memoria, voluntas), one may first remark on the primacy of the intellect, which mobilizes the will to action. Thomas à Kempis’s or Johannes Wessel Gansfort’s (1419–1489) dialectical steps of meditation or the train of thought of Ludovicus Granatensis, namely, that consideration (consideratio) awakes faith, leads to devotion (devotio), and mobilizes the will, can all be traced back partly to the idea of order encoded into the human soul derived from Plato’s philosophy, and partly to intellectually grounded voluntarism. The Bavarian Jesuit Jeremias Drexel’s (1581–1638) divine rhetoric (Rhetorica coelestis), also popular in Protestant circles, follows the same line of tradition, and in accordance with the already familiar approach, identifies devotion not with the soul’s pleasant and pious feelings, but with the whole-hearted transmission of will.

The content of the first pages of the Practice of Pietie fits completely into this system:

Vnlesse that a man doth truly know God, hee neither can nor will worship him aright: for how can a man loue him, whom hee knoweth not? and who will worship him, whose helpe a man thinks he needeth not?

The text continues with the amplification of this idea, and then follows the theological foundation addressing the reason, from which logically and naturally evolves the system of rules of the practice of piety, which assumes a voluntary decision.

The complementary spiritual ability of imagination (imaginatio), equally assisting understanding, memory, and will, fits very well into this psychological “network.” In popular belief, the Jesuits were primarily credited with emphasize-
ing this ability of imagination, although devotional literature considered it with all its advantages and risks all along its mediaeval and later history. This question should be treated in more detail elsewhere; for now let us only consider some examples of the already cited authors. Kempis’s treatise on meditation exhorts the meditating person to depict in his/her mind the locations of Christ’s Passion, and walk through Jerusalem in his/her soul;70 Johann Gerhard writes the same in first person singular when “looking at” Jesus nailed to the cross;71 Bayly directly “sends” the meditating person to the biblical location in question:

As thou drinkest the Wine, and powrest it out of the Cup into thy Stom-acke; meditate [...] And in the instant of drinking, settle thy Meditation vpon Christ, as hee hanged vpon the Crosse; as if like Mary and Iohn, thou diddest see him nayled, and his blood running down his blessed side, out of that gasty wound, which the Speare made in his innocent Heart.72

Jeremias Drexel’s divine rhetoric makes more theoretical statements about *imaginatio:* it greatly assists meditation and animates the subject of the meditation.73 Yet he warns that it could also disturb the praying person.74

5 A Few More Words about Interconfessional Conjunctions

The interconfessional connections of devotional literature are not only marked by the use of common sources or structural patterns and motifs. For example, the Cistercian Cardinal Giovanni Bona’s (1609–1674) work entitled *Manuductio ad coelum,*75 which makes use of the traditions of Benedictine spirituality in giving plenty of practical recommendations on a correct way of life, has been translated into Hungarian both by the Jesuit István Tarnócz and by the Calv-
István Huszti.76 Huszti, known as the writer of medical and philosophical treatises in a Cartesian spirit, also had certain connections with Pietism, as he also translated into Hungarian one of Johann Arndt’s books, the Paradis-Gärtelein voller christlicher Tugenden.77

A similar story can be told about Jeremias Drexel. New information has become available lately as to the Hungarian reception of his works, which were translated by two Calvinist noblemen: János Komáromi (d. 1711) translated the Gymnasium patientiae, recently discovered in the Library of Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc, Romania),78 while István Újhelyi’s (d. 1706) translation of the Heliotropium, unfortunately, has been lost.

The Lutheran author Johann Gerhard also has its place in the line of interconfessional translations: his collection of meditations was translated in a faithful manner by the Lutheran Boldiszár Zólyomi P. at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Then, on the centenary of Gerhard’s death (that is, in 1737) a Calvinist priest, József Inczédéy (1688–1750) translated it again, although Inczédéy’s work only resembles the original from a considerable distance. In his own words:

I changed it in many places, sometimes I omitted matters, and sometimes I added things. I formed the last words [of the verses] so that they correspond to each other [i.e., rhyme], then dividing it into ten stanzas, I represented in short in an emblematic exemplum the subjects of the next five Meditations, I explained them in short stanzas, and had it printed in this pleasant form.79

Thus, the translator’s preface reveals that this is also a re-working, with omissions and additions, while the emblematic summaries are his own creations

76 Menyben vezető Kalauz, trans. Tarnóczi (1675); István Huszti, Az égre kézen fogva vezető Kalauz (Debrecen, 1705).
77 István Huszti, Keresztyéni jóssagos tselekedetekkel tellyes Paraditsom Kertetske (Kolozsvár, 1698).
79 “...sok helyeken változtattam, hol ki-hagytam, hol pótoltam, a’ bé-fejező szókat az egy-mással való meg-egyezésre szabogattam, végre tíz szakaszokra osztván, mindenik előtt egy képes példázatban az utána következő öt Elmélkedésbéli dölgokat summáson kiábrázoltam, rövid strófáskákkal ugyan azokat meg-magyaráztam, és e’ kellemetes formában nyomtatni adtam,” Inczédéy, trans., Liliomok völgye, 3 (unnumbered).
with the aim to offer pleasure (delectatio) next to its educative role. The work
in its greatest part derives from the Meditationes sacrae, but it often changes
the order of the original work and omits certain chapters. A quick compari-
sion reveals that twenty-eight of the fifty-one texts correspond to each other,
although the nature of the message has changed a little because of replace-
ments. The work thus becomes a version of the ars moriendi: it begins with the
depiction of the vanity of the world, then meditates on death (its immediacy,
the uncertainty of its time, and related topics), exhorts to frequent thinking of
death, etcetera. This is followed by the topic of hell, with the detailed depiction
of eternal torments. Due to its re-working, the work seems to return in a way to
the tradition of the four last things so familiar from the mediaeval devotional
tradition.

6 Conclusion

The analysis presented above has proved that the devotional culture of the
Early Modern Age, both Catholic and Protestant, is deeply rooted in all its layers
in the Middle Ages, and this cautions us that continuity in this period needs to
be taken as seriously as patterns of separation and delimitation. This culture
of devotion is, in fact, an ars devotionis springing from a collective treasury
of spirituality, worth being remarked on for its globality: its genres, textual
forms, worldview, and self-perception were produced by the Middle Ages, and
lived on in the devotio moderna. It was the mediation and strong influence
of the Modern Devotion that preserved and kept alive the mediaeval spiritual
treasure later in the Baroque Age. There is much more at issue here than just
the occurrence of a similar set of basic values of morality. We gain insight here
in a process of adaptation through application and continuation of a common
mental, cultural, and spiritual heritage.

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