In the Middle Ages, the process of Christian meditation involved the use of devotional images. The tradition of meditation enhanced by techniques of visualisation was further developed in the *Spiritual Exercises* (ca. 1522) of Ignatius de Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order. Ignatius assumed that a believer first imagines himself as being part of a situation (*memoria* or mind). After that, the reader examines the situation intellectually (*intellectus* or intellect) before his senses stir up devout feelings (*voluntas* or will). For more than a century, Ignatius’s readers had to visualize without the aid of images. The *Spiritual Exercises* was first printed in 1548, but not illustrated until 1657.

The religious emblem book *Pia Desideria* (*Pious Wishes*, Antwerp: 1624), written by the Jesuit priest Herman Hugo, tried to translate Ignatius’s meditative programme into words and images. Hugo’s work consists of pictures by Boëtius a Bolswert, which allegorically depict the relationship between God and the believer, in order to enhance the
communication between them. The accompanying texts facilitate this process by stimulating the reader’s intellect.

The *Pia Desideria* was often adapted by early modern Christians. In the *Corpus Librorum Emblemata*, Daly and Dimler list nearly 150 editions and translations of the *Pia Desideria* in almost all European languages: Latin, Dutch, French, German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Russian, Polish and Italian.\(^5\) Two different appropriation techniques existed: early modern users of the *Pia Desideria* reworked the collection of emblems either into a combination of images, *mottoes*, poems and prose texts, or into a combination of images, *mottoes* and poems. On the basis of available research, it would seem that both techniques fit the Ignatian meditative programme as propagated by the Jesuits.

In the Dutch Republic, the Amsterdam Catholic printer Pieter Paets (1587–1657) appears to have employed neither of these two existing strategies, as he published an unusual selection of elements from the *Pia Desideria* in several illustrated devotional works, sometimes even combining elements of the *Pia Desideria* with texts by other authors.\(^6\) Although Paets’s works do not include instructions on how to use them, we can surmise that they served as instruments for meditation. The use of a title like *Vierighe meditatien* (*Devout Meditations*) places Paets’s works in the meditative literary tradition.

In this article, I will explore Paets’s composition of elements from the *Pia Desideria*. My analysis will focus on how Paets’s works related to the Ignatian tradition of meditation. I hope to show that his works were indeed meditative in nature, but differed from other known *Pia Desideria* adaptations due to the position of the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic at the time. Paets’s works are highly suited to the Dutch context, in which meditation literature – let alone Catholic meditation literature – was rarely produced. Paets was the first to combine Dutch texts and meditative pictures in the Dutch Republic.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) ‘Devotional literature’ was recently used by Eire for a wide range of religious literature which was viewed or used as a means of shaping the faith of its readers. See Eire C.M.N., “Early modern Catholic piety in translation”, in Burke P. – Po-chia Hsia R. (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2007) 83–100, especially 85–86, 97–99.