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THE THESES of the DISSERTATION

1. Topics

The dissertation's topic unfolds through the following three chapters:

I. Introduction

The first chapter deals with the outlining of my objectives and tasks of the research. I present the literary historical background of my dissertation's topics. Which are the following: overviewing the stoicism of Hungarian renaissance; analyzing István Ecsedi Báthory's life and work from the above mentioned perspective; furthermore writing about the Hungarian Catholic renewal in the early modern period in line with Lukács Pécsi's writings.

A description is also provided about Ecsedi Báthory's prosaic prayers¹ and Lukács Pécsi's pseudo-Augustinian translations.²

II. Theory, literary history and cultural-historical overview

The historical evolution of the methods of prayer could be portrayed through the relation between prayer, meditation and the *soliloquium*-literature. I shall describe these with the help of Hungarian literary examples.

In the erudition of antiquity and of the Middle Ages memory and orality were fundamental tools in the transfer of cultural tradition. The rumination and meditation are placed in the following intellectual context: gathering knowledge, reflecting on the learned or read books. Regarding the expansion of memory rumination also played an important role. Based on chosen literary examples this dissertation seeks the answer to the following question: what kind of methods for praying and meditation are provided by the books of piety written on the turn of the 16-17th centuries.

My research aimed not only Lukács Pécsi's and Ecsedi Báthory's aforementioned books, I also included one work of Péter Pázmány³ and one of Albert Szenci Molnár.⁴ In

¹ ECSEDI BÁTHORY, 1984.

² Lukács PÉCSI, 1988 (RMNY 671).

comparison with Pázmány's and Szenci's books the two aforementioned books of piety's structure isn't so rigidly bound. Ecsedi Báthory wrote prosaic prayers based on psalms for personal practice. In one of the chapters I write about Lukács Pécsi's and János Erdődi's translations of the work *Soliloquia*, which mediates the tradition of the literature of Christian spirituality⁵ in such a way that even readers of the present can understand it. The differences between the two translations didn't influence the genre, both translations function within the limits of *soliloquium*, respectively the literature of meditation. The analysis of these two translations is completed with the phenomena of interconfessionality and the genre of *soliloquia* which constitutes a main part of my dissertation's topic.

Ars orandi and *lectio divina*. *Ars orandi* interpreted from the perspective of rhetorical speech

In this part of my work I depict the rhetorical evolution of the prayer and respectively the historical evolution of the related terminology.

I describe the thoughts of Lukács Pécsi, Ecsedi Báthory, Miklós Telegdi and Gergely Vásárhelyi on the method of prayer – it is good to keep in mind that these theories enrich the Hungarian concept of *ars orandi*. Furthermore I deal with the link between rhetorical *narratio* and prayer. I also expound the way in which certain parts of prayers are written with rhetorical tools, the steps of *lectio divina* and the three spiritual abilities (*memoria*, *intelligentia*, *voluntas*) – originating from Saint Augustine – entwine in prosaic prayer.

The European intellectual environment. A spiritual historical take on the subject

Understanding the devotional mentality is very significant if one strives to give a complete analysis of books of piety written on the turn of the 16-17th centuries. That is why I pay special attention to the role of meditation and prayer in achieving the ideal of a perfect Christian life.

³ Péter PÁZMÁNY, 2001 (RMNY 1513).

⁴ SZENCI MOLNÁR, 2002 (RMNY 1238).

⁵ The essence of Christian spirituality that is devoid of any kind of religious denomination.

In this part of my dissertation I ponder upon the notion of *perseverantia*⁶ which – along with two other similar notions – provides appropriate knowledge of theory and history of theology for the proper analysis of Lukács Pécsi’s translation of pseudo-Augustine’s writing as well as for Ecsedi Báthory’s prosaic prayers.

The second, third and fourth part of my writing contains subsections of detailed text analyses as well as theoretical debates.

The titles of the subsections containing text analyses are the following:

2.3. *Soliloquia*-translations by Lukács Pécsi és János Erdődi

3.2. *Ars orandi* interpreted from the perspective of rhetorical speech, might be considered a criteria for analyzing Pécsi and Ecsedi Báthory’s writings

4.1.5. Questions regarding the righteous devotional attitude in other two works of Lukács Pécsi,⁷ in the devotional writings of Ecsedi Báthory and in a prayer book written by Gáspár Debreczeni Szőr.⁸

4.2.2. I depict the link between the notion of *constantia* and devotion through these works: Pázmány’s translation⁹ of Thomas Kempis’s work and respectively Sámuel Kéri’s work: *Christian Seneca*.¹⁰

III. Analysis of the selected writings

I analyze the texts’ deeper meaning according to viewpoints developed by me. I resume the possible connection between perseverance, repentance and openness to piety in four groups. Hoping that in this way I can offer some sort of guidance through life’s challenging processes and in the better understanding of various manifestations of attitude of piety.

⁶ Latin word for perseverance. The Hungarian explanation for this Latin expression can be found here: Magyar Katolikus Lexikon I., 1993., 177–178.

⁷ PÉCSI *Hasznos orvosság*...1597 (RMNY 810); *Az test környvl.*...1598 (RMNY 838).

⁸ DEBRECZENI SZŐR 1599. (RMNY 848)

⁹ PÁZMÁNY, 1624.(RMNY 1297).

¹⁰ KÉRI 1654, (RMNY 2510).

2. Setting of objective and summary of the research

First of all my dissertation deals with meditations written by István Ecsedi Báthory between 1580-1605, furthermore the pseudo-Augustinian translation of Lukács Pécsi written in 1591.

The main ideas of my research are based on Tibor Klaniczay's following statement: the most representative genres of Mannerism are meditative literature, the meditative essay, and respectively the different versions of religious meditation. Klaniczay links the description of the characteristic genres of Mannerism with the new Stoic philosophy of late Renaissance from an ideological approach.¹¹ However we will come to realize that in this research the literary historical question – referring to the analyzed books' genre – needs to be expanded with an additional point of view, namely that of the history of spirituality. The Christian and new Stoic concept of the notion *constantia* could be expressed only in religious prosaic prayers and devotional meditations.

The two afore mentioned books are being analyzed from multiple viewpoints, such as history of spirituality, textological and regarding the characteristics of meditative literature. I included in my dissertation two larger text analyses. In the chapter dealing with prayer interpretation the notions of *ars orandi* and *lectio divina* are also approached from a rhetorical perspective. In another chapter the questions regarding the genre, are completed with aspects taken from the psychology of religion. Through the chosen works I depict the connection of perseverance, devotion and piety in a prayerful life.

Another part of my dissertation is about placing István Ecsedi Báthory and Lukács Pécsi according to cultural-history and literary history, as well as describing and analyzing the genres and compositions of Hungarian devotional literature of the 16–17th centuries. For example I explain what kind of methods for praying and meditating are provided by prayer books and other devotional writings.

I deal with the historical evolution of prayer and meditation practice of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, being especially interested in Christian spiritual tradition. I'm also reflecting upon the relation of the history of genres between *lectio divina*, ruminati-

¹¹ KLANICZAY 1985. 124–128. According to Tibor Klaniczay by the end of the 16th century a so called patrician new Stoicism emerged, in this period the effect of Iustus Lipsius and of the Stoic authors of antiquity became very significant. However we must take into consideration the standpoint of Keserű Bálint who draws attention that only after the death of István Ecsedi Báthory – meaning at the beginning of the 17th century – became possible to talk about the actual presence of Stoic ideas. István Ceglédi and János Laskai are considered by Keserű two main representants of the protestant bourgeois during the late Humanism. Bálint Keserű assumes that even if (through the Mannerist János Rimay) Báthory was familiar with the Stoic ideas, its interconfessional aspect remained hidden before him simply because Báthory belonged to the reformed faith. (KESERŰ, 1958, 45–49.)

meditation, *soliloquium*-literature. Furthermore I'm preoccupied with common characteristics and links between prayer, psalm, *ars orandi* and *lectio divina*.

I analyze two Hungarian translations of pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquia* regarding interconfessionality.

I provide an explanation of the notion *devotio moderna* from the perspective of the theory of meditation in the early modern age. The mentality of Christian Stoicism unfolds as I approach it from an ethical-religious and a contemporary devotional perspective.

I'm also concerned with the question: to what extent can we speak about a new Stoic philosophical trend in the late Renaissance Hungary.

3. The literary historical and cultural-historical achievements of the thesis

In the two prayer books – analyzed by me – the philosophy of the notion *constantia* could be expressed through the linkage of devotional theological expressions and spirituality. Apart from the literary historical approach the writings in question are in overall devotional and serving the righteous spiritual life. The history of theology of the Latin *perseverantia* (perseverance) could provide a golden mean between the literary historical, Stoic interpretation of *constantia* and the contemporary devotional one based on God's will. The notion of perseverance understood from a theological interpretation refers to the endurance practiced by a righteous man, who is living a graceful life.

During my research I wrote two longer chapters which contain text analyses about Lukács Pécsi's and Ecsedi Báthory's above mentioned works. In one of the chapters the following criteria were used to accomplish the analysis: what kind of phraseology was used in the prayers, to what extent was present both a repenting, meditative and also a contemplative aspect. The questions referring to the genre of prosaic prayer are backed up with criteria based on the psychology of theology. I choose fragments from the prayers in order to gain an outline of the renewal of the devotional prayer, a characteristic structure of spiritual writings and the main course of a devout life. Prayers can be distinguished maybe even categorized based on the manner in which they are told, written or said: ordinary prayer, prayer with my and heart, unceasing prayer, the latter could take closer to experiencing the divine. Considering the

criteria mentioned above one can find an alloy of different types of meditations and prayers rather than one (or more) pure type.

In another chapter I attempt to figure out how the combination of prayers containing rhetorical devices, steps of *lectio divina* and the three spiritual abilities (*memoria, intelligentia, voluntas*) work in the analyzed religious texts.

Among other things I realize a comparative analysis of the *Soliloquia*-translations of Lukács Pécsi and János Erdődi, which reveals new insight on the interconfessional nature of the devotional literature. Considering the content there weren't any differences to find in the two authors' work whereas their style, way of expressing, the idioms used by them, even their orthography and spelling was distinct. One reason for the difference is that the books were not written in the same time; other factors (causing the differences) were: they lived in different regions of the country so dialect had an effect on their spelling and as for their style and notions, their way of seeing the world had been greatly influenced by their different religions.

I am concerned with *devotio moderna* and I strive to depict the role and importance of devotion in the early modern theory of meditation. I also give an overview of the Christian interpretation of the Stoic ethical and religious ideas by summing up *De Constantia* by Iustus Lipsius and other authors who wrote tractates on devotional subject. Furthermore I present the essence of *Christian Seneca* by Schellenberg and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas Kempis.

I attempt to identify the obstacles of devout life as presented in devotional works written on the turn of the 16-17th centuries. Among the analyzed books one will find Lukács Pécsi: *Useful treatments to cure every illness of the spirit ...*, and Gáspár Debreczeni Szőr : *Devout prayers ...*