

Psalm Paraphrases in Latin in Sixteenth Century Hungary¹

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Abstract. The most popular trend in sacra poesis (sacred poetry) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the paraphrase of psalms into Latin. In parallel with numerous European examples, there are a good number of paraphrases of psalms from this period in Hungarian Neolatin poetry. Psalm transcriptions in Latin are associated with Georgius Purkircher (Psalm 72, 79), Christianus Schesaeus (Psalm 79, 90), Caspar Piltz (Psalms 3, 4, 23, 31, 51, 79, 80, 91, 110, 127), Johannes Sylvester (Psalm 79), Georgius Ostermaier (Psalms 1, 42, 122–126, 133), Laurentius Szegedinus (Psalms 51, 128), Valentinus Crispus (Psalms 42, 51) and Johannes Bocatius (Psalm 103). In my study, I attempt to outline the main similarities and differences between the paraphrases of the psalms in Hungary and Germany by selecting from this corpus of texts, by means of a detailed philological analysis of the poems and by highlighting the parallels between them.

Keywords: Neolatin poetry, biblical poetry, sixteenth–seventeenth century, psalm paraphrase, Hungary

The roots of the classical psalm paraphrases must be sought in the literature of the early Christian period. In 362, the Roman Emperor Julian issued a decree forbidding Christians to study the classical sciences, ancient literature, rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy. This edict acted as a catalyst for the birth of Christian classicist poetry, including biblical paraphrases in verse with classical features. The Greek-language hexameter paraphrases of the psalms (*Metaphrasis Psalmorum*), the so-called Homeric psalms, have long been attributed to the early Christian Greek bishop Apollinaris of Laodicea (310–390), although recent research suggests

1 The present study is a revised version of the relevant chapter of my monograph in Hungarian, Posta, *Neolatin Biblical Poetry*, 79–113. The Latin texts and quotations in this study are my own literal prose translations or translations of the content. The present study was prepared with the support of the Debrecen University Faculty of Arts Scientific Fund.

that they were composed later, in the fifth century.² In the metrical preface to the work, entitled *Protheoria*, we read of the author's intention that the Hebrew psalms should be the poetic book of Scripture, but that the Greek translation had lost the pleasantness of meter (*χάρις μέτρων*) and so now it had to borrow from Homer and the Greek poets to restore the sweet melody of King David's songs.³ The first Latin translations of the psalms were made by the early Christian Roman bishop Paulinus Nolanus (355–431), who transposed three psalms (1, 2, 136) into classical meter, iambic trimeter, and hexameter.⁴ In the early Middle Ages, the French deacon Florus of Lyons (810–860) continued this tradition and also produced a paraphrase of three psalms (22, 26, 27) in hexameters and in the Ambrosian hymn strophes.⁵

In the late humanist period, paraphrasing psalms was a popular practice of the *res publica litteraria*. Throughout Europe, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hundreds of Neolatin poets of various nationalities, Protestant and Catholic, attempted to translate the psalms into Latin, sometimes Greek, and classical meter, mostly hexameter and distichon. Czapla, in his monograph on the early modern biblical epic, lists thirty classic paraphrases of the psalms from sixteenth and seventeenth century European Neolatin poetry, the first being the work of François Bonade (1531) and the last a transcription by Laurent Le Brun (1653).⁶ Gaertner's earlier list includes at least eighty largely Neolatin paraphrases of psalms published in Europe between 1530 and 1600, including works by Alvar Gomez of Spain (1538), Antonio Flaminio of Italy (1546), Jean de Ganay of France (1547), Thomas Mitis of the Czech Lands (1562), István Parmenius of Buda (1582) and Jean Boch of Belgium (1607).⁷ The popularity of the genre in Europe is illustrated by the complex editions in which paraphrases of psalms by several poets of different nationalities appear simultaneously, for example, the paraphrases of the Frenchman Jean Salmon Macrin, the Italian Antonio Flaminio, the German Eobanus Hessus, and the Scotsman George Buchanan⁸ were published in one volume in 1556. The latter two paraphrases, along with a similar work by Théodore de Bèze, are among the best known. The paraphrases, considered the most outstanding, were read by thousands of people in many European countries for centuries to come.

2 Faulkner, ed., *Apollinaris of Laodicea*.

3 Ricceri, "Two Metrical Rewritings."

4 Hardie, *Classicism and Christianity*, 6–43.

5 Orth, "Metrical Paraphrase."

6 Czapla, *The Biblepos*, 558–68.

7 Gaertner, "Latin Verse Translations." István Parmenius of Buda was born in Buda about 1555, and after traveling throughout Western Europe, he went to England in the early 1580s, where he worked as chief librarian at Oxford University. He produced a metrical paraphrase of Psalm 104, in which he gives thanks to the Lord for his travels and geographical discoveries. Tóth, *Parmenius of Buda*.

8 Doelman, "Biblical Verse Paraphrase," 58.

For example, paraphrases by the Scotsman George Buchanan were widely used into the nineteenth century in European schools, from Sweden to Romania.⁹ In the second half of the seventeenth century, Neolatin psalm translations were increasingly overshadowed by paraphrases and translations into national languages, such as Philip and Mary Sidney's English or Clément Marot's French rendering.¹⁰

In sixteenth-century Hungary, classical psalter paraphrases were produced by Johannes Sylvester, Georgius Ostermaier, Christianus Schesaeus, Georgius Purkircher, Laurentius Szegedinus, Valentinus Crispus, Caspar Piltz, and Johannes Bocatius, among others.¹¹ Schesaeus was undoubtedly the most popular of the Protestant humanists mostly of Highland-Transylvania, and his biblical poetry is also extensively studied in international research.¹² On the other hand, there is no comprehensive philological analysis of the work of the other psalm poets in the literature, therefore this study will undertake to fill this gap.¹³ The late humanist intellectuals who created the religious Neolatin poem in Hungary sought to transpose into their own work the cultural patterns and methodological solutions they had experienced and studied during their peregrinations, largely in Germany (Wittenberg). Therefore, in order to interpret and evaluate the Hungarian Neolatin psalm poetry of the period, it is essential to first briefly review the examples and influences from Germany.

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- 9 Ijsewijn, *Companion*, 108–10; Green, “Davidic psalm”; Green, “Classical voices”; Green, “Poems”; Fuchs, *Psalterium universum*, 8–13.
- 10 Doelman, “Biblical Verse Paraphrase,” 9–82; Moul, *A Literary History*. There are also examples of psalm paraphrases in Hungarian from the period under discussion, with Bálint Balassi's five psalm transcriptions (Psalms 27, 42, 51, 54, and 148). The sources and models of the adaptations were, on the one hand, the Latin paraphrases of the psalms by George Buchanan and Théodore de Bèze, and on the other hand, the existing Hungarian prose and Psalter texts in verse (István Székely, Benedek Pap, Péter Bornemisza, Gál Huszár, Gáspár Heltai, and Gergely Szegedi). P. Vásárhelyi, “Bálint Balassi,” 413–23.
- 11 Sylvester, *De bello Turcis*; Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*; Ostermaier, *Septem psalmi Davidis*; Schesaeus, *Carmen ad Isabellam*; Purkircher, *Psalm. LXXII*; Purkircher, *Psalmus LXXIX*; Szegedinus, *Psalmi LI*; Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*; Crispus, *Psalmi duo*; Bocatius, *Psalmi CIII*, (Bocatius' psalm transcriptions date back to the early seventeenth century). For an overview of Szegedinus's psalms, see Molnár, “Szegedi Lőrinc.”
- 12 Poelchau, “Christian Schesaeus (1535–1585): Humanistische Dichtung”; Poelchau, “Christian Schesaeus: Ein humanistischer Dichter”; Wiegand, “Miklós Zrínyi”; Thurn, “Christian Schesaeus.”
- 13 Several Latin biblical paraphrases are associated with the listed Hungarian authors. For example, Schesaeus made verse transcriptions of well-known passages from the Gospels of Matthew and John. Purkircher paraphrased the Old Testament book of Wisdom, and Bocatius paraphrased the book of the Son of Sirach. Piltz's book of poems entitled *Meditationes Piae* also includes psalm paraphrases and prayers in classical verse.

Neolatin psalm poetry in Germany

Among the humanists in Germany, Eobanus Hessus was the first to produce a complete Latin paraphrase of the psalms in 1537.¹⁴ Hessus's *Psalterium*, as Matthias Laarmann states, was one of the bestsellers¹⁵ of sixteenth-century humanist biblical poetry. Hessus's *Psalterium* is understood by the contributing paratexts as a school textbook (*Schulbuch*) from which both the classical art of speech (*antike Dichtkunst*) and the truths of the Bible (*biblische Wahrheit*) can be learned. The book catalog of the Protestant Latin school in Weiden, for example, in which Hessus's work is included,¹⁶ is testimony to its actual use in schools.

In addition to the psalms in Latin written in distich, Hessus also provides a detailed rhetorical apparatus for explaining the text in the marginalia, in order to reinforce the teaching intention. In each case, the poet prefaces the paraphrases with an *argumentum*, a concise summary of the content and message of the psalm, followed by a four-line distichon, also to highlight the essential idea. Then the text of the paraphrase is read in parallel with the rhetorical interpretation, where Hessus analyzes the text, using rhetorical terms, usually accompanied by a concise explanation. For example, in the first lines of the paraphrase of Psalm 1, the phrase *propositio* (indicating the subject/topic) is used in the margin, then Hessus, in his own words, formulates what he means by this in a single sentence: "Blessed is he who is far from the counsel of the ungodly and takes pure doctrine to his heart."¹⁷ As the text of the paraphrase progresses, the argumentative train of thought unfolds, and the new rhetorical terms and their associated explanations help to unravel and understand it more easily: *ratio* (proof, reasoning, argument), *antithesis* (comparison of opposing things), and *epiphonema* (sentence concluding the argumentative train of thought).¹⁸

Johannes Spangenberg's and Andreas Spethe's paraphrases of the psalms are also primarily addressed to young students, as the accompanying texts attest.¹⁹ Spethe introduces his paraphrases with a short argument, using various very strong rhetorical-stylistic-poetic devices. We see quite daring forms of antiquity, since, in addition to the more usual expressions (*Tartarus*, *Styx*, *Avernus*, *Mars*, *Nympha*, and *Phoebus*), we also find more interesting examples, such as the poet calling God

14 I used the following edition: Hessus, *Psalterium Davidis*; Fuchs, *Psalterium universum*.

15 Laarmann, "Psalms, Vergil and Ovid," 79.

16 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmendichtung*, 129.

17 "Beatus est qui discedit ab ecclesia impiorum et amplectitur puram doctrinam." Hessus, *Psalterium Davidis*, Aa4r.

18 Hessus, *Psalterium Davidis*, Aa4r.

19 I used the following editions: Spangenberg, *Psalterium*; Spethe, *Psalmorum Davidis*; Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmendichtung*, 134.

Iuppiter.²⁰ At the same time, Spethe precisely indicates the meter, stanzaic structure, and syllable count of each psalm, and at the end of the edition, he summarizes the metrical features in a table, obviously for the sake of clarity and didacticism. Spangenberg also places his psalms in a Greek mythological context, with, for example, the classical names of the winds (*Boreas*, *Eurus*) or the underworld *Phlegethon*, and even God is the inhabitant of Olympus.²¹

The Neolatin paraphrases of the psalms by German authors are characterized by a syncretic vocabulary and a great variety of language and form. Nicolaus Selnecker and Sebastian Hornmolt composed their psalm transcriptions in German (*volkssprachlichen Psalmlieder*) in addition to the Latin version (*Latin Psalmgedichte/ Neolatin Psalterparaphrase*).²² Joachim von Beust, on the other hand, transcribed not only Gospel passages but also psalms into Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German in his collection *Christiados Libellus*.²³ Ambrosius Lobwasser (1515–1585) gives an emblematic interpretation of Psalm 90, a work also included in Beust’s anthology noted above. Johannes Stigelius, in his *Poematum Liber I*, has made a *Propempticon* of Psalm 23, and includes several metrical versions of a psalm.²⁴ Selnecker also carved a calligram (text arranged in an image related to its content) in Hellenistic fashion, from Psalm 23, and uses several verse forms (e.g., Sapphic stanza, iambics, ode) for each psalm version.²⁵

In their paraphrases of the psalms, Hesus, Spethe, and Spangenberg (although Spethe’s transcriptions were in a four-part form with musical notation) tended to focus on the expression of aesthetic value (*Kunstdichtung*). In German Neolatin psalm poetry, too, there are many examples of the case where the balance tips in the

20 Spethe, *Psalmorum Davidis*. Some examples of antiquated vocabulary: Psalm 16 – “*In Tartaro nec spiritus manebit.*”; Psalm 18 – “*Gurges Stygis terrebat.*”, “*In tuta iam me Iuppiter locavit, / Constans amoris foedus et probavit...*”, “*Fauces Averni me voraverant.*”; Canto 31 – “*Tanquam sedens in civitate / Fortissima triumpho, / A Marte non recumbo*”; Canto 45 – “*Iunctae sequentur virgines ibi, / Nymphae ferentur, sponse rex, tibi.*”; Canto 50 – “*Qua Phoebus ortu surgit et cadit, / Splendore lucem de Sion dabit / In claritatis gloria patebit.*”

21 Spangenberg, *Psalterium*. Some examples of antiquarian vocabulary: Psalm 1 – “*Pulvis ut a Borea, paleaeque agitantur ab Euro, / Sic habet haud stabiles impius ipse focos.*”; Psalm 2 – “*Sed residens summo Deus immortalis Olympo.*”, “*Involvat rapida vos Phlegetontis aqua.*”

22 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmendichtung*, 127; Selnecker, *Christliche Psalmen...* (Leipzig, 1587) contains, in addition to the German–Latin psalms, various prayers written in verse, hymns and anthems. Hornmolt’s Latin version (*Davidis Regii Prophetae Psalmi...*, Tübingen) was published in 1596, and his German paraphrase (*Deß königlichen Propheten Davids Psalter...*) a few years later, also in Tübingen, in 1604.

23 I used the following edition: Beust, *Christiados Libellus*.

24 I used the following edition: Stigelius, *Poematum Liber I*.

25 I used the following edition: Selnecker, *Psalterii*.

other direction, towards the *Heilwert* (salvation value). In Selnecker's volume, for example, Psalms 45 and 80 become strongly theologically oriented. In these paraphrases, the stylistic antiquity of the paraphrase is pushed into the background, and symbols of the Church, such as the bride and the vine,²⁶ take center stage. Selnecker also stresses in his preface to the *Psalterium* that Virgil's work is worthy of praise, but that nothing can compare to David's poetry, which is more valuable than the *Georgics* and the *Odyssey*.²⁷ Here, the salvational effect takes precedence over the aesthetic value, the classical disciplines of the art of speech, the human word is merely a more worthy expression of the divine word of salvific value.

Neolatin psalm poetry in Hungary

In the following section, I will give representative examples of paraphrases of typical psalm groups (lament, royal, penitential, thanksgiving, and wisdom psalms) by the Hungarian poets listed above. My aim in analyzing the adaptations is to point out, in a schematic way, the similarities and differences between the domestic poems and the German models.²⁸

According to the philosophical teaching of Psalm 1, every godly man should meditate on the law of the Lord, for those who walk in the path of heavenly wisdom will be saved. On the other hand, those who despise God and indulge in worldly pleasures will enjoy their happiness only for a time and will have a miserable fate.

Ostermaier's distich rendering follows the biblical psalm's line of thought exactly, with only minor changes in detail and some antiquing of vocabulary.²⁹ For example, the classical names for the winds appear in the paraphrase of two locutions. When the speaker says the pious people are like trees planted on the banks of the water, whose leaves do not fall, though the *Auster* (south wind) ravages them in vain, or when he

26 Bach and Galle, *Deutsche Psalmendichtung*, 137. Psalm 42 – “O Sponse Christe Iesu, / Nos protegas misellos, / Ecclesiamque sponsam / Ornes tuo cruore.” Psalm 80 – “Incensa nunc, succisa nunc est vinea, / Et tristis est Ecclesia. / Veni, vide tandem, malos et increpa, / Ut hanc cremare desinant. / Manu tua populum tuae tu protege / Dextrae, potente robore.” Selnecker, *Psalterii*, 12v, R3r.

27 “Laude dignus est Virgilius, qui & Bucolica & Georgica, & tandem Heroica carmina grauitate & suauiditate eximia composuit. Intueamur autem nostrum Dauidem, & fatebimur neminem ipsi conferri posse. Quam suaue, quam efficax est illud Bucolicum? Dominus pastor meus, nihil mihi deerit. In loco pascuae me collocauit, super aquam refectionis deduxit me. Quam graue & gratum est illud Georgicum? Quare etiam oportebat Dauidem Odyseam de suo exilio & erroribus ante Iliada scribere. [...] Haec est pictura exilij Christi [...]” Selnecker, *Psalterii*, (3r.

28 The biblical quotations are taken from the revised Protestant Bible of the Hungarian Bible Society: Rózsa, ed., *Bible*.

29 Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*, A3r-v.

compares the wicked to the dust stirred up in the air by the *Aquilo* (north-east wind). In the poem's conclusion, Ostermaier states that the army of the wicked will be cast into the waters of the Styx (*in stygias undas*), that is, they will be doomed to destruction. At one point, the voice breaks from the text of the poem and addresses the culprits directly: "Believe me, you will stand before the judgment seat of the supreme judge with weak legs and a trembling heart!"³⁰ In the light of the theme of this volume and the other paraphrases of the psalms it contains, this revelation, which at first sight seems to be a general teaching, has a very specific meaning. The paratexts speak of the sad and distressed state of the Church in the present day, with problems caused by the wicked and the tyrannical with their misdeeds. This psalm is thus an admonition, a warning to the current enemies of the Church, an elaboration on the original phrase ("Therefore sinners cannot stand still in the time of judgment..."), a more graphic depiction of the imagined future situation, presumably also to arouse fear.

Psalm 3 in the Old Testament is a prayer to the Lord by David, driven out of his kingdom and oppressed by his enemies. David had been dethroned, betrayed by his loved ones, including his own son, and pursued on all sides by his enemies. Despite all this, the exiled king seeks refuge in God's infinite love, complaining to the Lord of the pain in his heart and hoping for His help. This psalm is the anguished lament of a sorrowful, despairing, anguished soul. King David sees the only remedy for his fears in trust and faith in divine forgiveness and providence.

Piltz paraphrases the divine revelation, adapting it to the current situation of his time.³¹ The situation in which he speaks does not change, but the person who speaks does. It is already clear from the title (*Precatio Ecclesiae Dei, contra persecutores, ex 3. Psalmo Davidis*) that the personified Church is crying out to the Lord for help against its persecutors. Presumably here the persecutors mean the enemies of the oppressed new faith, the Church of Rome, the new tendencies of the Reformation, which were contrary to Lutheranism, and the pagan Turks. This transposition can be interpreted as a communal rather than an individual lament, as the following words testify: "For it is only by trusting in your famous protection that we are encouraged, especially in the most threatening situations of life"³² "By the gifts of heavenly grace, save our souls."³³

Piltz makes bold use of poetic-rhetorical devices. He reworks his poem in classical metered verse, but not in the usual hexameter, distich forms, but in iambic meter (*Iambicis quaternariis reddita*), in sixteen four-line stanzas, and concludes his poem

30 "Credite, supremi vos iudicis ante tribunal, / Stabitis haud firmo, corde tremente, pede." Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*, A3v. The term *corde tremente* is also found in Ovid. Her. 5,68.

31 Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, E5v-E7r.

32 "Quandoquidem tantum tuae / Protectionis inclytae / Nos erigit fiducia, / In forte vel tristissima." Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, E7r.

33 "Mentique nostrae munera / Coelestis auge gratiae." Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, E7r.

with a four-line distich stanza. The author largely aligns the text of the transcription with the biblical text, but in some places he freely changes the original order of the thought-process. For example, the order of the phrases “You lift up my head” and “Stand by me, Lord, save me, O God” is reversed in the paraphrase. In the original arrangement, the latter is placed from the back exactly in the middle, i.e., the eighth stanza of the paraphrase, while the former is placed in the penultimate, i.e., the fifteenth stanza. It is probably not by chance that the idea of divine deliverance from the enemy, divine help, is placed in the central eighth stanza of the poem. The rearrangement presumably serves to emphasize the main message of the psalm. Almost every element of the content is detailed, for example, the voice of the enemy and persecutors (“Many say of me, God will not help him”) is organized in two stanzas of questioning, in a confrontational and questioning tone: “If you truly honor God, why do you despise our denominations? . . . Here, here is salvation, why not drive out the other infidels?”³⁴ Just as his persecutors considered David guilty, ungodly, and disgraced before the Lord, so the representatives of ungodly, pagan religious movements have a similar view of the Lord’s true Christian Church and of believers. It is on the basis of the latter opinion that the doubting clause “If you truly honor God...” is based. Finally, the distichonic final stanza may be seen as a decoding and interpretation of the allegory running through the paraphrase: the Church prays as a shaken matron (‘married woman / wife / respectable woman’) who, even in this desperate situation, in the midst of trials, preserves her purity, her moral values, and her faith.

Psalm 42 is the lament of an exiled Levite who is far from his temple and God. As the deer longs for fresh water, so the psalmist longs for his Lord. This psalm is the yearning of a thirsty soul, hoping for help from the Almighty, longing for his nearness, longing for a spiritual witness of comfort and encouragement that the Provider is on his side.

Two of our poets have paraphrased Psalm 42: Valentinus Crispus and Georgius Ostermaier.³⁵ The paraphrases are similar in many respects: both are written in distich, the title is the opening phrase of the biblical psalm (*Quemadmodum cervus desiderat/Quemadmodum desyderat cervuus ad fontes aquarum, etc.*), both poems are accompanied by a short four-line distichonic *argumentum*. Crispus’s *argumentum* is literally a summary of the content of the psalm. The sorrowful prophet sings of his emotions, how he suffers at the hands of the enemy. And the merciful God encourages the weary, despairing soul of the sufferer. Ostermaier recontextualizes the song of the Levite with the first-person plural voice: if the Stygian demon torments our

34 “Vere Deum si diligit, / Cur castra nostra respuit?... Hic hic salus, quin caeteros / Exterminamus perfidos?” Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, E6r.

35 Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A2r-A3r; Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*, A3v-A5r.

souls with fear, God's goodness and protection, hope in divine help,³⁶ animates us. Reading this summary together with the paratexts, it becomes clear that the Stygian demon is none other than the Turk, who oppresses the Christian people and the Church as a dangerous enemy. Both Crispus and Ostermaier emphasize in their dedicatory texts accompanying the paraphrases of the psalms that Pannonia is suffering at the hands of the Turks and needs the Lord's help. Given the historical context, Psalm 42 assumes a very specific meaning, becoming a pleading lament of the Hungarian people oppressed by the Turks, reinforced by the fact that the speaker of Crispus's poem sometimes speaks collectively, on behalf of the community.³⁷

The paraphrases are accurate representations of divine revelation in their scope, structure, thought, composition, and use of form. The speech situation is also unchanged: the lyric speaker largely addresses God in the first-person singular, complaining to him, praying to him. In places, there is also a certain amount of detailing to enliven and color the text and make it more vivid. For example, Crispus gives the following details of the opening deer sentence:

“As the gentle deer longs to go to the spring waters and relieve its weary limbs of its burdensome thirst, as it wanders the high mountains and the deep forests, while it miserably chases after the refreshment it craves, so now my soul departs to the good God and thirsts for the true pleasures of the eternal God.”³⁸

And Ostermaier gives a little color to the whirlpool reflection:

“When your voice rings through the high whirlpools of heaven, the blue waters of the restless sea are bursting. Hence my soul is troubled with many perils, and my boat shakes with your waves. Though my heart wavers with myriad storms, And the boat plows the waters with a trembling rowing crew, Yet great is the mercy of the heavenly Father, To whom in various ways I sing songs of thanksgiving.”³⁹

36 Ostermaier's *argumentum* also contains an example of a slight antiquization of vocabulary: “*Si nos infestat Stygio cum Daemone mundus, / Angit ubi magnus pectora nostra pavor, / Nos sustentemus, freti bonitate Tonantis, / Spe firma auxilii, praesidioque Dei.*” Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*, A4r.

37 E.g., “*Sic nostrum taquam fluviorum turbine pressum, / Ulterius poterit vix superesse, caput.*”; “*Ossibus est veluti clades tristissima nostris / Vox, qua me misere pessimus hostis agit.*” Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A2v-A3r.

38 “*Sicut aquas mitis fontanas cervus adire, / Membra gravique cupit fessa levare siti. / Ut celsos peragrat montes sylvasque profundas, / Dum miser optatam prosequitur requiem. / Sic anima ad Dominum mea nunc secedit amicum, / Et sitit Aeterni gaudia vera Dei.*” Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A2r. The line *montes sylvasque profundas* occurs also in Lucretius. *De rer.* 5,42.

39 “*Dum tua vox resonat per celsa volumina coeli, / Diffugiunt trepidi coerulea stagna maris. / Inde*

However, there is also a difference between the two paraphrases in how closely they fit the structure and stylistics of the original text. The last lines of the biblical Psalm 42 occur verbatim in earlier parts of the poem. Ostermaier follows exactly the original style of editing and concludes his transcription with the same literal (sentence) repetitions. In contrast, Crispus reworks the original text more boldly, modifying the modality of the sentences to bring the text closer to the speaker's presumed intention. The impatient, sometimes questioning formulations of the biblical text are more restrained in order to emphasize, better express and convey the speaker's subordinate longings and desires. Thus, the question "When can I go to appear before God?" becomes the subjunctive phrase "Oh, if only I could stand before the supreme God, this brightness would be very pleasant for me, the wretch!"⁴⁰ and "Why must I go in mourning, why am I tormented by the enemy?" from the locus "Please don't let our countenance be so weary while you leave me alone, the fierce enemy is pressing me!"⁴¹

Psalm 51 is David's penitential psalm and one of the seven penitential psalms. At Nathan's words, David humbly confesses his sins, admits his guilt for having been with Bathsheba, and hopes for forgiveness. He prays that the Lord will receive him back into His grace and that he will receive salvation. This prayer is not only for the good of the individual, but also for the good of the Church, since David's fate is of importance for the community.

As with Caspar Piltz's other paraphrases of the psalms, this transcription is in iambic verse, arranged in a total of twenty-four-line stanzas.⁴² Piltz, as usual, strives for rich detail, selectivity, and precision in the expression of ideas. The simpler biblical phrasing is often given a more poetic form. For example, "Open my lips, O Lord, and declare thy praise." The phrase appears in the revised version, "Thy right hand loosens the fetters of my bound tongue, that my mouth may be devoted to singing thy glory."⁴³ In addition to individual atonement, the lyric speaker asks the Lord's forgiveness on behalf of other sinners. The second stanza's general plea for God to have mercy on those who are defiled by the filth of their transgressions and who have com-

meam vexant numerosa pericula mentem, / Et mea cymba tuis fluctibus acta tremit. / At licet innumeris titubent mea corda procellis, / Et navis tremulo remige sulcet aquas, / Est tamen aetherei celementia magna parentis, / Cui recino variis cantica grata modis..." Ostermaier, *Psalmi aliquot*, A4r.

40 "O utinam ante Deum possem cosistere summum, / Haec misero nimium lux mihi grata foret." Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A2r.

41 "Vultum quaeso sinas ne sic tabescere nostrum, / Dum me destituis, me premit hostis acer." Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A2v.

42 Piltz, *Meditationes Piaae*, K8r-L1v.

43 "Tu resolve dextera / Linguae implicatae vincula, / Ut os meum sit deditum / Tuae canendae gloriae." Piltz, *Meditationes Piaae*, L1r.

mitted ugly sins is presumably made on behalf of the community. Although there is no trace of historical recontextualization in the poem, when placed in the context of the *Meditationes Piae*, read together with the other paraphrases of the Psalm, this paraphrase can be interpreted as a collective repentance of a country ravaged by the Turks, a plea for help, spoken by the individual, in the words of the Psalm.

Laurentius Szegedinus and Valentinus Crispus already openly tailor their paraphrases to the historical present.⁴⁴ They both write in distich, using the opening words of the biblical psalm as their title. The emphasis in the texts is clearly on divine revelation and the transmission of ideas, rather than on formality. At the same time, Szegedinus's rhetorical modesty, that his unpolished, unadorned poems lack the charm, beauty, and glamor of *Aganippe* (dedication to the muses) and are thus perhaps not worthy of the renowned patrons, is precisely what draws attention to their form.

Szegedinus's Psalm, placed in the context of the volume that contains it, can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, from the point of view of the funeral verses at the end of the volume (*In fine addita sunt Epitaphia ab eodem scripta*), the transcription can be seen as an individual prayer for the absolution and salvation of the deceased. On the other hand, considering the date of publication of the volume (1564), the poem can also be understood as penitent supplication by the guilty Hungarians, oppressed by the Turks. The latter interpretation is even more probable in the context of the linguistically more communal approach: for example, the individual prayer in the biblical psalm ("Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew the strong spirit within me") becomes collective in the revision: "Let the holy deity dwell in this body, recreate it in our hearts and in our souls."⁴⁵

Crispus writes about the Turkish threat and the suffering of Pannonia in his dedication to Gáspár Heltai. Psalm 51 was also paraphrased to seek the Lord's help, so that the Hungarian people might receive support from heaven to fight against the dangerous enemy. In the paratext, Crispus compares the plight of the Church to a bad harvest, which is known to be a symbol of God's wrath and punishment in biblical phraseology. Crispus's poem is thus a communal prayer, and this communal approach is also evident in the argumentum and in the text of the poem. According to the argumentum, the psalmist shows the people the justice of faith (*turbae*); he teaches them the origin of sin and destruction and reminds them of divine mercy and forgiveness. The 'we' idea is evident in several passages of the paraphrase. For example, the paraphrase of the passage quoted above ("Create in me a pure heart, O

44 Szegedinus, *Psalmi LI*, A2r-A3r; Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A3r-A4r.

45 "Numen in hoc habitet concedas corpore sanctum / Corde quod in nostro visceribusque nova." Szegedinus, *Psalmi LI*, A2v. The passage quoted from the psalm (51,10) is still used in the Reformed liturgy today as a confession before communion.

God, and renew a strong spirit within me”) in Crispus’s text is similar to that seen in Szegeginus: “Let our hearts shine with the faith that does right, and let our inward parts be strong with your breath.”⁴⁶

Psalm 72 is a royal psalm, a prayer to God for the king. Specifically, it is the prayer of the Jewish King David to God for his son Solomon. The old David, who has endured the myriad trials and tribulations of reign, wishes his son Solomon strength and excellence in his coming reign. Purkircher’s hexameter argumentum makes use of the possibility of creating parallels and brings the ideas of the psalm up to date. In the paraphrase, Ferdinand, the old king, tired of the troubles and toils of ruling, prays for his dear son, Maximilian.⁴⁷ Maximilian is a just, wise, and peace-loving man who eliminates the ungodly and profane tendencies from religion, so that all may worship one God. Purkircher advises the old Ferdinand to give up praying, for what more could he want than to have a unified religion throughout the world.

In Purkircher’s iambic paraphrase, he makes considerable changes to the original psalm’s speaking position, structure, and thought leadership. In lines 1–14, we hear what is presumably the fatherly entreaty (imperative verbs: *doce, explica, fac*) from the mouth of the resigning King Ferdinand, who begs the Lord to make his son Maximilian a just and merciful ruler.

Then, with the narrator’s interjections in lines 15–16 (“Behold, God has already heard your pleas! Behold, he will now forge the king!”⁴⁸), the second structural unit (lines 17–36) begins, in which the focus is on the current situation (present tense verbs: *videtis, amet, gaudeat, persequuntur, conterat, iacet, fit, and colent*). The Lord seems to have heard and granted Ferdinand’s requests, for he endowed the heart of Maximilian with all good things, and he became a merciful and compassionate man.

In lines 41–156, the Song of Tribute follows, in which the speaker paints a picture of the coming kingdom of Maximilian (future tense verbs: *superbit, flore-bunt, augebitur, agent, gignet, uniet, stabit, nesciet, docebit, vivet, and precabitur*). This passage draws an idyllic vision of the future, tribute to the king, in which the expectations, desires, and wishes of the Hungarians and Protestants towards the reign of Maximilian are expressed. The speaker introduces all this in lines 37–40 with questions about what he should say about his king, and how he should begin this song of praise.

In the concluding lines 157–164, we return to the supplication (imperative verbs: *laudetur, sint, colant, repleto, and praedicet*), in which the lyric speaker

46 “*Candida iustificante fide sint pectora nostra, / Nostraque sint flatu viscera firma tuo.*” Crispus, *Psalmi duo*, A3v.

47 Purkircher, *Opera*, 114–19.

48 “*En, audiit Deus preces iam supplicis. / En, ut regem nunc expolit!*” Purkircher, *Opera*, 115.

presumably praises God, wishes him eternal respect and honor, and asks him to bestow his illustrious gifts on the king. Apart from the complexity of the composition (framing), what makes this adaptation most interesting is the author's intention to contextualize it in the given time-period. The central idea of the paraphrase is certainly the establishment of religious peace, which was also one of the main objectives of Maximilian's imperial program. The earlier idea of the argument, the dream of the birth of a united church, is reiterated in the unity of the future reign of Maximilian, when the narrator speaks of the fact that in Maximilian's kingdom everyone will be happy, fortunate, and wealthy, that peace will reign in the empire, and that this peace will be the key to the unity of the Church. In addition to the abundant detail, there are also sporadic examples of the antiquisation of vocabulary: in the locution "Let his name endure forever, let his fame spread while the sun shines", the sun is rendered Phoebus and the sky Olympus.

Psalm 79 is the lamentation and supplication of the people who have lost their temple. Pagans have infested Jerusalem, they have brought destruction to the holy city and its people. All this is the punishment of the Lord, who is angry with them for the sins of their forefathers. The suffering people plead with the Lord to have mercy on them, to forgive their sins, to save them from the enemy, and to take vengeance on the heathen who mock them.

There are four known Latin translations of Psalm 79 from the examined period, attributed to Piltz, Schesaeus, Purkircher, and Sylvester.⁴⁹ Piltz again chants the psalm in iambic verse, in fifteen four-line stanzas, while the other three paraphrases are in diction, and all the poems contain references to the historical situation of the time. Schesaeus speaks in general terms of the persecutors of the Church in the title, but he does not say who he means, nor is there any more specific reference to this in the text. Nor does the context of the volume in which it is set bring us much closer to a solution, since the transposition of Psalm 79 comes after the greeting in which Schesaeus implores Queen Isabella and her son, John Sigismund II (King John II of Hungary, 1540–1571), to defend the true faith from heretics. As a continuation of this, the psalm paraphrase can be interpreted as a prayer against the enemy on behalf of the Church community.

Piltz's paraphrase, as well as the entire *Meditationes Piae*, is dedicated to János Rueber, the captain of the Upper Hungarian army, organizer, and participant in the struggle against the Turks. The poet introduces the paraphrase with a short, four-line distich in which he addresses the hero of the Turkish defeat (*Heros insignis*) and advises him to link prayers with the sword and arms (*iunge preces gladiis* and

49 Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, L2r-L3v; Schesaeus, *Opera*, 442–47; Purkircher, *Opera*, 130–33; Sylvester, *De bello Turcis*, C4r-D2r.

armis), because this is the most effective way to defeat the Turks. In addition to the introductory lines, there is also an update in the text of the psalm: in the seventh stanza, Piltz concretizes the line “Pour out your fiery wrath on the heathen who do not know you” and speaks of Turkish power, and in the stanza that begins the psalm he compares the threatening enemy to a wolf that chases the flock.⁵⁰ The very title of Purkircher’s psalm is evocative: it is a prayer for Hungary (*Türkengebete*), engaged in an arduous struggle against the Turks. In addition, the Zsámboky poem on the title page is a further way of bringing the psalm’s message up to date. According to the poem, the prayer in the psalm is expected to be heard by the Lord and, thanks to heavenly assistance, the enemy will finally be defeated. In the text itself, the name of the Turk(s) is recorded in several places, for example in the very fourth line, which says that the Turk, the destroying raider, roams the cultivated lands of Hungaria.⁵¹

Sylvester, in his Latin dedication to King Ferdinand I (King Ferdinand I of Hungary, Holy Roman Emperor, 1503–1564), blames the godless lifestyle of the rulers for the fact that the people have to suffer such calamities and horrors as the Turkish plague. It is for this reason that, close to the Last Judgment, or *tempus extremum*, his poems seek to exhort all princes to strive for a life of piety and penance. Thus, the transposition of Psalm 79, interpreted as a plea for forgiveness of the Hungarian people in their struggle with the Turks, is also incorporated in Sylvester’s paratext and in the Elegy (*De bello Turcis inferendo elegia*), intended to rally spirits in the fight against the invading Turks.

In terms of style, linguistic formulation, speech situation, and editing, all four authors offer interesting solutions. Piltz tweaks the style, creating a gentler tone for the invocation. In stanza 6, he transforms the original text’s impassioned, reproachful questions (“Lord, how long will your wrath last?”) into humble requests: “Our King, have mercy in your wrath, put a limit to just anger!”⁵²

Although Schesaeus gives little detail, making a completely faithful transcription, he does not fail to emphasize the horror of suffering in the original text (“O God! Pagans have broken into your inheritance, desecrated your holy temple, laid waste Jerusalem. The corpses of your servants have been fed to the birds of the sky, the bodies of your worshippers to the wild beasts of the earth... We have become a mockery to our neighbors, our surroundings mock and laugh at us.”) is rendered in a more graphic, dramatic description:

50 “Tandem fac Ottomannica / Te sentiat potentia, / Blasphema Regna corruant, / Quae non tuum nomen sonant / Hostes velut lupi tuas / Exterminant oviculas...” Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, L2v.

51 “...Hungariae cultis in finibus erret / Turca, suo vastans nomine reque latro.” Purkircher, *Opera*, 130.

52 “Rex noster, indulgentia / Tuam sed iram tempera, / Impone tandem seriam / Iusto furori clausulam.” Piltz, *Meditationes Piae*, L2v.

“O God, your royal court has fallen upon a terrible people, a people who bring impious words into your temple. The members of thy servants in heaps are cast before terrible beasts to be torn to pieces... The neighboring enemies, who surround us on every side, spew out of their angry mouths a multitude of curses and invectives.”⁵³

In Purkircher’s poem, Hungaria speaks (*Hungaria loquitur*) in the first person singular to God, i.e. the Hungarian land devastated by the Turks complains and pleads to the Lord for help. In addition to speaking in the first person, Hungaria sometimes also speaks of herself in the third person, for example in lines 1–6 quoted above. Purkircher’s text is rhetorically well-organized, as can be seen, for example, in the juxtaposing structures of time and value 7–15. Here the valorised past, when Christ was still venerated, is contrasted with the decadent present, when Christ is defiled. In the first four lines (lines 7–10) there are past tense verbs (*erant, fuerit, docebant, fuit*), while in the second four lines (lines 11–14) there are present tense verbs (*sunt, inveniuntur, eructant, est*), and the word *nunc* is a kind of borderline between the two (at the beginning of the fifth line). Purkircher also gives a wealth of detail, and the verses of the original text are amply explained. What is more, he often adds completely new and unique ideas to the biblical text. Hungaria becomes an adulterous wife, and the Lord a jealous, angry husband. In the same way, the Lord’s wrath is like a crackling fire: as the latter melts the wax, so the former destroys the people.⁵⁴ In another passage, the prisoners destined for death appear as lambs in a pen, for whose salvation Hungaria prays, and that the Lord will bring the Turks to the palace of Stygis (*Stygis aula*).⁵⁵

Sylvester’s paraphrase stands out from the rest by its particular wording. The poet quotes lines from the Latin text of the original psalm, followed in each case by the paraphrase. The degree of detail Sylvester gives is clear from the composition, the most abundant description being of the devastation caused by the Turks (*scelerata cohors*). Here, Sylvester’s lines, like those of Purkircher and Schesaeus, convey a deep, honest experience of the agony. The speaker notes in parentheses that it is painful to recount all this (*res est miseranda relatu*): the Turks kill the Lord’s servants

53 “O Deus, horribili tua cessit regia genti, / Quae vehit in templum verba prophana tuum. / Praebuit innumeras strages et membra tuorum / Servorum obscaenis dilanianda feris. / (...) In nos vicini, quibus undique cingimur, hostes / Ore venenato plurima probra vomunt.” Schesaeus, *Opera*, 447.

54 “Ceum mulier thalami foedus transgressa pudici / Irati patitur verbera iusta viri, / Sic ego saepe tuam variis erroribus iram / Accendi et poenae sum mihi causa meae. / Sed miserere mei, tuus extinguitur et ignis! / Iram nemo tuam, scis, tolerare potest. / Mollis ut ad flammas crepitantes cera liquescit, / Sic homines summi conterit ira Dei.” Purkircher, *Opera*, 131.

55 “Agnus ut in laceri septis inclusus ovilis / Ante oculos mortem nocte dieque videt, / Sic tua turba feri libitu damnata tyranni / Iam capitis poenas est subitura graves. / Eripe sed miseros inimico e gutture mortis / Atque illis vitae tempore longa para! / Turcos inferni truculento carcere claude, / Supplicii variis hos Stygis aula gravet.” Purkircher, *Opera*, 133.

with their bloody weapons, the towns are emptied and deserted, fathers, sons and daughters suffer from the violence, even the infants are given over to death by the savage enemy, torn from their mothers' breast.⁵⁶

Psalm 103 is the pious soul's thanksgiving to God for His heavenly gifts: forgiveness of sins, protection, goods, justice, mercy, grace and eternal life. Bocatius transposes Psalm 103 into seven different metrical tenses (*Hebdomelodia*), a poetic achievement that makes him unique in late humanist Neolatin biblical poetry in his country.⁵⁷ In addition to the traditional hexameter (1. *carmen heroicum*) and distichon (2. *carmen elegiacum*), we also find in this repertoire more special forms of verse, such as *carmen sapphicum* (3. *carmen heroicum*), which are common in Horatian *carmen* poetry, *carmen hendecasyllabum phalaecium* (4), *carmen tricolon tetrastrophon* (5), *carmen monocolon* (6) and *carmen dicolon distrophon* (7).

In most of his paraphrases, Bocatius does not significantly alter the content-structural structure and phraseology of the original psalm text, but his details make the existing figures more visible. For example, in his distichonic transposition of the metaphor "He fills your life with his goods, your youth is renewed like the eagle's", he expounds it in six lines, while in one of his strophic poems (*carmen dicolon distrophon*) Bocatius truncates the figure and condenses its subject element (youth, renewal of strength) into a single line.⁵⁸ The repetitions of the biblical text are also paraphrased, sometimes in a linguistically more complex, sometimes in a simpler form.

The vocabulary of the poetic texts shows the author's intention to syncretize. The poet refers to the vulture as the bird of Iuppiter (*Iovis ales*) and the sun as Phoebus. Other names of the gods are also found in Bocatius in their secondary meanings: Atlas represents the burden on the soul, Themis divine justice, and Mars the conflict that entices to sin. Olympus in the heavenly sense is also the dwelling place of the Lord, and the classical names of the winds (*Auster*, *Boreas*, *Caurus*, and *Eurus*) occur regularly in the following simile of the psalm: "The days of man are like grass, he flourishes like the flower in the field. When the wind sweeps through it, it is destroyed, not even its place will be known.

56 "Sanguineoque tuos servos absumere ferro, / Civibus atque urbem sic viduare suis. / Vim sensere patres, pueri, innuptaeque puellae, / Et trepidi, matrum turba beata gregis. / Non iuvenes virtus, teneras non forma puellas / Non pueros aetas ipsa, senesque iuvat. / Non alios quidque poterat quod forte iuvare, / Cunctis saeva lues mortis, & una fuit. / Extracti infantes trepidantis ab ubere matris / Caedeque confecti procubuere pari." Sylvester, *De bello Turcis*, C4r-v.

57 Bocatius, *Opera*, 803–19.

58 *Elegiacum*: "Te saturam ille famere vetans et egere quod optas, / Quodque optare pudor, dat tibi satque tuis. / Ille facit, vivax ut sis haliaeëtus aevo: / Namque aquilae in morem tu renovata viges. / Ne rugae turpent inhonestae, verna iuventus / Praestat, ego ut victus sim vegetusque senex." Bocatius, *Opera*, 806, *Dicolon distrophon*: "Pubere aedificat corpus nova, es hocce tu senecta." Bocatius, *Opera*, 816.

Bocatus also incorporates classical passages into his transcriptions. The distichonic paraphrase “*Scit, quod pulvis homo, quod levis umbra sies.*” line can be linked to Horace’s *Carmen Ad Manlium Torquatium* (IV/7). In a line of the fourth poem (*phalaeccium*) (“*Si puri scelerum integrique vitae*”) we also find a Horatian allusion, a transposition of the first line of the poem *Ad Fuscum*.

Elsewhere, Bocatus colors the linguistic-stylistic construction of the text with poetic questions, exclamations, and parenthetical interjections. The poet introduces the locus on the Lord’s mercy with the question “*Sors mala nos torquet?*” in the diction paraphrase. The meaning of the same passage is emphasized by the lyric self in the fifth poem with the exclamation “*Ipsa sed ah bonitas Iehova!*” (*tricolon tetrastrophon*) and in the hexameter paraphrase, the passage on divine mercy is punctuated with a parenthetical interjection (“*o coeles amor!*”).

Conclusion

If we look at the Hungarian psalm paraphrases analyzed in the German context outlined, we can only find examples of more extreme expression from one direction. The paraphrases of Piltz and Bocatus, with their more modest elaboration, can perhaps be compared with the transcriptions for educational use by Hessus, Spethe, and Spangenberg, and their high level of formal elaboration. Piltz and Bocatus are the only ones to use, in addition to the usual diction and hexameter meter, more varied strophic forms. Their poetic texts are rhetorically well organized, with a rich use of forms, ample detail and, in some places, an antiquated vocabulary. These features are also characteristic of Purkircher’s and Sylvester’s adaptations, and Purkircher has also paraphrased Psalm 79 in German⁵⁹ as well as in Latin. Most poets (Crispus, Szegedinus, Schesaeus, and Ostermaier), however, confine themselves to faithfully following the original biblical text, giving little detail, and only minor linguistic embellishments and changes in their paraphrases. It is true of almost all the national psalmists that they emphasize the salvific value of divine revelation. The external appearance is relegated to the background, the words of the psalm are mostly given a topical meaning, and the paraphrases with their classical form can be interpreted as a collective lament of Hungarians oppressed by the Turks or disease, as a penitential prayer to God. There is barely a trace here of the formal-linguistic bravura seen in German, of the boldly antiquated word use. Fear and despair are all-pervasive, and the focus is on supplication, atonement, and pleas for help rather than on the display of poetic talent.

Translated into English by Gábor Bogyó

59 Purkircher, *Opera*, 133–37.

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