

The “Spiritual Hammer” (1656) as an Emblematic Translation of the “Imitatio Christi” by Thomas à Kempis¹

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Abstract. The subject of this article is a Polish-language collection of emblems by Paweł Mirowski, the *Spiritual Hammer*, 1656. The work is in fact a paraphrase of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi*, which the author admits neither on the title page nor in the preface. In addition, the translation is supplemented with five to seven engravings (depending on the surviving copies) of an emblematic kind. The purpose of this article is twofold. Firstly, to juxtapose Mirowski’s translation with Kempis’s work in order to reveal his translation techniques and discuss the advisability of their use. Secondly, to analyse the purpose of using emblematics in the *Imitatio Christi* and to point to two hitherto unknown copper engravings preserved in a unique copy of the Seminary Library in Warsaw.

Keywords: emblems, meditation, translation, Thomas à Kempis, *devotio moderna*

When a member of our Society of Jesus, about eighteen years ago, went to Mauritanian Agira to make a ransom for the captives, the king (who was once a Christian) brought him into his library, equipped with various books. He extended to him various manuscripts to look at, and among them was a booklet by Thomas à Kempis on the imitation of Christ, translated in the common language of the Turks. He added to him that he esteemed this one, more than all the other Mohammedan books of his library put together. It would be superfluous to recount here how many

1 This article is the outcome of a research fellowship at the Maurits Sabbe Bibliotheek in Leuven (Belgium), thanks to a TNA ReIReS Horizon2020 scholarship. While doing the research, I was able to consult over 300 editions of the *Imitatio Christi* printed between the 15th and 18th centuries, primarily examining the collection of Xavier and Michel Van Meerbeeck (c. 1 000 editions of Thomas à Kempis’s, *De imitatione Christi*, published between 1494 and 1840). I thank Professor Mathijs Lamberigts and the head of the special collections department Dr. Hans Storme for their invaluable help.

minds it has changed and the innumerable conversions that have resulted from reading this book, which led from the broad and spacious road to the narrow path of salvation.²

This assessment from the preface of the 1608 Latin edition by the Dutch Jesuit Henricus Sommalius (1534–1619) attests to the importance that the *Imitatio Christi* had for Christians in early modern times. The remark that a non-Christian could appreciate its message is an extension of the trans-confessional use of the book within the Christian community, which was exploited during the Reformation. At the dawn of the confessional divide and the rise of the Reformation movements (on both the Protestant and Catholic sides), prayer and the way it was recited became a “controversial” practice and therefore a tool to compete for the believers.³ When the *devotio moderna* was riding the wave of popularity in the 16th and 17th centuries, the *Imitatio Christi* also became a source of confessional strife, which was reflected in the emergence of distinct traditions of book publishing differing in the layout of content, vocabulary, and additions from translators and publishers. The most significant difference was the presence or omission of the fourth book on the Sacrament of Communion. Protestants obviously omitted the fourth book from their translations. Catholics, on the other hand, wondered where to place it (in third or fourth place), as the Antwerp publisher Gaspar Bellerus obliquely pointed out in his edition.⁴ Prayer books thus were another arena of struggle for the faithful between Catholics and Protestants.

The essence of Thomas à Kempis’s spirituality lies in the need to know Jesus, his life and death, which takes the form of an intimate relationship with the Savior. This is especially realized in Book III (“On Interior Consolation”) of the *Imitatio Christi*, arranged in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and the Soul. The goal of

2 Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*, 1608, 12–13: “Referam hi quod nisi gravissimis testimoniis niteretur, incredibile videri possit. Cum quidam e nostra Societate IESU, ante annos plus minus duodeviginti, Argirium Mauritaniae profectus fuisset, pretium redemptionis captivorum laturus, Rex, (qui aliquando Christianus fuerat) cum in suam duxit bibliothecam varia librorum supellectile instructam. Varios his illi codices visendos porrigit, atque in his libellum Thomae à Kempis, de imitando Christo, vulgari Turcarum lingua conversum. Adiecit autem, pluris se unicum illum facere, quam reliquos omnes Mahumetanorum. Supervacaneum hic esset percensere mirabiles, ex huius libelli lectione, animorum metamorphoses, innumerasque eorum conversiones, quos ad arctam salutis semitam, a via lata & spaciosa traduxit” Later it was eagerly repeated in translations and editions, e.g.: Kempis, *De l’Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, f. a₃r; Kempis, *O naśladowaniu Pana Christusa*, f. A₄v–A₃r.

3 Hendrix, *Early Protestant Spirituality*, 201.

4 “Ordinem vero librorum cum auctor illum de Ver. Eucharistiae Sacramento in suo M.S. tertio apposuerit loco, eodem quoque loco reservavimus, ne hinc germanae editioni aliquid deesse videatur” (Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*, 1616, f. *4r.)

the follower of Christ is to recognize the vanity of the world, which can be achieved through the constant interior vision of the Savior through his life, passion, death, and resurrection. In union with God, through Christ the Bridegroom (from the Song of Songs), the Soul attains its highest goal and is then admitted into conversation with its creator. Mystical union is based in this case on the rejection of earthly life.⁵ Thanks to the simplicity of language, unencumbered by dogmatic terminology, and its affective message, this text has served wonderfully in popularizing Christian spirituality not only among religious but also among lay audiences.⁶

While today the book is regarded as one of the most important devotional writings, it has not yet enjoyed such esteem and recognition in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as it did in Italy, France, and the Netherlands.⁷ When we compare the number of Polish editions printed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (14)⁸ with the French ones (26 editions only in the seventeenth century),⁹ the difference is significant. Nevertheless, in the same way as in the Netherlands, Italy, and France, in Poland and Lithuania as well the Jesuit Order contributed to the popularization of the devotional work. This book was of particular importance to them, because Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* recommended that during the spiritual exercises one should read it along with the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints (especially in the second week of recollections, although the content of the first week also betrays the inspiration of the *Imitatio Christi*).¹⁰ Typically, the *Spiritual Exercises* could only be read by adepts of the Order, thus Kempis's work served as a devotional text intended for lay people.¹¹ It was the Jesuit Jacob Merlo Horstius (Jacques Merler, 1597–1644) who prepared Kempis's edition, which later served as the most popular basis for translation. The popularity of the *Imitatio Christi* is thus linked to the expansion of Jesuit colleges and the fact

5 van Dijk, "Thomas Hemerken a Kempis," 821–23.

6 Meditation according to Kempis consisted of seven stages, which he presented in his work *Sermones de vita et passione Domini* (chap. 26, p. 3): 1) Quis est qui haec patitur; 2) A quibus patitur; 3) Quanta patitur; 4) Pro quibus; 5) Quam longo tempore patitur?; 6) In quibus locis patitur? 7) In quibus membris patitur? Cf. Goossens, "Méditation," 917.

7 Grzebień, *Wujek*, 16.

8 Anonymously translated editions—10 (1551; 1545; 1586; 1608—probably by Jan Wielewicki, S.I.; 1623; 1642; 1655; 1672; 1681; 1682; 1688); Jakub Wujek—3 (1571, 1586, 1603), Stanisław Grochowski (1611). Cf. Estreicher, *Bibliografia staropolska*, Vol. 33, 129 and Vol. 20, 202–208; *Materiały do uzupełnień Bibliografii Staropolskiej*, no. 2351, source: <https://www.estreicher.uj.edu.pl/mdu/baza/> (accessed 13.08.2021).

9 Cf. Delaveau, "Les traductions," 81. More than 1500 editions were printed in France between 1470 and 1800, cf. Delaveau et al., *Édition et diffusion*, 11.

10 Loyola, *Spiritual exercises and selected works*, 147–48.

11 Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant*, 181–82.

that Jesuit translators were often educators. Additionally, through their commitment to missions, the Jesuits were specialists in cultural translation.¹² Finally, the Jesuits' devotion to the book was also reflected in the iconographic content of its editions. A telling example can be found in the mentioned edition by Henricus Sommalius, where Ignatius Loyola was depicted in the opening engraving of Book III as kissing Jesus (Fig. 1).¹³

In the case of Polish translations, almost all of them were made by Jesuits (or their alumni) except the one that is the subject of this article—*Młotek duchowny* (*Spiritual Hammer*) printed in 1656. Neither the author of the oeuvre nor its translator were mentioned on the titlepage or in the colophon. It consists of prefatory matter, four chapters, and a template of the last will “translated from Italian.”¹⁴ The composition repeats the “Catholic” arrangement of the content. In addition to the illustrated title page, each chapter is accompanied by a large engraving, and there are also small decorative graphical elements.¹⁵



Figure 1 Kempis, *De imitatione Christi libri quatuor*, Douai 1608, NkČr BG X 38, f. 158 r

- 12 Burke, *Cultures of Translation*, 15–17. In the early 1600s, the Society of Jesus already printed translations of the *Imitatio Christi* in Italian, French, Dutch, English, Catalan, Castilian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Greek, Chinese, and Japanese; cf. M. von Habsburg, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- 13 On the margin of a copy from the Royal Library in Prague, a reader expressed his idea that “this emblem could bear the inscription from Rom. 8. Who will separate us?” [“Posset tali figuræ forsan emblematicæ inscribi ex Rom. 8. Quis nos separabit?”]. Additionally, the reader drew a stair step with an inscription “FIDES” to point out that the basis of the union with Christ is faith. Cf. Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*, 1608, f. 158 r (NkČr, BG X 38).
- 14 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, p. f. Aa₁r–Bb₁v: *Testament albo dusze człowieka chrześcijańskiego woli ostatecznej oświadczenie. Z włoskiego języka przetłumaczony do zbawienia każdemu człowiekowi chrześcijańskiemu potrzebny*.
- 15 Five “large” engravings: 1 – f. title page, 2 – f. A₃r, 3 – f. F₂r, 4 – f. H₂r, 5 – f. T₁r (the coat of arm of Sas Jan Karol Czołhański) – Aa₁v; three small woodcuts: 1 – S₈v (Christ teaching), 2 – Z₄v (Cross), 3 – Z₈v (David playing the harp); a typographical ornament on f. Z₃v.

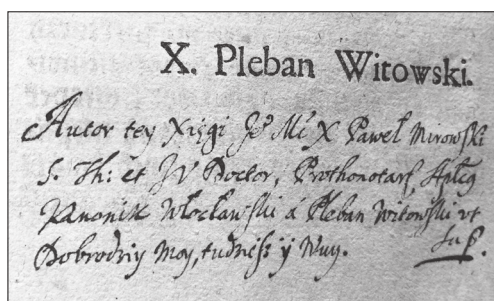


Figure 2 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny w sercach ludzki drelujący...*, Gdańsk: David Friedrich Rhete, 1656, BSW, O.128.44, f. []3v

Based on a handwritten note on the title page of the *Spiritual Hammer* of the copy kept in the Seminary Library in Warsaw, this work is attributed to Paweł Mirowski (Fig. 2).¹⁶ Little is known about the supposed author. He earned his bachelor's degree in 1629, his master's degree in liberal arts in 1631 at the Zamojska Academy, and his doctorate in theology in 1634 at the Jagiellonian University.¹⁷ On the basis of the title page of his other work entitled *Questio theologica, de processione Spiritus S. ex prima parte Angelici Doctoris* (1634),¹⁸ it can be deduced that his supervisor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Kraków Academy was the well-known theologian and multiple rector of the University, Marcin Wadowita (1567–1641). It is also known that he matriculated at the University of Padua in 1638¹⁹ and in subsequent years he assumed ecclesiastical positions: he was successively canonicus of Włocławek, provost of Koszyce, and parish priest of Witów.²⁰ Among his writings, there are also pieces of occasional literature—congratulatory eulogies, epithalamia, and funeral orations.²¹ The Seminar Library of Włocławek preserved 18 books with his provenance. The collection consists mainly of Italian and Latin books.²²

The introduction of the *Spiritual Hammer* was especially puzzling, as the translator revealed that he was “not publishing this book in order to boast of someone else's writing, but to multiply God's praise through it and to benefit the Church of Christ.”²³ He also commented on the status of the *Imitatio Christi* within the Polish-

16 Cf. Maciejewski, *Piśmiennictwo*, Vol. 3, 853; Jocher, Vol. 3, 32; Estreicher, *Bibliografia staropolska*, Vol. 33, 129.

17 Jan Toński wrote a panegyric for this occasion: *Phtongus famae* (Cracow, 1636). Cf. Muczowski, *Statuta*, 296.

18 Mirovius, *Questio theologica*, I.

19 Barycz, *Archiwum*, 330.

20 Ozorowski, “Mirowski Paweł,” Vol. 3, 140.

21 Mirowski, *Symbolum epithalamicum*; Mirowski, *Illustrissimo principi*; Mirowski, *Gratulatio*; Mirowski *In natalitia Iesu Christi ... carmina*. The *Symbolum epithalamicum* has also emblematic constructions in the volume from ZNiO XVII-2159-II where someone painted images on the blank pages. Mirowski dedicated this work to the relative of the parson of Witów, who signed after 26 years the prefatory letter in the *Młotek duchowny*. Cf. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *Emblematy*, 121, 123.

22 Iwańska-Cieślak, “Prywatne księgozbiory,” 16–18.

23 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []2v: „pomnożenia czcziej Boskiej i pożytku Kościoła

Lithuanian book market: “This book that is 100 years old in the Polish language, has been forgotten, covered with dust, and has almost been lost.”²⁴ Bibliographers have long understood these words literally, thinking that the *Spiritual Hammer* was written around 1550 and had been waiting to be published by the anonymous translator for a century.²⁵ In regard to the findings of Agnieszka Pabian,²⁶ who discovered that in fact the emblematic work is a paraphrase of the *Imitatio Christi* by Thomas à Kempis, the introduction becomes understandable—it refers to the previous Polish translations of the book.²⁷

It is necessary to comment on the fact that the translator concealed not only his name, but also the basis of his translation. Perhaps Mirowski understood that despite the efforts of previous Jesuit translators, Thomas à Kempis was not received as a book for general use in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For this reason, he made the title more persuasive and suggestive. In the end of the first meditation, it is God himself, then, who strikes at the reader’s heart, which engages the viewer in accordance with the idea of direct contact between Him and the believer notion (*unio mystica*), promoted both in religious emblems and Kempis’s spirituality: “Kind reader, please chew the words you read, for you I wrote this, with you I speak, into your heart this hammer strikes.”²⁸ Each of the four chapters is entitled *Drelowanie* (*Hammering*). In the Middle Polish language, the word *drel* or *dryl* was used to mean a ‘hammer’ or ‘mallet’, but also a tool for skull trepanation, which adds even more rhetorical poignancy to the book’s tone.

The reader should hammer the message into this or her mind which is represented by heart—as illustrated on the frontispiece by the symbol of a heart with the *manus Dei* above it, holding a mallet and ready to strike (Fig. 3). In the copy preserved in BSW on the first page verso, there is a handwritten dedicatory poem addressed to the noble woman, Katarzyna of Grabki (with an allusion to her coat of arms—Podkowa, i.e., Horseshoe). The priest, Krzysztof Piskoniwicz, who gave the book to her as a gift, continued the metaphor of the hammer and indicated the need for “nailing into the mind” the book’s message.²⁹ Many of the protectors and commissioning patrons of meditative emblems in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

CHRYSTUSOWEGO”. Here and below the Polish quotations are transcribed according to the rules described in Górski et al., eds, “Zasady wydawania tekstów staropolskich: projekt.”

24 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []2v: “[...] rzecz tak potrzebna jeszcze sta lat niedoszedszy w polskim języku srodze zapęziła, zaniedbała i już niemal zagubioną [...]”

25 Cf. A. Jocher, Vol. 3, 32, and Maciejowski, *Piśmiennictwo* Vol. 3, 853.

26 Pabian, *Symbolika*, 4.

27 Pabian, *Symbolika*, 10.

28 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. E₈r: “[...] namilszy czytelniku, proszę cię przegryzuj, co czytasz, tobiemci ja to napisał, z tobąć mówię, w twojęć serce ten młotek bije.”

29 Cf. [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, BSW (O.128.44) upper cover (Fig. 3).



Figure 3 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny w sercach ludzki drelujący...*, Gdańsk: David Friedrich Rheté, 1656, BSW, O.128.44 (frontispiece)

were noblewomen connected to male convents, such as Anna Ostrogska's foundation of her Catholic center in Jarosław. On the other hand, the choice of a particular convent or nun as the addressee of a dedication was due to familiarity with a particular religious community, often resulting from serving in it as a confessor, provost, or spiritual father like in case of Dorota Kątska (1558–1643), mother superior of the Zwierzyniec convent in Kraków, to whom numerous meditative and pious writings by Jesuits, Norbertines, and Dominicans were dedicated.³⁰ Both nuns and lay women ordered the books to apply the monastic *vita vel regula* to their everyday life. Some of the selected texts were ordered for private use and sometimes left in manuscripts³¹. Others were disseminated widely, and now we can examine many copies of one edition as part of provenance research. In cloisters, it was often the mother superior's decision that contributed to the dissemination of the

book: the supervisor decided who was allowed to read it, which books could be read aloud, and which ones in seclusion.³² The already noted handwritten dedication by Piskoniewicz confirms that the fact of writing in Polish shaped the audience in such a way that devotional, even monastic, writings reached even lay women-readers.

What is important is the desire to popularize monastic piety among the laity. The preface to the reader reflects the author's awareness that the "average" lay reader may have had doubts about the way to use the book, suggesting that he was convinced that "simple people" should also have access to meditative practices:

30 Cf. Gwioździk, *Kultura pisma*, 297–98.

31 As was the case of the poet Zbigniew Morsztyn and his protector Katarzyna Radziwiłłowa (née Sobieska), cf. Morsztyn, *Emblemata*, 4; Mieszko, *Emblematy*, 60–64.

32 Cf. Gwioździk, *Kultura pisma*, 148, 187.

In order that these books may be more usefully opened and read, it is necessary to know that simple people, those who are not well versed in spiritual exercises or who are not very proficient in them, and especially those burdened with secular matters, should turn to the first book. To the second and third books I would refer any Christian man, but even there those who constantly reflect on the truly spiritual life or who progress [in the spiritual life] and are no longer occupied with earthly matters may have greater benefit. Fourthly: to each of those who are ready to come to the Lord's table, so that they may receive the true body of Christ the Lord, for salvation rather than for condemnation, it gives abundant instruction. This is what you yourself, kind reader, will admit with your own judgment, but not before you have read it.³³

Significantly, Mirowski does not divide people into laity and clergy; instead he advises each person to evaluate their own spiritual progress. In another place, he explicitly emphasizes that the book can also be read by lay readers: "Not only the clergy, but all classes of Christ's hard path have sufficiently broad, holy and salutary teaching"³⁴ and: "Indeed, many before, both clergy and laity, had their hearts crushed [by this hammer] and then a great multitude of them were drawn by the Holy Spirit to Himself."³⁵ At the end of the first chapter, Mirowski adds a whole page where he addresses the reader and forbids them to think that the *Spiritual Hammer* strikes only at the hearts of monks and nuns. Each person stands for their own salvation and will be unable to plead someone else's deeds on the day of judgment.³⁶ It is also mirrored in the translation where he uses the inclusive quantifier: "*in case*

33 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []4r-v: "Aby z większym pożytkiem te książki otwierane i czytane były, potrzeba wiedzieć, że ludzie prości i w ćwiczeniu duchownym nieumiejętni albo też i mało co biegli, sprawami zwłaszcza świeckimi obciążeni do pierwszej książkowej pochód brać mają. Do drugiej i trzeciej już wszelakiego człowieka chrześcijańskiego odsyła, a wszakże i tam większy przecię pożytek mieć mogą, którzy prawdziwie duchowny żywot ustawicznie rozmyślają, albo co postępek biorą, więcyj się ziemszczyzną nie parać. Czwarta każdemu z tych co się gotują do stołu pańskiego przystępować, aby ku dusznemu zbawieniu, a nie ku zatraceniu prawdziwie ciała Chrystusa Pana przyjmować obfitą naukę podaje. Co i sam łaskawy Czytelniku przyznasz, kiedy nie pierwej aż przeczytasz, sądzić będziesz". A similar division is found in the Jesuit translation by Jakub Wujek, cf. Kempis, *O Naśladowaniu Pana*, f. +Vr.

34 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []2r-v: "Mają tu nie tylko duchowni, ale i wszystkie stany pracowitego toru Chrystusowego dość szeroką, świątobliwą a zbawienną naukę."

35 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []3r: "[Młotek ten], którym zaprawdę wielu przed tym tak z duchownych, jako i świeckich serca skruszywszy Duch Święty w wielkim mnóstwie do siebie pociągnął."

36 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. E₈r: "Nie mów, że to tylko księży, mnichów a mniszek tyka, każdemu o swą skórę idzie, a wszak u nikogo też Cyrografu nie widzimy, któremu by pozwolono do nieba o cudzej strawie wędrować."

you are a monk...”³⁷ while in the original there is only the mere address to the friars.

As the technique of meditation was not widely practiced outside the walls of monasteries, in vernacular meditations we often find instructions on how exactly the reader should carry out the reading.³⁸ In his recommendations, Mirowski also attests to the formative nature of the book as a guideline to everyday life—the reader can open it as often as three times a day like St. Francis of Assisi and “consider it to be an augury and a rule”.³⁹ This is an allusion to the events that were to take place in 1208 when St. Francis kept asking himself what he should do with his life and decided to spontaneously open the missal lying on the pulpit in the church of St. Nicholas in different places three times. All the passages he came across concerned the renunciation of earthly matters.⁴⁰ This practice of using the passage from the Bible as prophetic was called *sortes Biblicae* and had its roots in ancient methods of fortune-telling based on picking verse from poets such as Homer or Virgil (*sortes Homericae* or *sortes Vergilianae*). Even though sortilege, together with other auguries, was banned by the Church, this method of fortune-telling was still practiced by laymen.⁴¹ According to Mirowski, the *Spiritual Hammer* could serve the same function for its reader.

Another issue is the translator’s decision whether to remove specialized vocabulary and replace it with elaborate metaphors to reach a larger audience. Mirowski took the open tactic of posing as a simpleton—in line with Thomas à Kempis’s arguments—by praising the *docta ignorantia*: “Do not go before swathes of reason, but rather write yourself unlearned”.⁴² Not getting involved in “philosophical disputes” is supposed to be an expression of humility: “Indeed, I prefer a humble peasant in the fear of God to a bloated philosophical bladder that, having forgotten itself, rolls about in heavenly circles”.⁴³

This is consistent with an intentional adaptation of the content to the recipient, since Mirowski took an active part in theological disputes at university level.

37 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. C₄v: “Jeśliś w zakonnym stanie” (italics mine).

38 Cf. Bielak, *Po co i jak medytować?*, 127–43.

39 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []2v: “Może tej bezpiecznie każdy ni drugi Franciszek Święty niekiedy Mszału (za jedną pobożną wrózkę i życia swojego regułę poczytając) i po trzykroć na dzień otwierać”.

40 The quotes were respectively: Mt 19,21; Lc 9,3; Lc 9,23. Cf. Thompson, *Francis of Assisi*, 22–23.

41 Metzger, “Sortes Biblicae.”

42 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []7r: “Nie wyjeżdżaj przed swaty rozumem, ale raczej pisz się nieukiem.”

43 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []6v: “Wolę zaprawdę pokornego chłopka przy bojaźni Bożej niż nadęty pęcherz filozofski, który samego siebie zapomniawszy, po niebieskich się obrotach wałkuni.”

We know that Marcin Campius Wadowita asked him and his colleague, Jan Noskovic, a *questio* to solve (*ad decidendum proposita*): *Questio de invenienda, congno-scenda et discernenda vera Christi in terris Ecclesia* (1636), the script of which has survived to this day.⁴⁴ Mirowski was then ideally prepared for academic disputation, but in this work he decided to suspend this approach.

His decision to frame Kempis's simple expressions in metaphors (or to expand on metaphors already present) is evident already in the opening passage (translator's additions marked in bold):

Thomas à Kempis, <i>Imitatio Christi</i> , I:1	Paweł Mirowski, <i>Młotek duchowny</i> , I:1
<p><i>Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris</i> [J 8,12] dicit Dominus. Hæc sunt verba Christi, quibus admonemur quatenus vitam eius et mores imitemur, si volumus veraciter illuminari, et ab omni cæcitate cordis liberari. Summum igitur studium nostrum, sit in vita Jesu meditari.⁴⁵</p>	<p><i>Ten, który w trop mój stąpa nie chodzi w ciemnościach</i> [J 8,12]. Słowa są Chrystusa Jezusa, które mi do naśladowania życia swego nuka i do zamiłowania się swych obyczajów świętych powabia. Obiecując nam to dobrym Słowem, iż tak żadna ciemności światowych na serca nasze nie padnie ślepoty, ani jasna światła prawdziwego pochodnia z ręki naszych wygaśnie, ale raczej światłem prawdziwym dusze nasze rozjaśnią. Przetóż najwyższe szczęście i główne szczęście tu zawiesić winien z nas każdy jakoby godnie żywot Chrystusa Jezusa rozpamiętywał.⁴⁶</p>

44 The subject of the dispute was, by definition, focused on confessional divisions, since its subject was the problem of whether there is an identity of the Church of Christ with the visible (terrestrial) Church, and thus whether its internal properties or external ones (in order to distinguish it from others) should be taken into account. They answered in the affirmative, adding at the same time that all the marks given by dissenters (i.e., the word of God and the legitimate use of the sacraments) must be rejected, for it is clear to them what the matter of controversy is. One cannot look for the marks of the Church in her essence, because it is not clear, only accidents lead to its knowledge. The marks must be obvious and discernible. Cf. Mirovius, *Quaestio theologica*, 5–6: „Catholica professio est certissima, Spiritum Sanctum a Patre Filio[ue] procedere, Graecorum, Schismaticorum, Armaenorum et Moscorum, a solo Patrem erronea et execranda.” Graff, *Marcin Campius*, 278–281. Work incorrectly attributed to Wadowita, cf. Natoński, *Humanizm jezuicki*, 158–59, 268.

45 The Latin version of the *Imitatio Christi* quoted after <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/>.

46 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. []5v: “*He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness* [J 8,12]. These are the words of Christ Jesus, with which he encourages us to imitate his life and tempts us to love his holy customs. He promises us in a good word that no darkness of the world will fall upon our hearts, nor will the bright torch of true light go out of our hands, but rather the true light will enlighten our souls. Therefore, the highest happiness and main blessing should be established by each of us on whether we have worthily meditated on the life of Christ Jesus.

Above all, Mirowski adds adjectives and adverbs (*‘holy customs,’ ‘meditate worthily’*) and repeats the content reinforcing its message. Whereas in the Latin version, Christ recommends imitating His life and customs, in Mirowski’s, one should not only imitate, but also *love* customs. Kempis briefly summarizes the quote at the beginning, indicating that these are the words of Christ himself, while Mirowski adds that not only did Jesus utter them, but also explains that it was a promise made to man. Meditation on Christ’s life described as *studium* in Polish is translated as “the highest happiness and the greatest blessing”. The major addition is the elaborate metaphor of light, obviously present in the original, but in the translation, there is a suggestion that the reader following Christ is holding a torch in his hand. The translation is thus much more suggestive and uses such devices as *enargeia* and *hypotyposis* that stand in contrast to Thomas à Kempis’s severe style.

Mirowski also interferes with the composition of the content by adding quotations from the Church Fathers at the end of subsections. For example, the quotation from St. John Chrysostom that he adds at the end of the first chapter concerns the identity of a Christian: “therefore from *Christ* you are called *Christian*”,⁴⁷ but after the disputes between antitrinitarians and Catholics in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this is not an indifferent statement. In 1570, the antitrinitarian Piotr of Goniądz, in his treatise *O ponurzeniu chrystyjańskim* (On Christian Baptism), distinguished between “chrześcijanie” and “chrystyjanie”, stating that “it is not from baptism [*chrzest*] that believers are called Christians [*chrześcijanie*], but it is from Christ that they are called [*chrystyjany*]”. In Polish, the morpheme of the world ‘chrześcijaństwo’ (‘Christianity’) is indeed closer to ‘chrzest’ (‘baptism’) than to ‘Chrystus’ (‘Christ’).⁴⁸ This etymological figure was therefore associated with the rejection of the sacrament of baptism and is repeated in subsequent antitrinitarian treatises.⁴⁹ Mirowski deliberately invalidates this distinction. Moreover, even though the lack of apologetic passages in the translation (even in the preface) shows the sense of the translator, who wanted to bring the book closer to the lay audience, confessional matters are present. For example, in the fourth book, Mirowski adds a little from himself, emphasizing the role of Christians receiving Holy Communion. He places in the right part of the emblematic icon accompanying the fourth chapter an image of the Paschal candle as the symbol of Christ: a light which burns out and dies while showing people the way (1 Corinthians 6:17); as well as images of the crucifix;

47 [Mirowski], *Młotek duchowny*, f. []7r: “tedy od *Chrystusa* nazwany jesteś *Chrześcijaninem*.” There is a mistake in print: instead of John there is “Piotr [Peter] Chryzostom.”

48 Piotr z Goniądza, *O ponurzeniu*, f. A₂v: “nie od chrztu nazwano wiernych *chrześcijanmi*, ale od Chrystusa – *chrystyjanmi* [...], boć i Jezus syn Boży nie jest Chrzestus, ale Chrystus.” (after: K. Meller, [introduction to:] Czechowic, *Zwierściadłko*, 8 (italics mine).)

49 Czechowic, *Zwierściadłko*, 108.

and the Arch of the Covenant as a predecessor of the altar alongside a high priest's hat, an incense boat, and a thurible. On the left, Archangel Michael holds a trial over a dog and a pig which (Matthew 7,6) symbolize those who cannot recognize holiness. Thus, Mirowski alludes to the holiness of the Catholic eucharist and thereby suggests that the dog and pig represent heretics. The last will (*Testament*) added to the book (also with meditations) links the "true faith" with the "Saint Catholic faith"⁵⁰ which can be regarded as the confessional approach but hidden inside a simply "Christian" book. It is noteworthy that the book was published by David Friedrich Rhetius (?–1694), who printed theological works written by both Catholics (for the Jesuits' college in Stare Szkoty near Gdańsk) and Protestants (hymnbooks and polemical writings).⁵¹ Thus, his name was not associated with any confession, and in this edition, the confessional terminology is not present at first glance.

Regarding the graphic content of the *Imitatio Christi*, the engravings in the *Młotek duchowny* are not modelled after any foreign edition or series, which was common practice at the time in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because of the low number of trained engravers.⁵² A comparison of German, Dutch, French, and Italian editions points to the existence of certain editorial conventions, often resulting from the choice of edition that the publishers based their work on, which also led to copying their graphic compositions. For example, editions modelled after Hortius (SJ) contain the same illustrations despite being published by various printing houses in various countries.⁵³ Some compositions and visual tropes continued to be used as late as the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ However, an emblematic structure similar to the *Młotek duchowny*, at least in terms of its complexity, has not been found.

This does not mean that emblematics did not permeate the *Imitatio Christi*'s editorial traditions. For example, a 1653 edition demonstrates that visual tropes spread by emblematics, and other arts also impacted the editorial realities of the *Imitatio Christi*. On the title page, the Christ Child is shown inside a heart, thus combining a depiction of the Savior as a child, which was typical of emblematics

50 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. Aa₂r. The author mentions the four temptations that "Satan uses against the holy Catholic true faith of Christ" ["czterem pokusom, które Czart zwykł przekłety wywierać przeciwko wierze świętej katolickiej, prawdziwej Chrystusowej"] (ibidem).

51 Nowak, "Rhete Dawid Fryderyk," 251–52; Kawecka-Gryczowa et al., *Drukarze dawnej Polski*, 347–54.

52 Cf. Talbierska, *Grafika XVII wieku*, 231–70.

53 Cf. Kempis, *Viator Christianus*, 1643; Kempis, *Viator Christianus*, 1670; Kempis, *De l'imitation de Jésus-Christ*, 1698.

54 One example is Thomas à Kempis's attribute: an open book with the sentence "In omnibus requiem quaesivi et nusquam inveni nisi in angulo cum libro" in it see Mathis, "In Angulo," 16–25.

with cordial devotion popularized by Antoon Wierix, as evidenced by the inscription: “*Ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est Cor tuum*”.⁵⁵ Moreover, graphic borrowings from popular emblematic collections of the time can also be identified in various editions of the *Imitatio Christi*. A Dutch translation by the Jesuit Jan Maes contains prints from copperplates used in Herman Hugo’s famous collection *Pia desideria* (17 identical engravings, Fig. 4).⁵⁶ Engravings inspired by Hugo’s series can also be found in French editions.⁵⁷ In three of the examined editions, engravings inspired by Antoine Sucquet’s emblem collection the *Via vitae aeternae* are identified, with two Cologne editions of the *Imitatio Christi* from 1643 and 1670, approximating the French collection even with their titles: *Viator Christianus recta ac regia in caelum via tendens*.⁵⁸

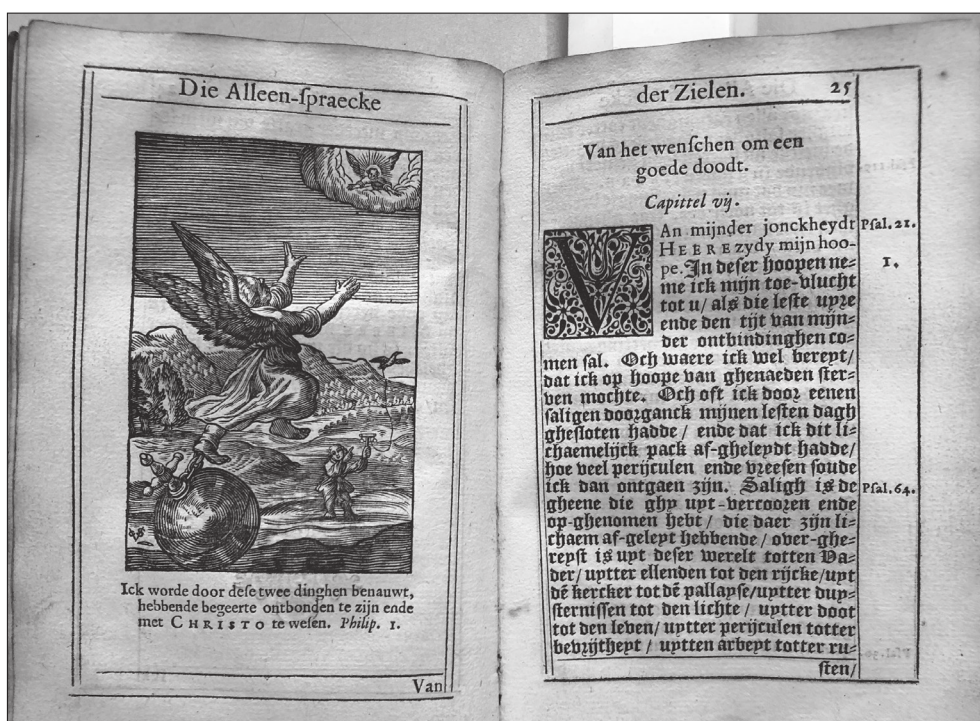


Figure 4 Kempis, *Die Alleen-spraecke der zielen met Godt door erw Heere H. Thomas van Kempen Regulier der Orden van p. Augustijn*, Loen: Ian Maes, 1628, MSB JEZUITICA MU ASC B IV 58

- 55 Kempis, *L'imitation de Jesus Christ*, 1653, frontispiece.
- 56 Kempis, *Die Alleen-spraecke*, titlepage, f. A₅v, B₅r, B₈r, C₃v, C₆v, D₂v, D₆v, E₃v, E₈v, F₃v, F₈v, G₆v, H₅v, J₃v, M₆v, N₃v, and N₇v. On P₆v and R₄v are engravings from other, rosary circles of engravings.
- 57 Kempis, *IV livres de l'Imitation*.
- 58 Kempis, *Viator Christianus*, 1643, 124 (MSB, GBIB P VM029); Kempis, *Viator Christianus*, 1670 (MSB, 74 0 THOM I) 1670; Kempis, *De l'imitation de Jésus-Christ*, 1698.

Whereas Mirowski's emblems did not follow any known illustration series, we can identify some inspirations based on certain graphic originals. The *Młotek duchowny's* frontispiece was probably based on the titlepage of the *Argenis*, printed in Venice in 1637, a well-known anti-Jesuit work by a Scottish satirist, John Barclay (Fig. 5).⁵⁹ But while the engraving by Rhetius's printing house mirrors the frontispiece in a Venetian edition of the *Argenis* (which in turn was inspired by earlier, probably French, editions),⁶⁰ the composition was not simply copied: the Gdańsk engraver added a central figure of a young Jesus holding a cross and the images of a heart and a hammer (Fig. 3).

The same compositional scheme recurs in each of the four emblems in most copies of the *Młotek duchowny*.⁶¹ Each of the emblems' icons is divided into seven panels: the central strip constitutes the main scene and contains a narrative part, with two figures on either side to supple-



Figure 5 Barclayus, *Argenis*. *Editio novissima cum nominum propriorum elucidatione hactenus*, Venetia: Francisco Baba, 1643, ON 224.465-A (frontispiece)

59 Barclayus, *Argenis*, 1637 (another edition with this frontispiece: 1643). Particular editions can be identified based on an image of Venice printed in a usual place with the printer's signature. Though it may be surprising to find the Venetian landscape in a Gdańsk publication, it is clearly a view of Venice from the bay, with its characteristic town hall tower, the Biblioteca Marciana and the St. Mark's Basilica. Venice's vista was identified by Pabian, *Symbolika*, 20.

60 Although the same composition is present in earlier Parisian editions, it could not have included a view of Venice at the bottom, see Barclayus, *Argenis*, 1630. The composition is repeated in later editions, see Barclayus, *Argenis*, 1655.

61 I was able to locate six copies currently held in the following libraries: BUW (Sd 712.788); BPG (XXo B.o. 1871); BSW (O.128.44); VUL (III 3026); BTPN (7386. 1); ZNiO (XVII-4488-II); in 2019, one was auctioned off by the Polish antique book shop Tezeusz (and its current location is unknown).



Figure 6 Girard, *Les peintures sacrées sur la Bible dédiées à la Reyne*, Paris: Antoine Sommaville, 1656, BMdL SJ E781/13 (frontispiece)

ment the narrative, which aligns popular architectural compositions present in frontispieces in the seventeenth century.⁶² In this case, the upper strip comprises three small panels and discusses the main theme symbolically; while the lower strip is just one panel and it is the most challenging to relate to the engraving's main message—sometimes, it is linked directly to the lemma.⁶³ These findings have been made more challenging by two existing copies held at BSW (O.128.44) and BPG (XXo B.o. 1871), where I discovered two engravings which had never been listed in bibliographies and catalogs (Figs 8–9). The two newly identified engravings are placed before the engraving the *Drelowanie wtóre* (“Hammering Two”) (BSW, BPG, cf. Fig. 8) and the engraving *Drelowanie trzecie* (“Hammering Three”) (BSW, cf. Fig. 9).⁶⁴

This suggests that the number of engravings created by the Gdańsk artist was unexpectedly larger than required by the four parts of the *Imitatio Christi*. The two “supplemental” engravings are untitled. Apparently not fitting into the gathering (8^o), they were noticeably glued in the book before the second and third chapter of the *Młotek duchowny*.

Mirowski adjusted the contents of the *Imitatio Christi* to the symbolic language of emblematics. The composition of the engraving which accompanies *Drelowanie pierwsze* (“Hammering One”, Fig. 7) is modelled after the frontispiece of *Les peintures sacrées sur la Bible* edited by Antoine Girard (Fig. 6).⁶⁵ It is reversed like a

62 Cf. Bertram et al., “Introduction,” 7.

63 Pabian, *Symbolika*, 17–18.

64 It was also overlooked by Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa who probably had been unable to see the copy first-hand as she wrote in her *Emblematy* that there were only five rather than seven engravings (including the title page).

65 This Bible had five editions in Paris—four by A. de Sommaville in 1653, 1656, 1665, 1680 and the final one by Nicolas de Gras in 1700. In the first three, the same frontispiece was used (engraver: Rousselot). See De Backer, *Bibliothèque*, Vol. 2, 233–34.

mirror image, which means that the engraver redrew the original engraving on a copperplate (thus the reversal). Thus, the engraver of the Gdańsk emblems probably used ready patterns, disassembling their compositions and adding new elements. In Mirowski's collection, the central figure of this icon is Moses holding a stone tablet with the inscription: "God above all, thy neighbor as yourself" ("Boga nad wszystko, bliźniego jak siebie") in his left hand, and an unfolded scroll with the inscription "Shun evil, do good" ("Stroń od złego, czyń dobrze") in his right. A dove is flying above Moses' head (the Holy Spirit), and a woman with a wreath on her head (Ecclesia) is sitting at his feet and embracing a cross, while holding a laurel branch in her left hand and a key and tiara in her right (the symbols of papal supremacy and power). Propped up on Ecclesia's knees, there is a book with the inscription: "[Come] to me, / babes, / [come] to me, / I will teach you / the fear of God" ("Do mnie, / dzieciaczky, / do mnie, / bojaźni was / Pańskiego nauczę") (Fig. 7). The scene is framed on two sides by two figures standing on pedestals with columns in the background. Such an architectonic frame appears in almost all the emblems. The man to the left, dressed in robes decorated with a pattern of open eyes, is holding a telescope. Above him, on the column, there is the word: "Ceremonies" ("Ceremonie") written, and below him, on the pedestal: "I [can] see, I do not doubt" ("Widzę, nie / wątpię"), which is an allusion to Doubting Thomas who wanted to touch Christ's wound after the resurrection (John 20:29). The figure to the right, dressed in robes decorated with an ear pattern, has the inscription "Faith" ("Wiara") above it and "I [can] hear and / I believe" ("Słyszę i / wierzę") below it. The sense of hearing is also symbolized by a hare that the figure is holding in their hands. The two figures are visualizing Thomas à Kempis's call from the beginning of the book (I, 1): "Be oftentimes mindful of the saying, The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with



Figure 7 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny...*, Gdańsk: David Friedrich Rhete, 1656, NZiO, XVII-4488-II, f. A₅r

hearing. Strive, therefore, to turn away thy heart from the love of the things that are seen, and to set it upon the things that are not seen.” (“Często sobie przypominaj przypowieść onę: Oko i Ucho – przepaść własna, nigdy ich widokiem ani słuchem nie nasycisz. Zamujże tedy Serce twoje, żeśli się kiedy do rzeczy widomych zacieczce i ono do miełości rzeczy niewidomych nakracaj.”⁶⁶

The upper strip of the engraving is filled with three smaller emblems framed by cartouches. The first is a pair of scales with a crown, a tiara, and jewels on one scale and a book on the other, tipping it. The inscription comments on the result of the measurement: “[It] outweighs” (“Przeważa”). The middle emblem of the upper strip depicts a cart transporting a heap of crosses, pulled by a sheep and a lion, which is a reference to a prophecy from biblical times: “the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together” (Isaiah 11:6).⁶⁷ The lemma “A lovely yoke / a sweet burden” (“Miła sprzęża / słodka cięża”) in combination with the icon echoes Matthew 11:29–30: “Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. / For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.”

The third of these emblems depicts a sun smiling above a book and the words “A night without either” (“Noc bez obojga”). After 2 Corinthians 4:4, the light of the Gospel cannot be seen by those in whom “the god of this world hath blinded the minds” and “unbelievers that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.” A similar theme can be found in Georgette de Montenay’s *Emblemes, ou devises chrestiennes* under the title *Res omnes caecis sunt tenebrae*. In this case, the eponymous “blind man” is holding an open book and a torch, looking at the sun. Without god’s light, he “does not know whether it is a lie or a fable”.⁶⁸ Mirowski follows Kempis in saying “happy is the man whom Truth by itself doth teach”,⁶⁹ and specifies that he means “The Eternal Truth of the Almighty God” (“Prawdę Przedwieczną, Wszechmogącego Boga.”)⁷⁰

In the lower strip of the composition, there is a single cartouche with the image of a hedgehog and an inscription “Do not touch me” (“Nie tykaj mię”), which clearly refers to the trope *Noli me tangere* (John 20:17). In emblematics, the hedgehog signifies the encouragement of humility and fear resulting from the respect towards something, like in Claude Paradin’s words: “Spicula sunt humili pax haec, sed bella superbo / Et salus ex nostro vulnere, nexq; venit” (“These spikes are peace for the

66 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. A₆r-v. English translation from Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*.

67 “Vitulus, et leo, et ovis, simul morabuntur.” All Bible quotations are after *Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ editionis*, 1598, English translations after Douay-Rheims Bible (<http://www.drbo.org>).

68 Montenay, *Emblemes*, 204: “Car il ne sait si c’est mensonge ou fable.”

69 Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, I 3.

70 Mirowski, *Młotek duchowny*, f. A₇v.

humble, but war for the bold / from our wound end death, salvation comes.”⁷¹ On the other hand, in Christian symbolism, the hedgehog was rather viewed as a sinful creature.⁷² According to St. Augustine’s interpretation of Psalm 104(103):18 “The rock is the refuge for the hedgehogs and the hares. Because the Lord is a refuge for the poor.”⁷³ Still, in the context of the symbolism of sight and hearing (Mark 4:9), the hedgehog completes Mirowski’s composition, indicating the requirement of unwavering faith which would be based on something more than the senses. In order to follow in “the real footsteps of Christ himself” (“prawdziwe tropy samego Chrystusa”), as promised by the title of the first emblem, one should not repeat Mary Magdalene’s or Thomas’s gestures indicative of following Christ physically. Instead, one should reject mundane things (*contemptus mundi*) and bring the relationship with God from one’s senses into one’s heart. The rhyming motto of the whole composition gathers many themes by teaching the reader that a man without faith, one that does not imitate Christ, is doomed to perdition and “night”: “The world is ruled by the great sun, men are ruled by a small tome, / Eclipse the sun, destroy the books—the world and men will err” (“Świat wielkie słońce, ludzie księga mała rządzi, / Zgaś słońce, wygub księgi, świat i lub pobłądzi.”)

One engraving which is only present in the BSW and BPG copies merits a closer analysis in how it relates to the *Imitatio Christi* (Fig. 8). Because it was added before (on paper leaf sewn between f. F_{1v}-F_{2r}) the engraving which opens chapter two in both copies, it may have been intended to conclude the first part or introduce the second. Its icon is concentrated on the vanity of the world, allowing Mirowski to display the heights of his emblematic imagination and linguistic virtuosity. In the central scene, there are three children playing with soap bubbles. Each of the three bubbles contains a portrait of a pope, a noble man and an emperor or poet laureate. This is an iteration of the theme *homo bulla*—the world and man are nothing.⁷⁴ To the left of the scene, a figure crowned and dressed in expensive garments can be seen using a dagger to pierce a bee which is lying on a pedestal. There are also bees flying around the figure’s head. This is likely linked with Andrea Alciatus’s emblem

71 Paradin, *Devises héroïques*, 26 (emblem *Ultus avos Troiae*).

72 Cf. Maranini, “Col senno e con la mano”, 145–56.

73 Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarratio*, PL 37, 1350: “Petra refugium ericiis et leporibus. Quia factus est Dominus refugium pauperi”. English translation based on: Augustine, *Exposition on Psalm 104*.

74 Cf. a similar composition in the Jesuit priest Jan David’s meditation in *Veridicus Christianus*. David, *Veridicus Christianus*, 271: “Quidni vilitatem, & ut ita dicam, nihilitem mundi fastuosi bullis illis comparem, non iam communibus sponte in aqua surgentibus, sed illis quas pueri ex concha, smegmate aquae immixto, straminea fistula, magno, licet puerili, studio exsuscitant? Hinc enim pueri (ut stulti insensatique saeculares ex suo orbe) non parum accipiunt oblectamenti. [...] Et ita, mundanae more laetitiae, extrema gaudij luctus occupat.”



Figure 8 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny w sercach ludzki drelujący...*, Gdańsk: David Friedrich Rheté, 1656, BSW, O.128.44, f. F₁v-F₂r

long hair and with a sword on his belt. The lemma below him is a traditional old Polish proverb “what you like leads you astray” (“Tym się gubisz, co lubisz”).⁷⁷ This theme was elaborated on in the collection *Amoris divini et humani antipathia* (1629) by Ludovicus van Leuven (a new edition under a different title was published one

Principis clementia (The mercy of the prince), according to which “[because] the king of wasps will never sting [...] these will declare merciful governance, moderate kingship, and sacred laws entrusted to good judges”.⁷⁵ This is a paraphrase of Seneca’s concept (Cl. 19,1) after Pliny (11,17) of the bee king as a benevolent ruler who is respected despite not having a sting. According to Horapollon (1,62) bees symbolize a king’s obedient subjects—which could be represented by the swarm flying around the figure’s head in Mirowski’s emblem. In the engraving, the ruler kills the bee (his royal subject). The warning which accompanies the image explains that one should not give too much significance to earthly rulers as both their graces and their power will pass: “This play also / Thus passes” (“I ta zabawa / Tak mija”). This likely refers to Kempis’s devaluation of earthly rulers and assertion that Christ is the real king as well as the *hic transit gloria mundi* motive that supposedly originates in the *Imitatio Christi*.⁷⁶ The message is complemented by a figure to the right of the main image, hanging on a tree branch by his

75 Alciato, *Book of Emblems*, 149. Alciato replaced “bees” from ancient sources with “wasps”. Cf. commentaries in: Alciato, *Emblematy*, 446–47.

76 Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*, 1, 3, 6: “O quam cito transit gloria mundi.” Cf. the proverb “sic transit gloria mundi” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, Oxford University Press, 2006; source: www.oxfordreference.com (accessed: 04. 10. 2021.)

77 Cf. Linde, *Słownik* Vol. 1, part 2, 1300, s.v. *lubić*.

year before the *Młotek duchowny*, in 1655).⁷⁸ In it, the emblem *Instructio Amoris* depicts Absalom hanged by the hair and pierced with an arrow. At his feet, God's Love is instructing the Soul about the meaning of the situation:

Regard Absalom, look at the poor wretch: who was so proud of his hair, is hung by his hair. Through the sins one commits, through these one is also tormented. And the amount of beatings will also be commensurate with the sin committed. Dear soul, I might rightly say that all the pleasures the world has to offer are not unlike the bees: at the front they look nice, at the back they sting. Let others judge about themselves. [...] There is always some pain in pleasure, but there is no pleasure in pain. No joy is pure for mortals. Torment, however, is torment to the full. And what is more, that what used to bring us pleasure and joy, that very same thing inflicts pain and sadness, and in the same bodily parts with which we have sinned, in these also we are punished.⁷⁹

This way, the emblem subscription from the Dutch collection explains the meaning of Mirowski's work. As Absalom died because of the love for his hair, so does the stinging bee die by a dagger. This is supported by the inscription placed under the image of Absalom, which is a fragment of this biblical passage (Wisdom 11:17): "That they might know that by what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented." In the end of the first book of the *Spiritual Hammer* Mirowski added a poem (translation of one of the Jacopone da Todi's [1230–1306] works) in which Absalom is mentioned as one of the figures that illustrate the *ubi sunt* motive that corresponds also to the bubbles with depictions of carious heads from the center of the emblem:

Tell me where Solomon is, his noble head!
Or where Samson's strength has gone.
Where is the beautiful Absalom? Where is his lovely face? [...]
How many of them! Where are the popes' bright crowns?
Emperors' and kings' thrones?⁸⁰

The above cited fragment proves that the "additional" engraving was also projected in cooperation with Mirowski, probably as a summary of the first book,

78 Cf. Leuven, *Amoris divini*, XXXVII; Leuven, *Theatrum*, 74–75. The work was first published in 1626 by Michael Sniijders, then copied several times, cf. Adams et al., *A Bibliography*, 120–36; Cf. Landwehr, *Emblem Books*, no. 618.

79 Leuven, *Amoris divini*, 1629, translation after: <https://emblems.hum.uu.nl/> (accessed: 29.09.2021).

80 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny*, f. E₈v–E₁r: "Powiedz, gdzie Salomon, ona pańska głowa? / Albo gdzie się działa siła Samsonowa? // Gdzie gładki Absolon? Gdzie krasna twarz jego? / [...] Gdzie cesarzów, królów, najaśniejsze trony!"



Figure 9 [Mirowski,] *Młotek duchowny w sercach ludzki drelujący...*, Gdańsk: David Friedrich Rhete, 1656, BSW, O.128.44, f. between H₁v-H₂r

since the text corresponds to the image composition. This makes one reconsider whether it is justified to speak of an emblematic series, because, as can be seen from this example, one cannot be sure that the publisher did not paste in additional engravings. It might be the case that they have not survived to our times because someone tore them out, e.g., for devotional reasons (people often used to cut out engravings and paste them in their notebooks)⁸¹ or collector's reasons (this was a particularly popular trend in the nineteenth century).⁸² It is also possible that only some of the copies received additional engravings. The upper strip of the emblems refers to the scenes below it. The first cartouche shows making lace or rope using bobbins, with the inscription saying: "Gossip" ("Plotki"). Braiding, which was thought of as a women's pastime, apparently to Mirowski seemed the perfect situation for spreading rumors. While this relates to Kempis's warning that it is better to say nothing than to gossip, it also corresponds to Wisdom 11:17 and the figures below: the rumormonger can suffer from rumors much like the bee can be killed

81 Such examples are preserved e.g., in the Norbertine Convent in Imbramowice (Poland), where engravings from the *Cor Iesu Amanti Sacrum* series by Antoon Wierix were glued to the notebook with handwritten meditations by one of the nuns (rkps 8). Also, in BUW there is a notebook (rkps 192) with handwritten meditations and glued engravings taken from the Italian edition of Otto Vaenius' *Amoris Divini Emblemata* (first edition: Antverpiae 1615), where someone wrote his own words next to the images.

82 Cf. e.g. in BUW there is a collection of engravings from the books of the Silesian monasteries closed in 1810 (emblems from *Pia desideria*, BUW Inw.zb.d. 16755–16793). The engravings have been cut out and pasted onto larger pages. Cf. Przepałkowska, *Zakup rycin*. For a similar collection but by an unknown author cf. BSW N543I–N543II.

by a dagger. Internal references in the emblem go even further. “Gossip” is tied to Absalom through wordplay: the Polish word *plotka* is etymologically derived from *pleść*, which means “to braid” or “to talk nonsense.” In the plural form, it could mean “something braided,” like hair, which once again links to Absalom. Such an interpretation is also offered by the anonymous author of a rhymed hand-written Polish-language note in a copy of the *Amoris divini et humani* found in Uppsala: “In gossip [or braids], in hair, Absalom’s delight / He was hanged on them. Whenever someone has evil in their heart / Death awaits” (“W plotkach, we włosach rozkosz Absalowa / Z nich zawisł. Kto, co złego w sercu chowa / Śmierć gotowa”).⁸³

The next panel in the upper series of cartouches depicts a boy looking out of a window and waving a ribbon, surrounded by the words “Próżność / nad / próżnościami / próżność”, which is a translation of Koheleth’s “vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas”, which opens the first book of the *Imitatio Christi*. The final upper cartouche shows the celestial sphere with a Zodiac belt around its perimeter. The sphere is flying in the air with two pairs of wings and is encircled with the words “It rolls down and flies.” (“Stacza się i lata”) Importantly, it is empty inside like a soap bubble.

The lower emblem which summarizes the entire composition portrays a spider in its web with the words: “It poisons itself with its pleasures.” (“Swą się rozkoszą truje”) The overall motto is: “Everything in the world [is] gossip, people [are] soap bubbles / Honours [are] a balloon, money [is] a fish bladder, tomorrow [is] a spider’s web.” (“Wszystko plotki na świecie, ludzie bańki z mydła / Godność bąbel, grosz pęcherz, Kras pajęczce sidła”) In fact, the motive was popularized by Hieronim Wierix’s engraving *Speculum peccatoris*, in which a half-naked man is sitting on a chair that is placed on two ropes over a well (in later implementations, the ropes turn into a spider’s web).⁸⁴ The man’s torso is reconciled by the blades of four swords. Each of them with a pinned plaque with text and inscriptions: *Peccatum* (sin), *Vermis* (worm, but also: conscience), *Diabolus* (devil), and *Mors* (death). Above the man’s head hangs a dagger with a wavy blade bearing the inscription: *Dominū iudicium* (Judgment of the Lord). In this context, “the poisonous pleasures” are things connected with mundane matters.⁸⁵

The emblematic icons were to strengthen the persuasive dimension of the book, which is in accordance with knowledge about human psychology and, based on it, with the pragmatic aims of the authors and editors. For example, the editor Diego

83 Pelc, *Miłości*, 51. The French subscription: “Absalom symbol Apprennons au malheur d’un autre A preuenir tant mieux le nostre.”

84 For example, cf. an engraving by Boethius à Bolswert invented for the *Via vitae aeterna* by Antoine Sucquet (Antverpiae 1620) and an engraving in Ignatius of Loyola, *Exercitia*. Cf. Knipping, *Iconography*, Vol. 1, 69, 183–84.

85 Cf. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish*, no. 1792; Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les Estampes*, no. 1474.

Jimenez, in his preface to the famous work by Jeronimo Nadal entitled *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia* (Roma 1608), mentioned his passion for finding suitable artists and consulting with them on engraving designs: he states that attention is paid to quality, elegance, and even to ensuring that the number of illustrations do not bore the reader.⁸⁶ Secondly, the icons also had an epistemic function. Thanks to such crafted mnemonic images, the reader could easily recall what they had read in the particular chapters, as well as better remember the meditated themes. Mirowski develops the content present in Thomas Kempis and adapts it to the codes popular in emblematics. The visualization of mental images that occur to the contemplating person in their mind⁸⁷—here embodied by the addition of engravings, so that the reader, unaccustomed to meditation, may have support for the imagination—perfectly fits the poetics of meditation as a process of seeing the truths hidden from the corporeal eye with the eyes of the soul.⁸⁸ The interpretation of Thomas à Kempis through emblematic icons certainly enhances the persuasive nature of the book. It outlines the main problems by depicting them in the engravings so that the meaning of the meditations could be better remembered.

In sum, in keeping with Sommalius's appreciation of the great impact of Kempis's book as a source of "many metamorphoses of minds and innumerable conversions", Mirowski's efforts are aimed at introducing the book to the widest possible audience (which he clarifies in the preface by leaving instructions for readers) through several devices. The absence of the author and the translator of the book could stand as an one of the elements of such a plan to reach readers without discouraging them with personal allegiances. We do not learn about the confessional dimension of the book from the frontispiece, which may also be a part of widening the audience by not excluding anyone. Likewise, the confessional aspect is eliminated from the preface and appears only in the "Testament" added at the end, which refers to the "holy Catholic faith." In the preface we also have reading instructions addressed to those at various stages of their relationship with God (both the laity and the clergy). Such provenance marks as a handwritten dedication to the

86 Nadal, *Adnotationes*, f. *4r. Based on Aristotelian psychology, it was a popular belief in the early modern period that people could not think without images, therefore that pictures could assist them (cf. *De Anima*, III, 7, 431a, 14–17). Some printers and editors pointed out this reason as the purpose of using illustrations in their editions. Cf. Freedberg, *The Power*, 182–83. On the theological consequences of such beliefs in Jesuit image- and symbol theories cf. Guiderdoni, "The Theory," 89–101; Dekoninck, "The Jesuit Ars," 75–77, 80–82.

87 About the development and uses of the category of the mental image popularized in early-modern meditation by Ignatius of Loyola (as *compositio loci*) meaning the power of imagination to project the contemplated scenes, situations, and problems in the *meditans'* mind cf. Fabre, *Ignace de Loyola*; Dekoninck, *Ad imaginem*, 68–80.

88 Cf. Melion, "The Art of Vision"; Melion, "In sensus cadentem imaginem."

noblewoman Katarzyna of Grabki confirm that it was indeed read (or possessed) by lay people (not only monks). Mirowski's willingness to engage the reader regardless of their profession or level of education is evident in his strongly engaging style. In place of the austere and simple formulations of Thomas à Kempis, Parson adds pictorial metaphors, emphasizing the sensual dimension of meditation propagated by the Jesuits from the late 16th century onward (emphasis on *compositio loci*). Also related to this is the author's and publisher's decision to include illustrations with each meditation, which in a way summarize each book by playing a mnemonic role. Mirowski uses humanistic symbolic codes propagated in emblematic literature. This is because in the emblematic icons, there are themes from the *Imitatio Christi*, as well as related biblical and mythological motifs. All these devices should be counted among the persuasive techniques applied in order to attract the reader. As a result, Mirowski created a unique mirage of a work of the *devotio moderna* and emblematic genre, updating Thomas à Kempis's message through its adaptation to his readers' needs and the widespread symbolic codes in the seventeenth century.

Abbreviations

BN = Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (Poland)

BPG = Biblioteka PAN w Gdańsku (Poland)

BmDL = Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon (France)

BnF = Bibliothèque nationale de France

BSG = Bibliothèque Sainte-Genève (France)

BSW = Biblioteka Seminaryjna w Warszawie (Poland)

BPTPN = Biblioteka Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk (Poland)

BUW = Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie (Poland)

MSB = KU Leuven Maurits Sabbebibliotheek (Belgium)

NkČr = Národní knihovna České republiky (Czech Republic)

ÖN = Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austria)

VUL = Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka (Lithuania)

ZNiO = Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich (Poland)

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