

CENTERS AND PERIPHERIES
IN EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE
CULTURE

Essays by East-Central European Mellon Fellows



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PÁL ÁCS

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The Theory of Soul-sleeping at the Beginning of the Hungarian Reformation Movement

Matthias Dévai: “*De sanctorum dormitione*”

“Mátyás had been the preacher in Hungarian” [that is Mátyás Dévai was the first to preach in Hungarian]¹ – sang the Protestants of the 16th century and they were right to revere in him the first religious reformer to preach in Hungarian.² He was also acknowledged by the Catholics as such which is demonstrated by the note in the register of students of the university of Cracow next to his name: “This Mathias took the Lutheran pestilence to the Hungarians, a man of sin, the son of peril.”³ As part of the research of the beginnings of Hungarian Reformation,⁴ it is worth examining the first work of the preacher once called the “Hungarian Luther.”

¹ Iván Horváth dir., *Répertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne: Manuel de correction d'erreurs dans la base de données* (Paris: Nouvel Objet, 1992), № 4046.

² Jenő Solyom, *Luther és Magyarországon. A reformátor kapcsolata hazánkkel haláláig* [Luther and Hungary. The reformer's relations with Hungary until his death] (Budapest: Magyarországi Luther Szövetség, 1996[1933]), (Magyar Luther Könyvek, 4.), 113.

³ János Balázs, *Sylvester János és kora* [János Sylvester and his times], (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1958), 94; cf. Károly Schrauf, *A kerakói magyar tanuló-bárá lakóinak jegyzéke (1493–1558)* [The register of tenants of the Hungarian coetus in the university of Cracow, 1493–1558] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1892), 24; Imre Révész Snr., *Dévy Bíró Mátyás első magyar reformátor életrajza és irodalmi művei* [The life and works of the first Hungarian reformer, Mátyás Dévai] (Pest: Osterlamm K., 1863), 7; Solyom, op. cit., 128; István Botta, *Dévai Mátyás, a magyar Luther. Dévai belső irányba hajlásának problémája* [Mátyás Dévai, the Hungarian Luther: The problem of his turn towards Calvinism], Budapest: Országos Baráti Kör, 1990), 63.

⁴ Ferenc Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdésében* [Hungarian market towns in the age of Reformation. Studies on the early rise of Hungarian middle classes] (Budapest: Balassi, 1995), 16 (Humanizmus és reformáció 23.).

The very first document of Mátyás Dévai's work as a religious reformer following his arrival home from Wittenberg⁵ was a hurriedly compiled polemical treatise – a series of articles of faith – in 1531 entitled *De sanctorum dormitione*, or in other words *The Sleeping of Saints*.⁶ “A friend of ours had come to me asking in earnest to put to writing something for him concerning the sleeping of saints. He justified his request by saying that there were people ardent about the Pope [Catholics] who were fighting against our faith with all their might – for whom... I have written down some thesis – as I remember only about the sleeping of saints – without much precision” – wrote Mátyás Dévai in a later work.⁷ *The Sleeping of Saints* never appeared in print, however, it was circulated in a wide range in manuscript format and had a significant effect on contemporary public opinion.

The text of the treatise has not come down to us – obviously not by accident – so its content can only be reconstructed on the basis of the replies and retorts. Gergely Szegedi – a Franciscan preacher from Vár (Nagyvárad/Orađa)⁸ – accepted the challenge and engaged twice in dispute with Mátyás Dévai and one of his writings appeared in publication.⁹ Dévai attempted to demolish the arguments of his Franciscan opponent and at the same time looked back on the whole course of the polemic in his famous *Disputation* published in 1537.¹⁰ Thus we are able to draw up the outline of Mátyás Dévai's first work as a reformist on the basis of these two later publications.

The Sleeping of Saints dealt with the state of the human soul after death on the basis of Protestant arguments against the Purgatory and the cult of saints, and as such it is directly connected to the early phases of Wittenberg Reformation that is the disputes concerning parish feasts. Its basic aim was to prove the futility of invoking the help of saints. The Hungarian preacher expressed his opinion about the universal problems of European Reformation – but by no doubt he adjusted his message to domestic peculiarities since he intended his work to a Hungarian audience.¹¹ Lutheran Church

⁵ Jenő Zoványi, *A reformáció Magyarországon 1565-ig [The Reformation in Hungary until 1565]* (Budapest: Genius, 1922), 96.

⁶ On the genesis of *De sanctorum dormitione* see Révész Snt., op. cit., 27; Imre Révész, *Dévy Biró Mátyás tanításai. Tanulmány a magyar protestáns teológiai gondolkodás kezdetéről [The teachings of Mátyás Dévai. A study on the origins of the Protestant theology in Hungary]* (Kölcsevár/Ciuj: Sűef Jenő Es Társa, 1915), 6; Solyom, op. cit., 114, 120; János Horváth, *A reformáció jegyében [In the name of the Reformation]* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1957²), 162.

⁷ Quotation from the letter of Mátyás Dévai written to Imre Bebek (Sárvár, 16. 5. 1535); see Révész Snt., op. cit., 74.

⁸ Jenő Zoványi, *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon [Ecclesiastical encyclopaedia of the Hungarian Protestantism]* (Budapest: Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóoszt., 1977³), 583.

⁹ Gregorius Szegedi, *Apologia* (after 1531. [lost]), idem, *Censurae Fratris Gregorii Zegedini ex ordine divi Francisci, in propositiones erroneas Matthiae Devai, sed ut ille vocat, rñdimenta salutis continentis* (Vienna, 1535).

¹⁰ Matthias Dévai, *Disputatio de statu in quo sint beatorum animae post banc vitam ante ultimi iudicii diem; Apologia; Expositio Examinis* (Nürnberg, 1537).

¹¹ In Imre Révész's opinion *The Sleeping of Saints* had been written in Hungarian but this assumption (continued...)

historians have long ago recognised how “deeply Dévai was involved with the practice of invoking the help of saints,”¹² however it was neither clear why the preacher set this question in the centre of his program as a reformist preacher, nor what gave it topicality. I am trying to find the answers to these questions.

First, I shall draw up the European context of Dévai's deduced argumentation. I must emphasise that we are dealing with a work of which actually nothing has survived except its title.

The references in the 1537 *Disputation* show that Dévai organised his reformist argumentation around three topics in *The Sleeping of Saints* – that are in close logical connection. These constituted an open challenge to the Catholic belief concerning *the state of the soul after death, Hell and the cult of saints*.

What could Dévai's lost manuscript have had to say about the faith of souls after death? The fact that although the manuscript version was entitled *The Sleeping of Saints*, in his *Disputation* published in 1537 Dévai totally neglected this title and was evidently careful to evade the term soul-dreaming or the dreaming of the souls, but he is talking “about the state in which the blessed souls are after life until Doomsday.” The original teaching concerning the dream of souls had probably been so simple and radical that the author himself strove to cover it up, tone it down or modify it.¹³

The fact that Dévai's original words could have been interpreted as if the souls of saints passed into a death-like dream without showing any sign of life points to this original simplicity and radicalism. In his *Disputation* published some years later the preacher endeavoured to clear up this “misunderstanding” when arguing that though the souls are sleeping, they are still alive. As a sleeper is unaware of those alive and their affairs, so are the saints asleep with regard to us (“dormiunt nobis”) without knowing anything about us and our affairs with their souls separated from their bodies: “So let them sleep, that is they should not know about us, but live in their own way, that is live for God.”¹⁴

The doctrine known as *soul-sleeping, soul-death, mortalism or psychopanychia*¹⁵ – on which Dévai based his argumentation against the invocation of the help of saints – did not

¹¹ (...continued)

is undemonstrable: Révész 1915, 6.

¹² Solyom, op. cit., 120.

¹³ Révész 1915, 41.

¹⁴ Révész 1915, 43.

¹⁵ Imre Révész, “Debreceen lelki válsága 1561–1571 [Spiritual crisis of Debrecen, 1561–1571],” *Századok* 70 (1936): 54–59, 66, 178–179; George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirkcubright, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992, Sixteenth century essays and studies 15.), 64–72, 196–198, 837–849, 1266–1277; Alastair Hamilton, “A ‘Sinister conceit’: the teaching of psychopanychism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment,” in Henry Méchoulan, Antonio Rotondo ed., *La formazione storica dell'alterità. Studi di storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondo vol. III.* (Firenze: I. S. Olschki, 2001, Studi e testi per la storia della tolleranza in Europa nei secoli XVI–XVIII 5), 1107–1127.

originate in the age of Protestantism.¹⁶ Greek Christianity preaching universal salvation has always accepted the notion that after death the soul will pass into a dream-like state similar to unconsciousness, which only comes to an end with the resurrection of the body on Doomsday.¹⁷ Of course Latin Christianity considered soul-sleeping an unacceptable heresy as it would have undermined the Catholic belief in Purgatory and the limbo of those not baptised.¹⁸ In the 15th–16th centuries – partly due to the influence of the tractate of Aristotle entitled *De anima*¹⁹ and partly due to a better understanding of the teachings of the Greek Church – the idea of soul-sleeping became popular in the West prior to Reformation.²⁰ The precise relation between the ideas of Renaissance Aristotelian philosophy on the immortality of the soul and the Protestant doctrine on soul-sleeping is not yet clear.²¹ We know that at the time Dévai wrote his work the doctrine of soul-sleeping was highly popular – for different reasons – among spiritualist and Anabaptist communities and Lutherans, while also for different reasons, it was vigorously opposed by Catholics and Calvinists.²² It is still a matter of dispute whether Calvin's famous *Psychopannychia*²³ – which was written about the same time as Dévai's work – was compiled against Anabaptist or Luther.

It is a well-known fact that the Anabaptist believed that the soul died together with the body or rather it "slumbered" till the day of Final Judgement, when God resurrected everybody. They based their belief among others on the prophecy concerning final judgement in the Book of Daniel which says: "And many of them that sleep in the dust

¹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, transl. by Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 46–48. Alastair Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse. The Reception of the Second Book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 76–78 (Oxford—Warburg Studies).

¹⁷ Hamilton 2001, op. cit., 1110, 1124; cf. Lilya Berezhnaya, "Sin, Fear, and Death in the Catholic and Orthodox Sermons in the 16th–17th Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (An Attempt at Comparison)," in M. Derwich, M. Dmitriev ed., *Ètre Catholique – être Orthodoxe – être Protestant. Confessions et identités culturelles en Europe* (Wrocław: LARHCOR, 2003), 253–284.

¹⁸ Henricus Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Freiburg, 1947²⁶), 214–218, 252; Hamilton 2001, 1110; Henry Donneaud, "Purgatoire," in Claude Gauvard–Alain de Libera–Michel Zink ed., *Dictionnaire de Moyen Âge* (Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 2002), 1161–1162.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *De anima*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1956, Oxford Classical Texts).

²⁰ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Concetti rinascimentali dell'uomo e altri saggi*, traduzione di Simonetta Salvestroni (Firenze: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1978, Il pensiero storico 72), 29–53.

²¹ Camillo Renato, *Opere. Documenti e testimonianze*, a cura di Antonio Rotondo (Firenze—Chicago: G. C. Sansoni, 1968), 203–204; Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Aristotelismo e sincretismo nel pensiero di Pietro Pomponazzi* (Padova: Antenore, 1983) (Saggi e testi 19); Ružena Dostálová, "Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele im 16. Jahrhundert (Paleolog's Traktat 'De anima')," in R. Dán, A. Pirnát ed., *Antitrinitarismus in the Second Half of the 16th Century* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982, Studia Humanitatis 5); Aldo Stella, "Influssi culturali padovani sulla genesi e sugli sviluppi dell'antitrinitarismo cinquecentesco," in R. Dán, A. Pirnát, op. cit., 35–46, 203–213; Hamilton 2001, 1116.

²² Williams, op. cit., 63–70; Peter G. Bietenholz, "How Sebastian Franck taught Erasmus to speak with his radical voice?," in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 62 (2000): fasc. 2, 241.

²³ Jean Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, ed. Walther Zimmerli (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1932); cf. Hamilton 2001, 1118–119.

of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt".²⁴ Northern-Italian Anabaptists probably set up their radical soul-death concept under the influence of the Aristotelian philosophers of Padua.²⁵

On the other hand however Luther was not lead to accept the doctrine of soul-sleeping – with restrictions though – by deep philosophical studies, but by his fight against the "papist" custom of indulgence.²⁶ "We will sleep till He comes, knocks on our grave and says: doctor Martin, wake up!" – said he in one of his preaching.²⁷ At the same time Luther turned his doctrine in a mystic-eschatological direction when treating the question from the aspect of time. He thought that from the limited aspect of time there really was a certain interval between death and resurrection, during which the souls are in a state of unconscious, deep, dreamless sleep. But from the point of the soul and God the resurrection of the man as a whole and the final judgement occurs right after death and time collapses in a single, eternal moment.²⁸

How far was Mátyás Dévai under the personal influence of the Reformists of Wittenberg in the question of soul-sleeping? Not much, as in 1530 – when he was studying in Wittenberg – both Luther and Melancthon were in Augsburg at the Imperial Diet.²⁹ Dévai's aim was not to burden his fellow countrymen with a mystical exposition. He attempted to argue in favour of the futility of the cult of saints in a more modest way. He realised only later that his simple argumentation was highly similar to the soul-death doctrine of the zealous Anabaptists.

The preacher went through similar phases when drawing up his teaching about Hell. It was not enough to outline the state of the soul after death, he also had to state where the souls were dreaming till Doomsday.

Many people considered this teaching inconsistent with the infinite righteousness and kindness of God Almighty. The Catholic Church strove to reduce the doctrine of eternal damnation gradually by referring to the free will of man and the Grace of God. For this reason they introduced the idea of Purgatory and limbo embodying hope for the sinners.³⁰

Reformation primarily attacked this Catholic concept of an intermediate state of the souls between death and resurrection, justly saying that the Purgatory and limbo are

²⁴ Dan 12, 1–2; cf. Hamilton 1999, 77.

²⁵ Williams, op. cit., 840; cf. Révész 1936 (note 15), 59; Antal Pirnát, "Arisztotelianusok és antitrinitáriusok. Gerendi János és a kolozsvári iskola [Aristotelians and Antitrinitarians, János Gerendi and the school of Kolozsvár/Ciuj]," *Helikón* 17 (1971): 363–392.

²⁶ Bietenholz, op. cit., 241.

²⁷ Williams, op. cit., 197.

²⁸ Paul Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge. Entwurf einer christlichen Eschatologie* (Gütersloh, 1933), 144; Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis. Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 37, 276.

²⁹ Sölyom, op. cit., 114.

³⁰ Daniel Pickering Walker, *The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 59–67.

“human inventions” alien to the Bible. Protestants thought that the faith of man was fulfilled in his lifetime, so prayers for the dead were absurd endeavours that questioned the providence of God.³¹

The idea originating from Origen that Hell cannot be considered eternal and God on the final day – “when restoring all things” – will abolish it was striving due to the influence of Erasmus in the age of Renaissance.³²

Both official Protestant Churches and spiritualist communities rejected the idea of Purgatory, but while the formers professed immediate salvation or damnation, the “zealous” groups showed inclination towards the teaching of Origen.

Mátyás Dévai must have written in his *The Sleeping of Saints* something like Hell did not exist – by which probably meaning that there was no “intermediate state” or Purgatory. In his later works he seems to try to reduce the strength of his argumentation and interpret it. The preacher in his *Disputation* and in his commentary to his *Ten Commandments* written in Hungarian insisted that it was not correct to translate infernus as Hell, because it actually meant pit or grave, as its original meaning was “fundus” which in Hungarian would be translated as “end” or “bottom”: “the Latin word [infernus] should not be interpreted as Hell, but end or bottom. In short it should be understood as follows: a human being is made up a soul and body and men are either saved or damned. When a man to be saves dies, his body will be put to the “bottom” that is into a coffin, he will become dust, and his soul will end up with God, thus be part of eternal life because for a Christian God is the ultimate end of eternal life. At the time of the Judgement, the bodies of all are united with their souls, they are resurrected to eternal life and this eternal life will be their ultimate end.”³³

The preacher was so vehement in his argumentation and use of expressions when attacking the Catholic dogma of Purgatory³⁴ that he came close to the idea of the Anabaptists according to which the soul of humans return to God when they die, while their bodies rest in the ground where they are aware of neither good nor bad, but sleep till Doomsday. At this point God revives everybody with the exception of the evil ones

³¹ Imre Révész, *Méltus és Kálmán. Víznyomok a Stancaro elleni harcban, a szentibáronomságtani közeglemben és néhány másodrendű teológiai vitakérdésekben [Péter Méltus and Kálmán. Their relationship in the fight against Francesco Stancaro, in the disputes about the Holy Trinity and in some inferior theological relations]* (Kolozsvár/Cluj: Műnerva, 1936, Erdélyi tudományos füzetek 85), 40–46.

³² Walker, op. cit., passim; Bietenholz, op. cit., 240–241.

³³ Mátyás Dévai, *A tíz parancsolatnak, a hit ágazatának, a Miatyánkának és a hit pecéitnek röviden való magyarázatja [A short explanation of the Decalogue, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments]*, facsimile edition of the c. 1549 Cracow edition by Áron Szilády (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1897), 68; cf. Révész Snr., op. cit., 77; Révész 1915, 27, 40, 42–43, 135–136, 168–169; Révész 1936b, 35–37; Solyom op. cit., 117–118; on the *descensus* see Williams, op. cit., 1271–1273.

³⁴ Denying Purgatory was a principal count of the indictment during the proceedings against Dévai held in Vienna: Révész 1915, 109. Dévai's contemporary Lutheran critics (Veit Dietrich and later Martin Chemnitz) realized that the Hungarian Reformer preached ideas very close to the Anabaptists: Zoltán Csepregi, “A Dévai-kod,” in Gábor Viktor Orosz ed. *Hol van a te testvéred? Tanulmányok a társadalmi nemekről és a testvérszeretetről* [Where is your brother? Essays on Gender and Fraternal Love], (Budapest: Luther Kiadó, 2011) 65–100.

for whom there is no eternal life, so they are not resurrected. Their final death is “eternal damnation”, this is how to understand the famous thesis of the Anabaptists: “there is no other Hell, than the grave.”³⁵

The infernus interpretation of Mátyás Dévai is justly considered a “personal invention.”³⁶

By his desperate rejection of the “intermediate state” of the souls Dévai wished to prove that the souls of the late lamented saints did and could not have any influence over the affairs of this world, thus their cult is senseless. If the saints had no notion about us, they could not pray for us and thus they could not be our intermediaries before God.³⁷

It would of course by nonsense to suppose that the articles of Mátyás Dévai's faith were approaching those of the Anabaptists.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is not easy to form a decisive opinion about the principles and denominational directions of the early phases of religious reformation.³⁹ Institutional Protestantism was at times within a hair's breadth of “zealous” thoughts. We might not be far from the truth if we said that the preacher adjusted the Anabaptist elements of his original series of articles of faith to the official theology of Wittenberg. Nevertheless, we can state that Dévai was exceedingly radical in voicing Protestant arguments against the invocation of saints for help and cut off the possibility and right to the saint cult at its root.⁴⁰

According to the memoirs of György Szerémi, in 1543 when the Sultan besieged Székesfehérvár “the rascal town dwellers – who were the cursers of God's saints – took Peter and Paul from the temple – who were carved from wood and gilded as memorials – tied a rope around their necks, brought them to the town wall and hung them by the

³⁵ This proposition had been formulated in 1550 on the synode of the Anabaptists in Venice: Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi: il caso di un mignatio del '500*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1976), passim. – On the Hungarian aspects of the topic see: László Makkai, “Tamás Arany, il primo rappresentante ungherese dell'anabattismo italiano,” in Tibor Klaniczay ed., *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi all'epoca del Rinascimento*, 2. *Convegno di studi italo-ungheresi, Budapest giugno 20-23, 1973*, Studia Humanitatis 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975), 337–346; János Heltai, “Tamás Arany,” in André Séguenny ed., *Bibliotheca Dissidentium XII, Ungarländerische Antitrinitarier*, Einleitung von Mihály Balázs (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1990), 35–50. – The idea of sleeping became popular among the circles of the radical Reformation in Hungary as well: Antal Pirmát, *Die Ideologie der siebenbürger Antitrinitarier in den 1570er Jahren* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1961), 95, 135–160; *ibid.*, *Névtári adalék Johann Sommer és Melius Péter műveinek bibliográfiájához [Some Contributions to the Bibliography of the Works of Johann Sommer and Péter Melius]*, in Géza Galavics, János Hermer, Balint Késérü ed., *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére [Essays presented to Tibor Klaniczay]*, Adattár 16–18. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez 10 (Szeged: JATE, 1990), 180–184.

³⁶ Révész 1915, 169.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁸ Anabaptism was not really influential in Hungary: Antal Pirmát, “A kelet-közép-európai antitrinitarizmus fejlődésének vázlata az 1570-es évek elejéig [Scheme of the development of the Antitrinitarianism in East-Central Europe until the beginning of the 1570s],” in Béla Varjas ed., *Irodalom és ideológia a 16–17. században [Literature and ideology in the 16–17th centuries]*, Memoria Saeculorum Hungariae 5 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1987), 18–19.

³⁹ Cf. Révész Snr., 57.

⁴⁰ Révész 1915, 37.

help of hooks over the wall and told the sculptures: Now, help us rascals, and we'll believe in you."⁴¹ *The Sleeping of Saints* was compiled in similar circumstances. The radical voice of Dévai was justified by the strained political and religious conditions. The country was not only smitten by the Turks but also by a civil war, both strives being coloured by Reformation, which in Hungary acquired a peculiar missionary zeal. This land was the stage of an apocalyptic war in which the Turkish sultan – the bodily incarnation of the Anti-Christ – fought with the army of the “chosen.”⁴² The question of help from the Other World received increased emphasis during this “final battle”.

According to the view incorporating the whole Hungarian culture of the 16th century in “the idea of Reformation”, Catholicism was by that time unable to provide support and consolation to the believers, and it did not provide answers to the vital questions facing Hungarians. Disputes about Mátyás Dévai somewhat alter this one-sided view. It is not known whether the preacher had mentioned in *The Sleeping of Saints* the cult of Hungarian saints. It is however clearly demonstrated in the debate arising in connection with the booklet that Dévai came up against the Patrona Hungariae idea, the official Virgin Mary cult embodying Hungarian statehood. In the course of the heated debates with Gergely Szegedi the preacher showed no reverence what so ever to the patron saint and the first saint king of Hungary also depicted on the coins of the country.⁴³ “One

⁴¹ György Szerémi, II. Lajos és János királyok házi képlánya emlékirata Magyarországi romlásáról 1484–1515 között [Epitaphia de perditione regni Hungarorum. Memores of the Court Chaplain of Lewis II and John I, Kings of Hungary of the Destruction of Hungary, 1484–1515], ed. by Gusztáv Wenzel, Monumenta Hungariae Historica II. 1, (Pest: Akadémiai, 1857).

⁴² Solyom, op. cit., 103; Mihály Balázs, *Az erdélyi antitrinitarizmus az 1560-as évek végén [Transylvanian Antitrinitarianism in the End of the 1560s]*, Humanizmus és reformáció 14 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1988), 145–146; Sándor Óze, „Bűnért bünteti Isten a magyar népet”. Egy bibliai parhuzam vizsgálata a 16. századi nyomtatott egyházi irodalom alapján [God punishes the Hungarian people for their sins. An inquiry into a biblical parallel on the basis of ecclesiastical literature printed in the 16th century], Bibliotheca Humanitatis Historica a Museo Nationali Hungarico Digesta 2 (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 1991), 85–89; Ulrich Andermann, “Geschichtsdeutung und Profete. Krisenfabrik und -bevältigung am Beispiel der osmanischen Expansion im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit,” in Bodo Guthmüller - Wilhelm Kühlmann ed., *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, Frühe Neuzeit 54 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 43–46; Mihály Imre, “Arbor Hareson. A wittenbergi történelemeszmélet ikonográfiai ábrázolása Szegedi Kis István Spaculum pontificum Romanorum című művének 1592-es kiadásában [German Summary: Arbor Haresonum von István Kis Szegedi Präsentation der Wittenberger Geschichtsauffassung im Spaculum pontificum Romanorum von István Kis Szegedi (Unbekannter Holzschnitt in der überarbeiteten Auflage aus dem Jahre 1592)], in Bortond G. Szabó, Csaba Fekete, Lajos Bereczki ed., *Egyház és művelődés. Fejzetek a reformátusság és a művelődés 16–19. századi történetéből* (Debrecen: Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület és Kollégiumi Nagykönyvtár, 2000), 64–72. Pál Ács, *Góg és Magóg fia [The Sons of Gog and Magog]*, in ibid., *Az idő órája – Történetiség és történelemeszmélet a régi magyar irodalomban* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 161–164; Balázs Trencsényi, “Hungarians as an ‘Elect Nation’ – Negotiating Denominational and National Identities,” in ibid., *Early-Modern Discourses of Nationhood*, PhD Dissertation, Central European University (Budapest, 2004), 413–499.

⁴³ Ferenc Soós, “Patrona Hungariae a magyar pénzeken [Virgin Mary as ‘Patrona Hungariae’ on Hungarian Coins],” in *Eremitani Lapok* 34 (1995): 3–12; cf. Ernő Marosi, *Kép és hatásmás. Művészet és valóság a 14–15. századi Magyarországon [Picture and Image. Art and Reality in Hungary in the 14–15th Centuries]* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1995), 84–85; ibid., “A magyar történelem képei [Images of the Hungarian History],” in Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó ed., *Történelem – kép [History – Image]*, guide to the exhibition of the Hungarian National Gallery (17. 3. 2000. – 24. 9. 2000.) (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2000), 48–62.

cannot trust saints – said Dévai – as they are mere creations. If Stephen, the first king of Hungarians, who is so often referred to by Franciscan friars, offered his country to Virgin Mary, then the king was not aware of the real nature of faith. Because in our faith we only call on God for help and set our eyes only on Christ.”⁴⁴

The cult of the Patron saint of the country was to ensure the existence, unity and future of the statehood of Hungary. It guaranteed the divine presence for a community endangered in its whole existence. It is not by chance that the veneration of Patrona Hungariae ornamented with the iconographic signs of the Apocalyptic “Madonna of the Sun” spread especially in the regions threatened by the Turks.⁴⁵

The booklet written by Mátyás Dévai attempted to sever once and for all the strings tying the country to her Patron, the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is thus understandable that the author was imprisoned by both reigning Hungarian kings against the Patrona Hungariae idea. His Catholic adversaries did not only consider him a heretic, but also a traitor who dishonoured the “most holly” symbols securing the future of the country.

Dévai had his own ideas though about the guarantees of the future of the country. He was dreaming of a country whose citizens invoked *only* the help of God, and no one else.

⁴⁴ Révész Snr., op. cit., 78; Révész 1915, 44; Solyom, op. cit., 84. – cf. Gyula Szekfű, “Szent István a magyar történet századaiban [King Stephen I (Saint) in the Hungarian History],” in Jusztinián Serédy ed., *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kétszázadiké évfordulóján [Essays published in honour of 900th anniversary of the death of King Stephen I (Saint)],* vol. III. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1938), 32.

⁴⁵ Sándor Bálint, *Sacra Hungaria. Tanulmányok a magyar vallásos népköltés köréből [Essays on religious ethnology in Hungary]* (Kassa/Košice: Veritas, 1943), 19–27; Sándor Bálint–Gábor Barna, *Búcsújáró magyarok. A magyarországi búcsújárás története és néprajza [Pilgrim Hungarians. History and ethnology of the Hungarian pilgrimages]* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1994), 100–105.