

Kristina Rutkovska / Rajmund Pietkiewicz (eds.)

Contextuality of the Bible in Lithuania until the End of the Eighteenth Century



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Rajmund Pietkiewicz and Piotr Burgoński

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Mirosław Kiwka (Poland), Mihály Laurinyecz (Hungary),
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**Contextuality of the Bible
in Lithuania until the End
of the Eighteenth Century**

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List of abbreviations

Archives and libraries

AFSt	Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen [The Archive of the Francke Foundation], Halle, Germany
BJ	Biblioteka Jagiellońska – Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie [The Jagiellonian Library at Jagiellonian University in Kraków], Poland
BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek [The Bavarian State Library], München, Germany
BUT	Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Toruniu [The Toruń University Library], Poland
GStA PK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz [The Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation], Berlin, Germany
HAB	Herzog August Bibliothek [The Herzog August Library], Wolfenbüttel, Germany
HIB	Herder-Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung [The Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe], Marburg, Germany
LLTIB	Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto biblioteka [The Library of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore], Vilnius, Lithuania
LMAVB	Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka [The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences], Vilnius, Lithuania
SBB PK	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz [The Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage], Germany
SUB Göttingen	Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen [The Göttingen State and University Library of Lower Saxony], Germany
VUB	Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka [The Vilnius University Library], Lithuania

Others

ESV	The English Standard Version
GDL	Grand Duchy of Lithuania
HB	Hebrew Bible
LXX	Septuagint
MS	manuscript

NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Vlg	Vulgate
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritifche Gesamtausgabe</i> , vol. 1–120, Weimar 1883–2009

The list of bibliographical abbreviations is provided separately in the bibliography of a given article.

Kristina Rutkovska, Rajmund Pietkiewicz

Preface of the editors

This publication offers an account of the ways in which the Bible functioned in the Lithuanian territory from the mid-sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The extensive research conducted by nine authors direct attention to the modes of religious communication, the dissemination of religious ideas in the works of theologians, the perception of biblical texts and the principles behind their reproducibility. The authors also explore the problems of Bible translation into Lithuanian and the Slavic languages spoken in Lithuania, consider the influence of other languages and cultures on the formation of the Lithuanian language at the beginning of its development, and discuss issues connected with editing and publishing religious writings. The book consists of nine studies that have one in common: the varied backgrounds against which the Bible functioned in multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Lithuania.

Ona Aleknavičienė's study, which opens the volume, enquires chronologically into the first translations of biblical pericopes used in the churches of the Duchy of Prussia in Lithuanian literature. These are two versions of Baltramiejus Vilentas' translation of biblical pericopes published in *Evangelija bei Epistolas* (1579, 182 biblical passages); the pericopes were selected by Jonas Bretkūnas and included in his original collection of sermons *Postilla* (1591, 68 biblical pericopes). The author also discusses a third version of the translation, released by Lazarus Zengstokas in *Euangelija bei Epistolas* (or *Evangelija bei Epistolas*) (1612, 188 biblical readings), and underscores the intertextuality of the Bible translations along with the cultural functionality of their different versions.

Mindaugas Šinkūnas seeks to trace the ways in which Martin Luther's Small Catechism, *Enchiridion* (1579), was translated into Lithuanian. A comparative analysis of 114 biblical verses quoted in *Enchiridion* addresses the question of whether they were translated by Vilentas himself, one of the first translators of biblical pericopes into Lithuanian, or whether he drew on existing fragments converted into Lithuanian by Mažvydas and other authors.

Birutė Triškaitė concerns herself with the history of the Bible first printed in Lithuanian, which occurred in Königsberg in 1735. It was translated by Evangelical Lutheran priests from Prussian Lithuania, with the translation process being managed by Johann Jacob Quandt, professor of theology at Königsberg University and chief preacher at the Prussian court. This study analyses the socio-cultural context

of the edition of this Bible and the history of its translation, giving pride of place to the contribution of Johann Jacob Quandt.

Jolanta Gelumbeckaitė and C. Mortimer Drach investigate the presence of the Bible in the old Lithuanian Lutheran postils. The study deals with several excerpts from biblical pericopes and proves that corpus data play a major role in the analyses of religious texts, as they: help reveal the strategies used to combine evangelical texts, show the methods used to construct translational sermons with adapted and original text fragments, and detect the influence of the author's language and confessional persuasion on the adaptation of canonical texts, selection of quotations from the Church Fathers or texts by other authors.

Kristina Rutkovska gives account of the ways in which the Holy Scripture was interpreted in the first original bilingual sermons in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: *Sermon Points* by Konstantinas Sirvydas (Konstanty Szyrwid) (1629, 1644). The study covers such issues as the structure of biblical quotations and their functions, the strategy of interpreting biblical terms and the role of biblical anthroponymy in the sermons. The analysis of the postils revealed important features of the stylistic mannerisms of the Lithuanian preacher.

Jūratė Pajėdienė familiarizes us with the ways in which the biblical text was used in early translations of Lithuanian literature. The author assumes that the comparison of recurrent divergences between certain translational constructions and those found in the original text leads to the identification of the reasons behind them: they may be put down to the translator's desire for clarity or consistency. Translations may also have undergone changes (including additions) stemming from cultural differences and the translator's or editor's desire to bring the text closer to the cultural environment of the target users. The author illustrates these manifestations of cultural distinctiveness, made manifest at the level of the syntactic structures occurring in both postils, with the translations of biblical pericopes from the first printed Lithuanian postils penned by Jonas Bretkūnas (1590) and Mikalojaus Daukša (1599).

Viktorija Vaitkevičiūtė discusses the interpretation of the Word of God in funeral service sermons; their popularity during the Baroque period in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was such that they ranked among occasional literature and lost nothing of their relevance even during the Enlightenment. The article draws on the example of two famous preachers: a Bernardine monk, Andrzej Grądzki (d. 1626) and Michał Franciszek Karpowicz (1744–1803). The study demonstrates which images, symbols and biblical themes the preachers chose, how they interpreted them in the light of changing rhetorical requirements and how they used the biblical quotations to construct the opening of their funeral sermons. Since Grądzki and Karpowicz represent different epochs, one of the research objectives was to compare their sermons, and in doing so, to highlight similarities and differences in

the interpretation of the Bible in order to also figure out how the use of the word of God reflected the epochal changes in the evolving worldview.

Sergejus Temčinas presents an overview of manuscripts and printed books of the Bible published by the Ruthenians living in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. To this end, he analysed texts composed in the two main written languages of this cultural region: the Old Church Slavonic, commonly used in southern and eastern Slavic countries, and the local Ruthenian language (along with a number of hybrid forms of these two). Particular attention is paid to two phenomena that merit more recognition: the manuscript of the Ostroh Bible, which was compiled before the publication of the printed 1581 Ostroh Bible, and the little-known seventeenth-century translations of biblical texts from Latin into Old Church Slavonic by Ukrainian booksellers who operated already under the control of Muscovite Russia.

Galina Miškinienė discusses the place of biblical texts in Tatar manuscripts in the Arabic script that were created in Lithuania. Among the many genres of Tatar manuscript heritage in Lithuania – *Qurans*, *hamails*, *tafsirs*, *tajwids*, *semi-kitabs* – it is *kitabs* that occupy a special place. This article explores excerpts from biblical texts contained in the *kitabs* of Lithuanian Tatars. The scrutinized texts originate from the *Kitab of Ivan Lutskevich* (the first half of the eighteenth century), the *Kazan Kitab* (1645) and the *Leipzig Hamail* (the second half of the seventeenth century).

Ona Aleknavičienė (Institute of the Lithuanian Language, Vilnius)

Bible readings in the Duchy of Prussia: sixteenth–seventeenth century Lithuanian translations

Translated by Jūras Barauskas

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church was taking shape in the Duchy of Prussia, an important role in that process was played by Bible readings, also known as pericopes. Since they formed the backbone of sermons, they were read out loud and interpreted in churches and, consequently, they had an impact on all societal strata. The general public of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century was largely illiterate: only about 5% of the population of Prussia could read; this figure was slightly higher in Königsberg but lower in towns and villages.¹ The attempt of Evangelical Lutherans to proliferate their faith and have it accepted both by the higher and the lower classes, enhanced the importance of national languages. The replacement of Latin by German, Lithuanian, Polish, and Prussian in church use, activated the faithful in their attendance of masses, thus reinforcing the Evangelical Lutheran faith.

The solidification of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was in the interests of Prussian Duke Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach (1490–1568), who had ruled as the Grand Master of the German Order since 1511; in 1525, he together with the rest of the brethren secularized the Duchy of Prussia and adopted the creed of Evangelical Lutherans. The Duke pursued a language policy that favoured the national tongues, which also came to be a forward-looking part of the general policy of the state.

Efforts were made to build a tertiary education system for priests, with the University of Königsberg (established 1544) awarding, as early as in 1546, 24 scholarships for young men from Lithuania, Poland, Prussia, and Sudovia, so they could study theology and become Evangelical Lutheran priests.² Young men who could speak Lithuanian were invited from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Prussia, a programme for book publication was devised, and new churches were built in

1 E.-B. Körber, *Öffentlichkeit im Herzogtum Preußen im 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Kulturgeschichte Ostpreußens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. K. Garber, M. Komarowski, A.E. Walter, Tübingen 2001, p. 233; cf. H. Waltz, *Deutsche Literatur der Reformationszeit*, Darmstadt 1988, p. 4.

2 I. Lukšaitė, *Die Reformation im Großfürstentum Litauen und in Preußisch-Litauen (1520er Jahre bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts)*, Leipzig 2017, p. 165–250.

locations populated by Lithuanians between the 1540's and 1570's.³ Between 1570 and the 1620's, steps were taken to further consolidate the network of churches and to improve the system of primary education.⁴

Emphasis was put on verbal communication between clergy and laymen, based on Bible readings and the sermons interpreting them. This process solicited both the religious world-view and the lifestyle grounded in it. Bible readings as an integrated part of the Liturgy of the Word were made up of texts that would have served the purpose of conveying to the religious communities the fundamental Evangelical Lutheran principles, which are encapsulated in the Latin phrases of *sola scriptura* 'the [Holy] Scripture only', *sola fide* 'only through faith', *sola gratia* 'only by grace', *solus Christus* 'Christ only', and *soli Deo gloria* 'glory to God alone'. The indoctrination of the congregations with these principles was the major factor behind the success of the new Christian teaching. The priests relied on Bible readings to introduce the public to religious concepts and symbols, help them understand their meaning, and in doing so shape the semantic code needed to understand the contents of the Bible.

Similarly to many other nations in Western and Northern Europe, Bible translations incentivized Lithuanians to devise their written language and to raise literacy. Bible translations into the Lithuanian language were sparked by Martin Luther's (1483–1546) postulate that every believer must be able to read the Scripture in order to learn how to live by it. With this in mind, it became to be understood in the Duchy of Prussia that the text of the Bible must be made accessible to every believer. Priests with a good theological and linguistic background felt a professional and moral obligation to translate biblical texts into their native languages.

Translations of the Bible texts into the national languages began to proliferate in the sixteenth century, which led to the standardisation and emancipation of these tongues. Having existed as a *lingua vulgaris*, or the 'language of the people', until mid-sixteenth century, the Lithuanian language gradually attained the status of the public language, as demonstrated by its use in churches and the publication of religious books in Lithuanian. The spoken language variety developed concurrently with its written counterpart. The process was largely affected by books published in other languages and utilized as sources for Lithuanian books.

The first Lithuanian translations of Bible readings would have been translations, handwritten by priests, of the Bible or postils that Evangelical Lutheran theologians would spread in the Western European countries where the ideas of the Reformation had been embraced. Priests that worked in the Lithuanian parishes of Prussia in the second half of the sixteenth century and in the early seventeenth century were

³ Ibid., p. 195–250.

⁴ Ibid., p. 346–369.

already taking advantage of the possibilities offered by printed word with a high degree of success. Publications that were printed in Königsberg printing houses spread Biblical knowledge and its interpretation over a much broader territory and to a much wider readership. Equally important is the fact that the second half of the sixteenth century saw the emergence of a group of like-minded people who were concerned with bringing the Reformation ideas to life by drafting the essential religious books. This paved a way for the Lithuanian language to become a language of liturgical rituals.⁵

In the second half of the sixteenth century and in the early seventeenth century, outlining and publishing Bible readings in Lithuanian was the product of the creative work of a handful of people. The books that appeared in that time have a strong intertextual bond, pointing to the interceptability and continuity of work. This topic is the focal point of section 1, in which the drafting and publication of readings is juxtaposed with the state policy on culture and language. The cultural functionality of the different versions of Bible readings – the applied function that catered to the needs of the Prussian Evangelical Lutheran Church – at different times varied as a result of a number of factors and shifting political, economic, and cultural circumstances. Functionality determined by the above-mentioned circumstances and by the accessibility of publications, is discussed in section 2.

1. Lithuanian translations of Bible readings

1.1 Handwritten translations

The entire text of the Bible was first translated into the Lithuanian language at the end of the sixteenth century. Compared to other European nations, the translation happened at a rather late stage, at the time when the Reformation was already gaining a firm foothold in the Prussian Duchy.⁶ The man behind the translation of the Bible was Jonas Bretkūnas (Johann Bretke, Johannes Bretkuis, ca. 1536–1602), an Evangelical Lutheran priest from Friedland, part of the Bartenstein County in

5 Ibid., p. 216–250, 370–395; D. Petkūnas, *Liturgija kaip veiksnys lietuvių ir prūsų tautinei tapatybei išsaugoti Prūsijos kunigaikštystėje XVI amžiuje*, “Senoji Lietuvos literatūra” 45 (2018), p. 11–38; Id., *Prussian Liturgies: from the Reformation to the Prussian Union*, vol. 1, Klaipėda 2020, p. 183–299.

6 As for translations of the Bible into national languages, see P.H. Vogel, *Europäische Bibeldrucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in den Volkssprachen. Ein Beitrag zur Bibliographie des Bibeldrucks*, Baden-Baden 1962; K. Unterburger, *Volkssprachliche Übersetzungen der Bibel im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. Die Entstehung von Interpretationsvarianten der Heiligen Schrift und die Frage des Auslegungsmonopols der Kirche*, [in:] *Wahrheit – Geschwindigkeit – Pluralität. Chancen und Herausforderungen durch den Buchdruck im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. J.M. Lies, Göttingen 2021, p. 163–180.

the Duchy of Prussia. His entry in the matriculas of the University of Königsberg, dated 14 June 1555, reads “Johannes Bretke of Friedland, born in the neighbouring village of Bamlen, a pauper, orphan, 5 groschen” [“Johannes Bretke, Friedlandensis, natus in pago vicino Bamlen, pauper, pupillus 5 gr.”],⁷ and in the matriculas of the University of Wittenberg, dated 16 January 1557, “Johannes Brecke (sic) of Friedland” [“Johannes Brecke (sic) Fridlandensis”].⁸

During his time as a priest in Labguva (Labiau, a position he assumed in 1563), Bretkūnas first translated the New Testament (BNT, 1579–1580)⁹ and the Psalms (1580); his translations of the other books of the Bible were completed in 1590, when he was already in Königsberg, where he had been relocated in 1587, following the death of resident Lithuanian priest Baltramiejus Vilentas (for more on him, see sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2).¹⁰ Bretkūnas was a priest at St Michael’s Church in Steindamm and served the entire Lithuanian community of Königsberg. His Bible translations were based on the 1546 edition of Luther’s Bible (LB) and the subsequent editions, with the exception of the Gospel of Luke. The main source for the translation of this Gospel was the Latin Vulgate.¹¹ Bretkūnas would highlight Bible readings by underscoring their beginning and end in red and including an inscription as to which Sunday or church holiday it was dedicated. For instance, in Mark 8:1, BNT bears a Latin inscription of “Euang: Dom: Septima poſt Trin:” in the margins; John 10:12–16, “Euang: Dom: Mifericord. Domini”; Acts 8:14–17, “Epist. Fer: 3. Pentecostes”; Gal 3:23–29, “Epist: Die Circumcision: Chrifti”; and so on.

Though the Bible, which Evangelical Lutherans considered and still consider to be the principal guide of their faith and a source of theological ideals, had been translated into the Lithuanian language, it remained unprinted. Bretkūnas had pleaded for it to be published on numerous occasions: his correspondence with Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg-Ansbach (1539–1603), the Prussian Duke who had ruled since 1577, regarding the evaluation of the manuscript and the possibilities to have it published, continued until 1602 – right up to Bretkūnas’s death. This is evident in six letters by Bretkūnas pertaining to the translation of the Bible (1593, 1595, 1598, 1599, 1600, 1602), and a letter from the Consistory of Sambia to the

7 G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1910, p. 18.

8 C.E. Foerstemann, *Album Academiae Vitebergensis ab a. Ch. MDII usque ad a. MDLX*, Lipsiae 1841, p. 324.

9 The bibliographical description, place of storage of the abbreviated sources of the Bible as well as references to critical and online editions are given in *Bibliography* (p. 46–47).

10 V. Falkenhahn, *Der Übersetzer der litauischen Bibel Johannes Bretke und seine Helfer. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Kirchengeschichte Altpreußens*, Königsberg–Berlin 1941, p. 86–97, 431.

11 For sources of BNT translation, see J.D. Range, *Bausteine zur Bretke-Forschung. Kommentarband zur Bretke-Edition (NT)*, Paderborn–München–Wien–Zürich 1992, p. 76–140.

Duke dated 1592.¹² In 1600, the manuscript was eventually delivered to the library of the Königsberg, and the translator was paid 400 marks and commissioned to revise and finalise the translation.¹³ As the Bible was kept at the library in the form of a one-of-a-kind manuscript, its readings were not accessible to priests from the more remote Lithuanian parishes in Prussia, and had limited use in the Liturgy of the Word.

No other handwritten translations of the Bible or individual texts of the readings have survived to this day, but there is some information that a few Evangelical Lutheran priests in Prussia commenced work on a Lithuanian translation of the New Testament or had at least some translations of the readings available. Friedrich Pastenaci's tract entitled *Kurzgefaßte Historische Nachrichten von allen im Königreiche Preußen befindlichen Kirchen und Predigern* [*Concise Historical News from all Churches and Preachers in the Kingdom of Prussia*] (1757) contains reference to the fact that Augustinas Jomantas (Augustinus Jamundus, ca. 1525–1576), the priest of Ragainė (Ragnit) had some of the Gospels. On 3 January 1576, he received an official letter urging him to proceed quicker with the translation of the New Testament, so that it could promptly be printed.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Jomantas died soon after without finishing his translation (what happened to the manuscript is not known). He had come from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and had been matriculated to the University of Königsberg in 1544 as “Augustinus Jamantowitz 1 gr.”,¹⁵ and was posted to Ragainė in 1563.

There is one surviving anonymous handwritten postil, which was translated into the Lithuanian language in the second half of the sixteenth century on the basis of postils by celebrated Lutheran theologians and was passed around as a duplicate.¹⁶ It is kept at the Library of Duke August in Wolfenbüttel and, as such, is usually referred to as the *Wolfenbüttel Postil* (see WP) dated 1573–1574, the duplicate was made by Jonas Bylaukis (Johannes Bielauk, ca. 1540–1603) of Vėluva (Wehlau), who,

12 V. Falkenhahn, *Der Übersetzer der litauischen Bibel Johannes Bretke und seine Helfer*, p. 433–444.

13 E. Kuhnert, *Geschichte der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek zu Königsberg. Von ihrer Begründung bis zum Jahre 1810*, Leipzig 1926, p. 88.

14 F. Pastenaci, *Kurzgefaßte Historische Nachrichten von allen im Königreiche Preußen befindlichen Kirchen und Predigern bei denselben, außerhalb Königsberg, von der Reformation Lutheri an bis auf unsere Zeiten. Herausgegeben von Friedrich Pastenaci, Hofpit. Pred. und Rect. zu Gumbinnen, auch Mitglied der Königl. Deutsch. Gefellsch. zu Königsb. in Preußen. Erstes Stück vom Insterburgschen Erzpriesterthum*, Königsberg, I.F. Drieft, 1757, p. 7; V. Biržiška, *Aleksandrynas. Senujų lietuvių rašytojų, rašiusių prieš 1865 m., biografijos, bibliografijos ir biobibliografijos*, vol. 1, Čikaga 1960, p. 101–105.

15 G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.*, p. 4.

16 J. Gelumbeckaitė, *Einleitung zur Edition der litauischen Wolfenbütteler Postille von 1573*, [in:] *Die litauische Wolfenbütteler Postille von 1573*, vol. 2, ed. J. Gelumbeckaitė, Wiesbaden 2008, p. XXXVI–XLIII.

since 1567, had served as a priest in Jurbarkas (Georgenburg)¹⁷, part of the Įsrutis (Insterburg) ecclesiastical province. This postil does not present the Bible reading in its entirety: instead, only the first line or the very beginning of a given reading is given before the sermon. This proves that priests either had their own handwritten readings, or employed interpreters who would translate them and the sermon into the Lithuanian language. The 1568 Church Regulations, *Kirchen Ordnung und Ceremonien* [*Church Order and Ceremonies*], contained a chapter on interpreters entitled *Von Tolken* [*On translators*], which suggested abandoning the practice of delivering sermons via an interpreter, and issued a reminder that the Prussian Duke had awarded at the University of Königsberg six scholarships for Lithuanians, Poles, Prussians, and Sudovians each, so that they could become priests and serve the national communities.¹⁸ The long list of sources of the *Wolfenbüttel Postil* indicates that Prussian priests were aware of the postils published in Europe, especially those that had been written in Latin. Even though they would translate their fragments – both readings and sermons – into Lithuanian and make copies thereof, this method of usage of handwritten texts might only have existed at a local level.

1.2 Published translations

1.2.1 Bible readings in Martynas Mažvydas's hymnal *Gesmes Chrikszoniskas* (1570)

Two separate Bible readings were first published in 1570 in *Gesmes Chrikszoniskas* [*Christian Hymns*] (MŽG), the hymnal by Martynas Mažvydas (Martinus Mosvidius, ca. 1520–1563), which was released by Georg Osterberger's printing house in Königsberg. These were Luke 1:46–55 (*Magnificat*, MŽG 484–489) and Luke 1:68–79 (*Benedictus*, MŽG 541–544). Mažvydas hailed from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He had come to Königsberg to study theology on the invitation from Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach, the Duke of Prussia: Mažvydas was entered in the matriculas of the University between 1 August 1546 and 8 September 1547 as “Martinus Moswidius, 1 gr.”¹⁹ and studied in 1546–1548.

The University of Königsberg played an exceptional role in the origin and further development of Lithuanian writings. While he was a student at this university, Mažvydas wrote and published the first Lithuanian book, *Catechismvsa Prasty Szadei* [*The Simple Words of the Catechism*] (1547). After he graduated, he was

17 V. Falkenhahn, *Der Übersetzer der litauischen Bibel Johannes Bretke und seine Helfer*, p. 367–374.

18 *Kirchen Ordnung vnd Ceremonien. Wie es in vbung Gottes Worts / vnd reichung der Hochwirdigen Sacrament / in den Kirchen des Herzogthumbs Preuffen foll gehalten werden*, Königsberg 1568, fol. 31v–32r (shelf mark: BSB Res/4 H. ref. 834 m-1/2).

19 G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.*, p. 6.

posted as an Evangelical Lutheran priest to the parish of Ragainė, and later became superintendent of Ragainė County.²⁰ He published two more books and compiled a hymnal for the whole ecclesiastical year, but was unable to have it published. This hymnal was only released in two parts (one in 1566 and the other, in 1570) after the author's death by his cousin and another graduate of the university, Baltramiejus Vilentas (for more on him, see section 1.2.2).

Magnificat and *Benedictus* were not just Bible readings; these were hymns and were published together with their musical notations. These hymns had been translated from the Latin *Psalmodia* (1553) of Lucas Lossius, but were edited under LB, and *Benedictus* in particular.²¹ Considering the reference in the title of the hymn, “drafted by Tamošius Gedkantas for all tones” [“ant wifū tonu prietaifitas nūgi Thamofchiaus Gedkanta”] (MŽG 484), the translation of *Magnificat* is attributable to Tomas Gedkantas (ca. 1525–1566), also of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a theological alumnus of the University of Königsberg. Gedkantas was matriculated on 17 July 1550 as „Thomas Georgius Giedkonti Lituanus”,²² predating Mažvydas and later than Vilentas. Eventually Gedkantas became an Evangelical Lutheran priest in Širvinta (Schirwindt), which was part of the ecclesiastical district of Pilkalnis (Pillkallen).²³

1.2.2 *Euangelias bei Epistolas*, the book of Bible readings by Baltramiejus Vilentas (1579)

The Bible readings in the Lithuanian language that the Prussian churches so needed were first published as a separate volume by Georg Osterberger's printing house in Königsberg in 1579. It was *Euangelias bei Epistolas* [*Gospels and Epistles*] (VEE), a book drafted by Baltramiejus Vilentas (see Fig. I.1). The author released it together with the Lithuanian translation of Luther's *Enchiridion* (VE). The 1579 publication was the second edition of this translation. Judging by Vilentas's letter to Albrecht Friedrich (1553–1618), the Duke of Prussia, dated 1 August 1572, the first edition of *Enchiridion* had been issued in or before 1572 with a run of 500 copies (none of the copies are extant).²⁴

20 O. Aleknavičienė, *Ar Martynas Mažvydas buvo vyskupas?*, “Archivum Lithuanicum” 16 (2014), p. 59–71.

21 Cf. G. Michelini, *Martyno Mažvydo raštai ir jų šaltiniai*, Vilnius 2000, p. 546–551, 603–606.

22 G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.*, p. 11.

23 F. Moeller, *Altpreußisches evangelisches Pfarrerbuch von der Reformation bis zur Vertreibung im Jahre 1945* (Sonderschriften des Vereins für Familienforschung in Ost- und Westpreußen e. V. 11), vol. 1: *Die Kirchspiele und ihre Stellenbesetzungen*, Hamburg 1968, p. 134.

24 B. Willent, *Brief an Herzog von Preußen Albrecht Friedrich* (MS), Königsberg 01.08.1572 (shelf mark: GStA PK XX EM 72 f.Nr. 51, fol. 7r–8v); O. Aleknavičienė, *Pirmasis Baltramiejaus Vilito Enchiridiono leidimas: terminus ad quem – 1572-iejį*, “Archivum Lithuanicum” 11 (2009), p. 129–131.



Fig. I.1. Baltramiejus Vilentas, *Euangelias bei Epistolas*, 1579, the title page (shelf mark: VUB L_R 1387).

Baltramiejus Vilentas (Bartholomaeus Willenthus, ca. 1525–1587) was a priest at St Michael's Church in Königsberg, where he had worked since 1553 until his death, serving the Lithuanian population of the entire town and its surrounding areas.²⁵ He also came from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and was matriculated at the University of Königsberg at roughly the same time as Mažvydas (between 1 August 1546 and 8 September 1547), his entry reading “Bartolomeus Villentatus, 5 gr.”²⁶

During his time at St Michael's Church, Vilentas worked with Jan Seklucjan (Johannes Seclucianus, ca. 1510–1578), a Polish priest and religious refugee from Poland whom Duke Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach had taken under his wing.²⁷ Vilentas and Seklucjan were both confessional and literary peers. Before Vilentas assumed his post in Königsberg, Seklucjan had been drafting books in the Polish language for ten years already, including the profession of the Christian faith entitled *Wyznanie wiary chrześcijańskiej* [*The Confession of the Christian Faith*] (1544), the little catechism entitled *Katechizmu text prosti dla prostego ludu* [*A Simple Text of Catechism for the Common People*] (1545), the catechism entitled *Catechismus, to jest nauka naprzędniejsza i potrzebniejsza ku zbawieniu, o wierze krześcijańskiej* [*Catechism, or the Most Important and Necessary Teaching for Salvation about the Christian Faith*] (1547), the hymnal called *Pieśni duchowne a nabożeństwa* [*Spiritual Songs and Services*] (1547), the *New Testament* (1551–1555, in collaboration with Stanisław Murzynowski), and other volumes.²⁸ Seklucjan's 1545 catechism provided a frame of reference for Mažvydas in his effort to draft the main section of his own catechism,²⁹ while Seklucjan's hymnal was the original source of some of the hymns retrieved from Mažvydas's translations contained in the latter's hymnal of MŽG, as published in Königsberg by Vilentas.³⁰

VEE consists of Bible readings arranged throughout the ecclesiastical year, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent. This book opens with readings for Sundays and Church holidays (VEE 1–135), while the subsequent separate chapter contains

The first edition was previously believed to have been published in 1575 and have had a run of 25 copies, see *Lietuvos TSR bibliografija. Serija A. Knygos lietuvių kalba 1547–1961*, vol. 1, Vilnius 1960, p. 450.

25 O. Aleknavičienė, *Baltramiejus Vilentas, Šteindamo Šv. Mikalojaus bažnyčia, Karaliaučius, 1553–1587*, “Archivum Lithuanicum” 17 (2015), p. 53–80.

26 G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.*, p. 6.

27 A. Grzybowski, *Gefchichte der evangelischen Steindammer Kirche zu Königsberg i. Pr. aus Anlaß ihres 650jährigen Jubiläums verfaßt von Aug. Grzybowski, Pfarrer der Steindammer Gemeinde, Königsberg 1905*.

28 J. Małłek, *Seklucjan (Seclucianus, Sekluczian) Jan*, [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 36, Warszawa–Kraków 1995–1996, p. 182–186.

29 Ch.S. Stang, *Die Sprache des litauischen Katechismus von Mažvydas*, Oslo 1929.

30 G. Michelinė, *Martyno Mažvydo raštai ir jų šaltiniai*, Vilnius 2000, p. 8–18.

those that are dedicated to the days of the saints and other feasts, such as the days of St Andrew, St John Baptist, St Catherine, the Conversion of St Paul the Apostle, the Annunciation, All Saints' Day, and suchlike (VEE 136–187, 214–216). The book ends with a *Passio* dedicated to the week of Easter, consisting of a text written on the basis of the four Gospels, entitled *Historia apie Muka ir Smerti Pona mušu Iešaus Chrištaus / pagal keturiu Euangelistų* [*The Story of the Suffering and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Four Evangelists*] (VEE 188–214), and a reading from the Book of Isaiah (Isa 52:13–15, 53:1–12), not attributed to any Sunday or Church holiday (VEE 214–216).

Vilentas presented two readings for every Sunday and Church holiday: one from the Gospels, and one from the letters of Paul the Apostle, the works of the Apostles, and the books of the Old Testament (cf. Fig. I.2). VEE features a total of 182 readings, of which 172 are from the New Testament, and 10 from the Old Testament.

In his outline of the book, Vilentas virtually kept the order of the Bible readings that had been devised for the Lutheran churches by Luther himself. Luther first published *Register zu finden die Episteln vnd Euangelien an Sontagen vnd namhafftigen Festen* [*Register of the Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and Notable Holidays*], or the list of the readings in the New Testament that was released by Johannes Lufft's printing house in Wittenberg in 1526.³¹ As he himself used the list to mark the readings in the editions of the Bible published between 1539 and 1546, the same order later became widely prevalent and was adopted with regard to the Evangelical Lutheran postils as well. In his description of the order of the masses and other kinds of service in *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung Gottesdiensts* [*German Masses and Order of Worship*] (1526), Luther pointed that churches must observe the order of readings as it appears in the postils and priests were not to choose the topics of their sermons at their discretion.³² The same was required by the decrees of the Prussian church. The resolutions of the visitors inspecting different parishes in the 1580's and the 1590's show that priests were enjoined to celebrate the holidays listed in the 1568 *Kirchen Ordnung und Ceremonien* in the manner prescribed by the authorities.³³ The established order of readings – both for the main service and for other occasions – was to be accepted by Prussian priests in order for them to uphold a structured Evangelical teaching.³⁴

31 F. Cohrs, *Register der Episteln und Evangelien*, WA 7, p. 529–544.

32 M. Luther, *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung Gottesdiensts zu Wittemberg fürgenommen*, M.D.XXVI, WA 19, p. 44–113.

33 A. Zieger, *Das religiöse und kirchliche Leben in Preussen und Kurland im Spiegel der evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Köln–Graz 1967, p. 104.

34 For the impact of the sequence of pericopes on the system and quality of sermons, see H.P. Jürgens, *Predigt und Buchdruck in der Reformationszeit*, [in:] *Wahrheit – Geschwindigkeit – Pluralität. Chancen*

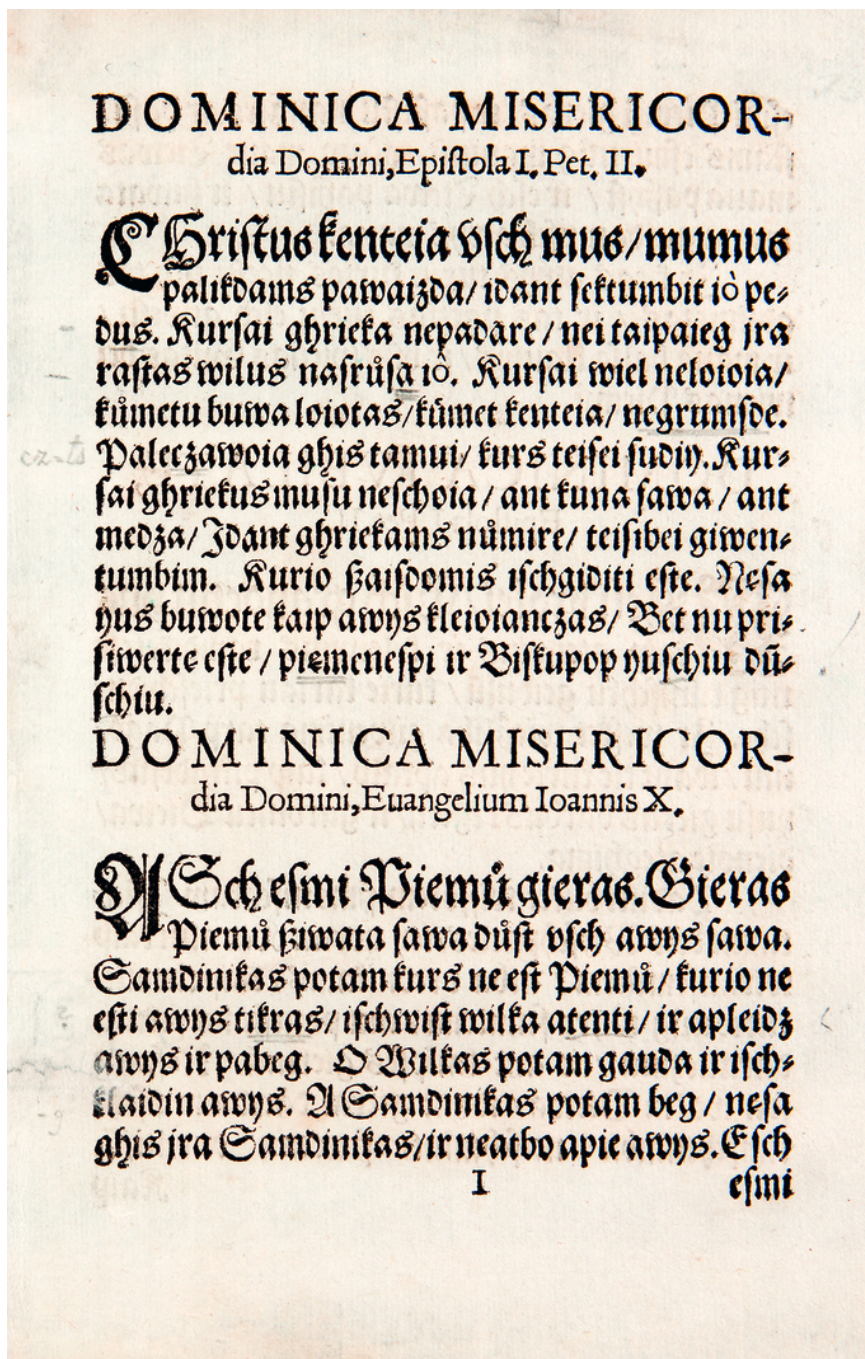


Fig. I.2. Baltramiejus Vilentas, *Euangelias bei Epistolas*, 1579, 65: an epistolary and evangelical reading of the Bible (shelf mark: VUB L_R 1387).

Vilentas adopted the *Hymnal's* text of *Magnificat* almost verbatim (Luke 1:46–55, VEE 158–159), with the exception of Luke 1:54, which corresponds to LB rather than to Psalmodia by Lossius. Vilentas wanted to preserve the Lithuanian text intact for all practical purposes, considering that it was also the text of a hymn to be learned by heart (any radical revisions were unwelcome in cases like that). The reading featured in VEE is a bit longer than the typical *Benedictus*: the text in the MžG only covers Luke 1:68–79, and that of o VEE, Luke 1:57–79; ergo, *Benedictus* here is but a second part of this reading (VEE 153–154). The *Hymnal's* own text was adopted with a rather high degree of accuracy, with some units exclusively mirroring its text and matching the sources of its translation. Hence, Vilentas tried to maintain the Lithuanian variant that had been published in 1570 here as well. Both texts were adopted from the MžG implicitly, with no source provided. The texts of the rest of the readings published in VEE virtually correspond to LB, yet they contain units of translation which point to reliance on the Vulgate or the Greek New Testament.

As Vilentas himself said in the foreword to the book, he had dedicated almost a decade to this work: “I gave nearly ten years of diligent work to this tract, the so-called Sunday Gospel and Epistles” [“opere quo Euangelia & Epistolæ quas || Dominicales uocant, continentur, propemodum decem=||nium elaborauī”] (VEE 3r). In the foreword, he stressed that his translation had been approved by priests and theological specialists who could speak Lithuanian: “this translation has been approved by the most experienced scholars of that language and specialists of our true doctrine” [“à peri=||tišimim quibusq; eius linguæ, & intelligentibus do=||ctrinam noftram faniorem, approbata est”] (VEE 3r). This shows that his own translations of Bible readings had the seal of approval as fit to be read at Prussia's Evangelical Lutheran churches.

A book of Bible readings was an essential aid for those priests of the Duchy of Prussia who while ministering in Lithuanian parishes had a poor command of Lithuanian. Even though in 1546, Duke Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach awarded six scholarships for young Lithuanian, Polish, Prussian, and Sudovian students of theology at the University of Königsberg,³⁵ research into the history of the Prussian Evangelical Lutheran Church indicates that Lithuanians pursuing this type of studies in the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century were few, with some of the scholarships even remaining unclaimed. The first priests who could speak Lithuanian had fled from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where they had been unable to spread the Evangelical Lutheran faith freely. These were religious

und Herausforderungen durch den Buchdruck im Zeitalter der Reformation, ed. J.M. Lies, Göttingen 2021, p. 115–121.

35 I. Lukšaitė, *Die Reformation im Großfürstentum Litauen und in Preußisch-Litauen (1520er Jahre bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts)*, p. 201–215.

refugees that found shelter in Prussia, obtained a theological education, a post, and support to engage in literary endeavours.³⁶

Nonetheless, this book of Vilentas had not been commissioned by the Prussian authorities, as had been the case with the previous Lithuanian books published under Duke Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach. Vilentas's letter to Prussia's Duke Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg dated 25 December 1581 testifies that, two years after the publication of his VEE, he still had not paid to Georg Osterberger's printing house for the paper and the work, and was hence asking the Duke for his assistance, reminding him that the foreword was dedicated to him.³⁷ Vilentas's letter to Duke Albrecht Friedrich dated 1 August 1572 testifies that he had not been paid for the publication of the first edition of VE either.³⁸ Vilentas's appeal was finally taken into consideration as late as in 1582, with the Duke issuing an order to pay him, since his work with Lithuanians and on book translations had made this priest very meritorious: he "served us loyally with the Lithuanian language and with the translations of *Euangelias bei Epistolas*, the *Catechism* and the *Postil* in particular".³⁹ Advisers to the Duke instructed him that he be paid 20 Polish guildens and be given 12 German bushels of grain every year for his service in the entire Königsberg and its surrounding areas. A similar fate befell Jan Seklucjan, the Polish priest: on 18 June 1575, he approached the Duke with a letter asking him for a premium for he had gotten himself into debt while printing Polish books.⁴⁰ All of which shows that authors who took the initiative to draft and publish their books were not certain whether they would have the money to pay the printing house or be able to later plead with the authorities for financial compensation.

These facts indicate that, following the death of Duke Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach, the Prussian authorities ceased to support religious literature written in national languages. Albrecht Friedrich, who succeeded his father in 1568, was

36 Ibid., p. 216–228; 370–395.

37 B. Willent, *Brief an Herzog von Preußen Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg* (MS), Königsberg 25.12.1581 (shelf mark: GStA PK XX EM 72 f Nr. 51, fol. 9r–10v); see O. Aleknavičienė, *Pirmasis Baltramiejaus Viento Enchiridiono leidimas: terminus ad quem – 1572-ieji*, p. 135–140.

38 B. Willent, *Brief an Herzog von Preußen Albrecht Friedrich* (MS), Königsberg 01.08.1572 (shelf mark: GStA PK XX EM 72 f Nr. 51, fol. 7r–8v); O. Aleknavičienė, *Pirmasis Baltramiejaus Viento Enchiridiono leidimas: terminus ad quem – 1572-ieji*, p. 129–135.

39 "mitt der || Littifchen ſprach vnd fonderlich In verſione || der *Euangelien vnd Epiftelen*, *Cathechifmi* || vnd *Poſtillen* treulich gedinet" (*Schreiben der Räte von Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg, Herzog von Preußen, betreffend die Zahlung an Bartholomaeus Willent* [MS], Königsberg 22.01.1582 [shelf mark: GStA PK XX EM 72 f Nr. 51, fol. 11r–12v]); see O. Aleknavičienė, *Pirmasis Baltramiejaus Viento Enchiridiono leidimas: terminus ad quem – 1572-ieji*, p. 138–140.

40 D. H. Arnoldt, *Zuſätze zu ſeiner Hiſtorie der Königsbergiſchen Univerſität, nebt einigen Verbeſſerungen derſelben, auch zweyhundert und funfzig Lebensbeſchreibungen Preußiſcher Gelehrten*, Königsberg, Verlag Iohann Heinrich Hartungs Witwe, 1756, p. 107–108.