

THE SOURCES OF THE 1545 OLD PRUSSIAN LANGUAGE CATECHISMS

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Abstract

The Teutonic Order in Prussia recognised and acknowledged its responsibility to catechise both the German-speaking colonists and the native population. The Reformation made no radical changes to these requirements, but gave them serious attention. During the 1540s to the 1560s, several Catechisms for the non-German subjects of the Duke of Prussia were prepared and published in Königsberg, including three in the Old Prussian language. The editor of the first and second Old Prussian-language Catechisms published bilingual books, with the German Catechism on the left-hand page, and the same text on the right-hand page in the Old Prussian language. Reinhold Trautmann established that the source of the Decalogue in these books was Luther's 1531 *Small Catechism*. However, he had difficulties confirming the sources of the remaining four parts of the Catechism, since he found a number of words and phrases which could not be identified as coming from Luther's Catechisms. The article elaborates on Trautmann's thesis that the source of the German Decalogue is Luther's 1531 *Enchiridion*. In addition, it argues that the sources of the remaining parts of the Catechism were German-language catechetical and liturgical texts that were circulating in Prussia at that time.

KEY WORDS: Duchy of Prussia, catechisation, Old Prussian language, Martin Luther.

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ANOTACIJA

Vokiečių ordinas Prūsijoje suvokė ir pripažino savo pareigą katechizuoti tiek vokiečiųkalbius kolonistus, tiek ir vietinius gyventojus. Reformacija neturėjo esminės įtakos šiems reikalavimams atsirasti, bet sustiprino jiems teikiamą dėmesį. XVI a. 5–7-uoju dešimtmečiais buvo parengti ir Karaliaučiuje išspausdinti keli Prūsijos hercogo ne vokiškai kalbėjusiems valdiniams skirti katekizmai, įskaitant tris katekizmus prūsų kalba. Pirmojo ir antrojo katekizmų prūsų kalba sudarytojas šalia knygos kairės pusės puslapiuose esančio teksto prūsų kalba dešinės pusės puslapiuose publikavo katekizmą vokiečių kalba. Jo šaltinius tyręs Reinholdas Trautmanas nustatė, kad prūsų katekizmo pirmosios dalies šaltinis yra 1531 m. Martino Lutherio Mažasis katekizmas. Tačiau nustatinėdamas likusių keturių dalių šaltinius, tyrėjas susidūrė su sunkumais, nes vokiškame tekste pasitaikė žodžių ir frazių, kurių nebuvo M. Lutherio katekizmuose. Straipsnyje plėtojamas R. Trautmanno teiginys, kad katekizmo prūsų kalba pirmosios dalies šaltinis yra M. Lutherio *Enchiridionas*. Be to, autorius teigia, kad likusių keturių dalių šaltiniai buvo vokiečių kalba parašyti katechetiniai ir liturginiai tekstai, cirkuliuavę to meto Prūsijos Hercogystėje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Prūsijos Hercogystė, katechizacija, prūsų kalba, Martinas Lutheris.

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THE REFORMATION IN THE SOUTHEAST BALTIC REGION

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As important as it is for an understanding of the literary and linguistic history of the Baltic peoples, the German sources of the first book in the Old Prussian language, *Catechismus jn preußnischer sprach vnd dagegen das deüdsche* (The Catechism in the Old Prussian and German Languages Side by Side), published in 1545, are still shrouded in mystery. Only one student of linguistics has given special attention to this question. The German scholar Reinhold Trautmann addressed the problem in a short article published in 1909. Trautmann indicated that he had been unable to determine a single literary source behind the German text of the Old Prussian Catechism. It was his considered conclusion that in many respects the text corresponds to editions of Luther's *Small Catechism* printed in 1531.¹ No other scholars have given such careful attention to this question. A two-volume study by Vytautas Mažiulis, *Prūsų kalbos paminklai* (Monuments of the Old Prussian Language), appeared in 1966 and 1981.² It dealt with the origins, structure and linguistics of the three Old Prussian Catechisms. However, Mažiulis' statements concerning the source material behind the first Catechism simply repeated the conclusions of Dr Trautmann. He broke no new ground, and asserted, even more emphatically than Trautmann, that with minor deviations, the 1531 edition of Luther's *Small Catechism* served as the basis for the German text of the Old Prussian Catechism.³

1. The problem of sources

Trautmann himself was a careful scholar who paid close attention to every word of the Old Prussian book, and diligently sought its origins in Luther's catechetical writings and his Bible. He found several instances where the wording of the Old Prussian book differed considerably from that of Luther's 1531 *Small Catechism*. He concluded that, in addition to the *Small Catechism*, the text corresponded to expressions used by Luther in the 1522 *Betbüchlein* (*Little Prayer Book*), the 1529 *Large Catechism*, the German Bible, and the 1525 *Eyn Büchlein für die Layen und die Kinder* (A Little Book for Laity and Children), a book Luther published in Wittenberg and which included catechetical material. Trautmann was unable to determine the source of the fragment '*dancket vnd gab seynen jünger*' (gave thanks and gave to his disciples) with reference to Christ's Words of Institution (Verba Testamenti) spoken over the cup in the Sacrament of the Altar. In this place, one would expect to find '*dancket und gab jn den*' (gave thanks and gave to them), as in all editions of Luther's catechetical writ-

¹ TRAUTMANN, Reinhold. Die Quellen der drei altpreussischen Katechismen und des Enchiridions von Bartholomaeus Willent. *Altpreußische Monatsschrift*, 1909, Bd. 46, S. 222. Cf. TRAUTMANN, Reinhold. *Die altpreussischen Sprachdenkmäler. Einleitung, Texte, Grammatik, Wörterbuch*. Göttingen, 1910.

² *Prūsų kalbos paminklai*. Parengė Vytautas MAŽIULIS. Vilnius, 1966; MAŽIULIS, Vytautas. *Prūsų kalbos paminklai*. [T.] II. Vilnius, 1981.

³ *Prūsų kalbos paminklai...*, p. 35.

ings. He stated in his study that he was unable to identify the source of this unusually worded phrase.⁴

Trautmann appears to have overstated the case. Indeed there are many similarities between the Old Prussian Catechism and Luther's *Small Catechism*; however, there are some major differences. Luther's *Small Catechism* differs from other Catechisms, even those by other Lutheran reformers, in that Luther provides short and remarkably concise explanations of the main parts of Christian doctrine. In addition, it should be noted that long before the Old Prussian Catechism was printed in 1545, Luther's Catechism had been expanded from the five chief parts found in Luther's original 1529 placard edition, to the printed editions with six chief parts. In all printed editions, beginning in 1531, the section on the Office of the Keys and Confession was placed between Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. The section on the Office of the Keys is missing in the Old Prussian Catechism.⁵

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The Old Prussian Catechism bears the closest resemblance in its structure to the Short Preface of Luther's *Large Catechism* of 1529. In both cases, five chief parts are given without any further comment or explanation. It shows its indebtedness in that, like the Short Preface, it lists five chief parts: the Ten Commandments, the Symbolum Apostolicum (Apostles' Creed), the Our Father, the Words of Christ concerning Holy Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar. This indebtedness does not extend to the wording of the Old Prussian Catechism, which differs from that found in the Short Preface.⁶

Some problems still remain. In a few places, the German text of the Old Prussian Catechism uses different words to those found in either the *Large Catechism* or the *Small Catechism*. In most cases, Trautmann was able to find precedents for the wording of the Old Prussian document where it differed from the 1531 edition of the *Small Catechism*. He found them in the *Betbüchlein* or other catechetical materials by Luther. In the case of the '*Deyn wille geschee auff erden als himmel*' (Thy will be done on earth as in heaven) in the Our Father, he was not able to find any precedents in Luther's catechetical writings, and so he looked to Luther's German Bible for the source. There, he found the fragment: '*deyn Wille geschehe auf Erden wie im Himmel.*' The source of the words over the cup in the Sacrament of the Altar '*dancket vnd gab seynen jünger*' escaped him, however. He could not find their source, and could give no explanation as to how this phrase could have found its way into the Old Prussian book.

⁴ TRAUTMANN, R. Die Quellen..., S. 222.

⁵ [LUTHER, Martin.] Enchiridion. Der kleine Catechismus für die gemeine Pfarrherr und Prediger. 1529. In *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter WA). Bd. 30, Abt. 1. Weimar, 1910, S. 241–263; [LUTHER, Martin.] Enchiridion. Der kleine Catechismus für die gemeine Pfarher und Prediger. 1531. In *Ibid.*, S. 346–402.

⁶ [LUTHER, Martin.] Deudsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus.) 1529. Vorrhede. In *Ibid.*, S. 129–132.

2. Textual differences in the Old Prussian book, the Short Preface, and the *Small Catechism*

It is beyond question that the Old Prussian Catechism was built on the foundation and structure of Luther's catechetical principles, since Luther himself articulated these principles in the Short Preface to the *Large Catechism*. However, the Old Prussian text corresponds, in most instances, to the text of the *Small Catechism*. Where there are differences, most are of little significance. It is noteworthy that there are a few discrepancies in the text of the Ten Commandments. Luther's '*Du solt den namen deines Gottes nicht vnnützlich füren*' (You shall not take the name of your God in vain), in the second commandment appears in the Old Prussian book as '*Du solt den namen Gottes nicht vnnützlich füren*', and in the fourth commandment '*Du solt deinen vater und dein mutter Ehren*' (You shall honour your father and your mother) becomes '*Du solt deinen vater und mutter ehren*' (You shall honour your father and mother). In the tenth commandment '*oder was sein ist*' (or what is his) adds a word in the Old Prussian book '*oder alles was sein ist*' (or all that is his). There are a few differences in spelling, but no alterations to the text that can be called significant. In general, the text of the Ten Commandments follows the 1531 *Small Catechism* rather closely.

A linguistically significant departure is found in the Creed, in the phrase '*Nidergestigen zu der helle*' (descended into hell), which Luther always gives as '*Nidder gefaren*'. An obvious departure from Luther is found in the German Our Father in the Old Prussian book: '*Deyn wille geschee auff erden als himmel*.' Trautmann could find nothing corresponding to this inversion of heaven and earth in Luther's writings. He gives the impression that the editor must have decided arbitrarily to depart from Luther and follow the text of Luther's German Bible.

So too, no analogy in Luther's catechetical writings can be found for the addition of '*Unser herr Christus sprach zu seynen jüngern, Gehe*' (Our Lord Christ said to his disciples, go) before the words instituting Holy Baptism. Luther's *Small Catechism* made reference here to the last chapter of Matthew, '*Da unser Herre Christus spricht, Matthei am letzten: Gehe*' (For Our Lord Christ said in the last chapter of Matthew, go), and the last chapter of Mark, '*Da unser Herre Christus spricht, Marci am letzten: Wer da gleubet*' (For Our Lord Christ said in the last chapter of Mark, for whoever believes). The Short Preface gives no introduction at all, but in the body of the *Large Catechism*, Luther again makes reference to the Words of Christ from the last chapter of Matthew.⁷

⁷ It is noteworthy that the Latvian version of the 1586 Courlandian catechism seems to follow a similar pattern: '*Musse kunx Jesus Christus szatcy vs szouwems maetceklems. Eythe*'. This Latvian book, however, appeared 40 years later after the Old Prussian Catechism. Cf. [LUTHER, Martin.] *Enchiridion[.] Der kleine Catechismus: Oder Christliche zucht für die gemeinen Pfarherr vnd Prediger auch Hausueter etc. Durch D. Martin. Luther. Nun aber aus dem Deudschen ins vndeutsche gebracht / vnd von wort zu wort / wie es von D. M. Luthero gesetzet / gefasset worden*. Königsberg, 1586, S. B.

The most significant difference noted by Trautmann is found in the Cup Words of the Verba Testamenti. Luther's *Small Catechism* has: '*Desselben gleichen nam er auch den kelch nach dem abendmal, dancket und gab jn den und sprach*' (In the same way also he took the cup after the supper, gave thanks and gave it to them and said). Luther repeats this in the body of the *Large Catechism* with only a few spelling changes. The Short Preface to the *Large Catechism* shortens the text to: '*Desselben gleichen auch den kilch nach dem abendmal und sprach*' (In the same way also the cup after the supper and said). However, the text of the Old Prussian edition adds some words: '*Desselbigen gleychen nam er auch den Kelch, nach dem Abendmal, dancket vnd gab seynen jüngern vnd sprach*' (In the same way also he took the cup after the supper, gave thanks, and gave to his disciples and said). Nowhere does Luther use the phrase '*gab seynen jüngern*' with reference to the chalice. In fact, no source for this phrase can be found in Luther's catechetical writings. In every other aspect, this version of the Verba follows Luther, who reshaped the Verba according to the New Testament, preferring it to the elaborated form found in the Canon of the Mass. One must look to the Verba in the Latin Mass rather than to Luther for the expression 'gave to his disciples' with reference to the cup. Thus, it appears that there is a liturgical source here overlooked by Trautmann.

Trautmann's arguments require the assumption that the editor of the Old Prussian Catechism had before him Luther's 1531 *Small Catechism*, but he arbitrarily chose to alter it in some places, using a variety of sources, such as the 1522 *Betbüchlein*, the 1529 *Large Catechism*, the 1525 *Eyn Büchlein* (*Little Prayer Book*), and Luther's German Bible. It must be asked whether this is a reasonable hypothesis. It seems unlikely that a German pastor serving a rural Prussian-speaking congregation in the Duchy of Prussia would deem himself qualified to stand in judgment over Luther's text. His single task was to produce a German translation of the Old Prussian text, and not to compose a German document.⁸

The purpose of this article is to give a more reasonable explanation, and to suggest that the source of the German text in the Old Prussian Catechism is to be found elsewhere.

3. Catechisation in Prussia in Medieval and Reformation times

An examination of the programme of catechisation in the Prussian Church in the Medieval and Reformation periods provides source material for understanding the complex question of the sources of the German text used in the Old Prussian Catechism.

The call for catechisation did not first arise during the Reformation. The Teutonic Order recognised and acknowledged its responsibility to catechise both the German-speak-

⁸ [LUTHER, Martin.] Deutsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus.) 1529. Vorrhede. In *WA*, Bd. 30, Abt. 1, S. 129–132; [LUTHER, Martin.] Enchiridion. Der kleine Catechismus für die gemeine Pfarher und Prediger. 1531. In *Ibid.*, S. 353–392; TRAUTMANN, R. Die Quellen..., S. 220–222.

ing colonists and the native population. Everywhere it was the responsibility of bishops, priests and teachers to teach the people the Decalogue, the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, the Our Father, and the Angelic Salutation (Ave Maria). In 1427, a synod in Sambia stated that 'every Sunday the Our Father, the Ave Maria, and the Creed should be read to the people.'⁹ It was also required that Old Prussian speakers should hear these read in their own language. Some priests, however, found the mastery of the Old Prussian language beyond them. Others were not interested in even trying to learn it. At the Council of Basel in 1435, the Bishop of Sambia was directed to see to it that his priests learned the Old Prussian language.¹⁰ In the Diocese of Warmia, similar instructions were put into effect in 1449. The Warmian chapter stated explicitly that speakers of Old Prussian must hear sermons and receive instruction in Christian doctrine, and if no Old Prussian-speaking priests were available, able translators would have to be employed.¹¹ In 1480, the Diocese of Pomesania determined that special attention be given to the instruction of Old Prussians and Poles in the Ten Commandments, the Ave Maria and the Creed. In all three Prussian dioceses, the instructions to the visitors stated that they should determine whether or not the Old Prussian, German and Polish-speaking people were receiving sufficient instruction in their own languages in the prayers for Sundays and feast days. The ecclesiastical statutes of the Diocese of Warmia explicitly required that, where necessary, priests should employ translators.¹²

The Reformation made no radical changes to these requirements, but gave them serious attention. The first constitution of the Prussian Church, the *Artickel der Ceremonien vnd anderen Kirchen Ordnung* (Article of Ceremonies and other Ecclesiastical Regulations) of 1525, stated that young people were to be taught the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.¹³ Luther's catechetical writings are not mentioned by name, although by that time his 1520 *Eine kurze Form der zehn Gebote, eine kurze Form des Glaubens, eine kurze Form des Vaterunsers* (A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, a Short Form of the Creed, a Short Form of the Our Father), and the 1522 *Betbüchlein*, were both widely available. The *Betbüchlein* included the Ave Maria, and gave it a proper evangelical interpretation; however, the 1525 constitution of the Prussian Church does not mention it.

⁹ Statuta synodalia ecclesiae Sambiensis edita Regimontii c. a. 1427. In JACOBSON, Heinrich Friedrich. *Geschichte der Quellen des Kirchenrechts des Preussischen Staats, mit Urkunden und Regesten*. Theil 1: *Die Provinzen Preussen und Posen*. Bd. 1: *Das katholische Kirchenrecht*. Königsberg, 1837, Anhang, S. 174.

¹⁰ *Codex Diplomaticus Warmiensis oder Regesten und Urkunden zur Geschichte Ermlands* (Monumenta Historiae Warmiensis oder Quellensammlung zur Geschichte Ermlands, Abt. 1). Bd. IV: *Urkunden der Jahre 1424–35 und Nachträge*. Hrsg. von Viktor RÖHRICH, Franz LIEDTKE, Hans SCHMAUCH. Braunsberg, 1935, S. 598.

¹¹ Constitutiones synodales Francisci Episcopi Varmiensis. Heilsbergae d. XII. M. Maii a. 1449. In JACOBSON, H. F. Op. cit., Anhang, S. 223.

¹² Additiones statutorum synodaliū per Johannem IV. ecclesiae Pomezanienses episcopum c. 1480. In JACOBSON, H. F. Op. cit., Anhang, S. 168.

¹³ *Artickel der Ceremonien vnd anderer Kirchen Ordnung*. [Königsberg, 1526], „Von Predigen“.

A new and important change in practice brought about by the Reformation was that the words of the Our Father in German, which previously had to be taught from the pulpit, were now incorporated into the Mass itself. The 1525 Church Order stated that the Our Father, which previously was prayed in Latin, should be prayed from the altar in German, in the usual chant tones, so that the choir could answer. Although not yet a catechetical element, the 1525 Church Order stated that the priest should sing the consecration of the elements in the German tongue.¹⁴ Now learning these chief parts was not just a pedagogical exercise, for they were part of the liturgical service. This established a textual tradition, a pattern of words which would remain largely unchanged in the years to come, and would be firmly established by 1545 when the Old Prussian Catechism was published.

The structure and purpose of catechisation during the Reformation came into focus more clearly with the 1529 publication of Luther's *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* and their prefaces. These all spoke clearly on the question of the purpose of catechisation, and the method by which it was to be carried out.

Luther distinguished between those who could learn and retain in their minds only very simple teachings, and those who were able to learn and understand far more. The programme of instruction for those whom Luther called 'the common or simple people' was delineated in the Short Preface to the *Large Catechism*. All that should be expected of them, Luther wrote, was that they should learn the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Our Father, a goal not much different from pre-Reformation times. In the 1522 *Betbüchlein*, he had also included the Ave Maria,¹⁵ but that appeared in no later documents. When the people had learned the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Our Father, then something more should be taught: the Words of Christ concerning Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. These now appeared for the first time in the catechetical programme.¹⁶

For those who could learn more, a more developed programme was proposed. This programme was fleshed out in Luther's *Small Catechism*. It included not only the five main parts already noted, but a new sixth main part. The Office of the Keys and Confession was soon added, and from 1531 on it was placed between Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. An important new feature of the *Small Catechism*, beginning with its first placard edition in 1529, is the inclusion of short, concise explanations of every commandment, article, petition, etc.

Outside Ernestian Saxony, Luther's Catechisms and the instructions he gave in the prefaces only had advisory force. No German territorial church was obliged to follow his advice. However, what he had written was repeatedly republished, and was eagerly read in many places, including the Duchy of Prussia.

¹⁴ Ibid., „Von der Messe“, „Vorrede czum Vater vnser“.

¹⁵ See [LUTHER, Martin.] *Betbüchlein*. 1522. In *WA*, Bd. 10, Abt. 2. Weimar, 1907, S. 407–409.

¹⁶ [LUTHER, Martin.] *Deutsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus.)* 1529. *Vorrhede*. In *WA*, Bd. 30, Abt. 1, S. 131.

The Prussian Church was very concerned about the catechisation of the people, but an even more pressing concern was the need to combat the growing influence of Kaspar Schwenckfeld and his followers and other enthusiastic preachers. Bishop Paulus Speratus of Pomesania found that the problems with sectarians were particularly acute in his Pomesanian diocese. The 1525 Church Order was far too brief in its treatment of doctrine, and the 1525 Prussian territorial constitution 'Landesordnung des Herzogthums Preussen' (Territorial Regulations of the Duchy of Prussia) was not a theological document. It spoke of Church matters only in general terms. Dealing with Church life only briefly, it did not concern itself with doctrine. It was not until after the publication of the Confession presented at Augsburg in June 1530 that one could say with real assurance what was or was not Lutheran in faith, order and practice.

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Earlier in 1530, Bishop Speratus prepared the 'Constitutiones synodales evangelicae' (Evangelical Synodical Regulations), which defined the Prussian Church's doctrinal position in clear terms. The Church Order of 1525 needed to be updated, and for this reason the Constitutiones had added an appendix, entitled 'Articuli ceremoniarum, e germanico in latinum versi et nonnihil locupletati' (Articles of Ceremonies in German and Latin, Somewhat Enriched), which amplified and brought up to date the 1525 articles. In the section on the Sermon (De Sermone), Speratus stated that the Our Father, the Creed and the Decalogue should be taught with the brief explanations that had recently appeared in the Latin language in the 1529 Wittenberg edition of Luther's *Enchiridion piarum precationum* (Handbook of Pious Prayers).¹⁷ Speratus' document does not speak about the adoption of Luther's *Small Catechism* as such, either in part or as a whole. Speratus simply repeats the requirements of the 1525 Articles that the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Our Father should be taught. Later, he went further, to suggest that explanations of these articles as found in the 1529 Latin edition of Luther's *Small Catechism* should be included in this instruction.

The 'Constitutiones' of Speratus were never adopted. Indeed, the document was never even officially printed, because it was rendered unnecessary by the presentation and publication of the *Augsburg Confession*. The *Augustana* was subscribed to by the Lutheran princes and theologians, and defined Lutheran Christianity in their realms. Prussia was included among the regions that subscribed. However, there was no mention of Luther's Catechisms in the *Augsburg Confession*, and the plan envisioned by Bishop Speratus never came to fruition. Nothing was done to introduce the *Enchiridion*. Indeed, little was said about catechisation during the 1530s. The requirements continued as they had been set down in the 1525 Church Order. Catechisation was to be built around the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Our Father.

¹⁷ COSACK, C[arl] J[ohann]. *Paulus Speratus Leben und Lieder. Ein Beitrag zur Reformationsgeschichte, besonders zur Preußischen, wie zur Hymnologie*. Braunschweig, 1861, S. 115–116.

4. The reform of Catechisation in Prussia

A new concern for the reform of catechisation began in 1543 with the publication by Duke Albert of his *Fürstlicher durchleuchtigkeit zu Preussen bevelch, in welchem das volk zu gottesforcht, kirchengang, empfangng der heiligen sacramenten und anderm vermant wirt* (The Decree of the Illustrious Duke of Prussia in which he Admonished the People to Godly Fear, Churchgoing, Reception of the Holy Sacraments, and other Matters).

The decree was published on 1 February in the course of a visitation of the Prussian parishes in which Albert himself participated. He was appalled by the ignorance of the people in all matters pertaining to the Christian faith, Christian living, church attendance, and the benefit and use of the sacraments. He determined that the people had to be diligently catechised in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Our Father, and Words of Christ concerning Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. No specific mention is made of Luther's *Small Catechism* in his decree, but it is clear that Albert was influenced by the scope of the programme of instruction which Luther had set down. Here Baptism and the Lord's Supper were inculcated for the first time in a Prussian document among the main parts of Christian doctrine on an equal footing with the Decalogue, the Creed and the Our Father. In general, what the Duke envisioned in his 1543 decree was in agreement with the pattern of Luther's five chief parts as set down in the Short Preface to the *Large Catechism*.¹⁸

Duke Albert's decree required that priests should catechise their people. In order to implement the decree, Catechisms had to be compiled, printed and distributed. The text of the Catechism had to be appropriate to the simple mentality of those for whom it was intended. The text had to include the five chief parts. Nothing was said about what was to serve as primary source material for catechetical instruction.

In accordance with the decree, Catechisms for non-Germans were prepared. The first to appear was a Polish-language Catechism for the Polish-speaking people of what was later be known as Masuria, prepared by Jan Seklucjan in 1545. It was entitled *Katechismu text prosti dla prostego ludu* (The Simple Text of the Catechism for Simple Folk). The second Catechism to be printed was the first Old Prussian book, *Catechismus jn preußnischer sprach vnd dagegen das deüdsche*, published in 1545, with German and Old Prussian texts on facing pages. The editor of this volume is unknown, and it appears that he was not well versed in the Old Prussian language, for his text contained some serious errors. It is likely that he was a German-speaking priest who wrote to meet the needs of his Old Prussian-speaking followers. The book had to be revised. It was corrected and reprinted

¹⁸ *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Hrsg. von Emil SEHLING. Bd. 4: *Das Herzogthum Preussen. – Polen. – Die ehemals polnischen Landestheile des Königreichs Preussen. – Das Herzogthum Pommern*. Leipzig, 1911, S. 59.

later in 1545, under the title *Catechismus jn preußnischer sprach gecorrigiret vnd dagegen das deüdsche* (The Catechism in the Corrected Old Prussian Side by Side with the German). In 1546, a new Polish Catechism, *Catechismvs to iest Nauka Krzescianska od Apostołow dla prostich ludzi, etc.* (Catechism that is Christian Teaching from the Apostles for Simple Folk, etc), was prepared by Jan Sandecki-Malecki. He considered Seklucjan's earlier Polish Catechism to be inadequate in both its form and its content. In January 1547, the Lithuanian-language Catechism *Catechismusa prasty Szadej, makslas skaitima raschta yr giesmes krikscianistes, etc.* (The Simple Words of the Catechism, Instruction for Reading of Writing and Hymns for Christendom, etc), prepared by Martinus Mosvidius (Martynas Mažvydas), appeared, the first ever book published in the Lithuanian language. Finally, in June 1547, Seklucjan printed a second expanded edition of his Polish Catechism, entitled *Catechismus to jest nauka, etc.* (Catechism that is Teaching, etc).

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It appears there was no single source which stood behind all of these volumes. They had little in common, except that they all included the five chief parts, as required in the 1543 decree. Apart from that, the content of each book was quite unique. Seklucjan took very literally the requirements as printed in 1525, and followed the order set down there: the Our Father, the Creed, the Ten Commandments. In addition, he added some explanations from Luther and other sources.¹⁹ The Old Prussian editions of the Catechism were the simplest in form. They followed precisely the order given in the 1543 decree: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Our Father, the Words of Christ concerning Baptism, and the Words of Institution of the Sacrament of the Altar, and nothing more.²⁰ Malecki's text was also short. It followed the order given in 1543, but added a sixth part with the Words of Christ from Matthew 16 and John 20 establishing Absolution. Malecki was evidently acquainted with Luther's Short Preface, and followed it by stating after the first three parts that these were received by the Apostles to be given to the people, and that anyone to be saved must know them.²¹ Clearly, the richest and most complete edition was the Lithuanian Catechism by Mažvydas. He followed Seklucjan, and made use of his texts along with those of others, because he did not personally know German. Along with his native Lithuanian, he was well versed in Polish and Latin, and used these languages in preparing his edition. Unlike Seklucjan, he followed the order given in the 1543 decree. However, his fourth part on Baptism also included the words of Christ concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, and a section on Confession and Absolution, including the promises of Christ in Matthew 16 and John 20. The fifth part was a Table of Duties, such as Luther had included in the *Small Catechism*.²² A local German-language Catechism was not needed in the Duchy

¹⁹ *Druki mazurskie XVI w.* (Prace Instytutu Mazurskiego, 2). Z pierwodruku i rękopisu wydał, wstępem, komentarzen i charakterystyką językową opatrzył Stanisław ROSPOND. Olsztyn, 1948, s. 18–29.

²⁰ *Prūsų kalbos paminklai...*, p. 84–95, 100–111.

²¹ *Druki mazurskie...*, s. 33–43.

²² MAŽVYDAS, Martynas. *Katekizmas ir kiti raštai*. Red. Giedrius SUBAČIUS. Vilnius, 1993, p. 64–85.

of Prussia, because Luther's *Small Catechism* in German and other Catechisms were already widely available. Pastors could make use of it in fulfilling the duke's decree, which also called for the catechisation of the German-speaking population.

The authors of these Catechisms did not work from a common source. What they had in common was their claim that each of them had produced a simple Catechism for the common folk. Polemics between Malecki and Seklucjan developed, with Malecki chiding his fellow Pole, saying that he had failed to produce the 'simple Catechism' he claimed to have prepared, because he had cluttered up his work with explanations, and thus made a mess of the task.²³

5. Sources of the German text of the Old Prussian Catechism

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The question of the sources of the Old Prussian Catechism is difficult to solve. It is clear that no attempt was made to bind the authors to any particular source. In their attempts to fulfil the requirements of the 1543 ducal decree, they were free to use any material they found helpful. It has already been shown that it is not helpful to seek the primary source material for the German text of the Old Prussian Catechism in Luther's catechetical materials. Trautmann's attempt to do so failed, and any similar attempts to do so today would meet the same fate. The German text of the Old Prussian Catechism used German-language sources, which differed in their wording from Luther's texts.

By the 1540s, two of the chief parts of the Catechism were already very familiar to German-speaking people in the Duchy of Prussia. They were the Our Father and the Words of Institution. The people heard them repeated Sunday after Sunday in the Divine Service. Trautmann was unable to reach a conclusion concerning the textual sources of these elements in the Old Prussian Catechism, because he found no parallels with the wording of some of its phrases in Luther's catechetical writings. This was the result of his decision to limit his search to catechetical documents and Luther's German Bible. He disregarded the possibility that the sources might be found in the Church's liturgical texts. Concerning the Our Father, he noted only that the text of it was included in the Bible in a form which paralleled the wording of the Old Prussian Catechism, with 'on earth as in heaven' instead of the more usual 'as in heaven so also on earth'. More perplexing were the Words of Christ over the bread and wine. The Words of Institution are found in the New Testament no less than four times, but in no case is there a parallel with the form found in the Catechism, where 'gave it to his disciples' found in connection with the blessing of the bread is repeated in connection with the blessing of the cup.

²³ RIMŠA, Vaidotas. *Jano Maleckio ir Jano Sekluciano polemika dėl katekizmo kanoninio vertimo* (Bibliotheca archivi Lithuanici, 2). Vilnius, 2001, p. 174.

The wording of the Our Father in the Old Prussian Catechism is indeed unusual. It differs from the word order which is found in Luther's Catechisms, in the Greek New Testament, 'ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς' (as in heaven also upon the earth), and in the Our Father, as it was prayed in the Latin Mass from Jerome's Vulgate edition, '*fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra*' (Your will be done as in heaven so also on earth). Like the Old Prussian-German text, Luther's German Bible reverses the order, and gives '*dein Wille geschehe auf Erden wie im Himmel*' (Thy will be done on earth as in heaven), but it is highly unlikely that the editor of the Old Prussian book would have reversed the wording simply to agree with the German Bible. It appears rather that the editor chose this text because this was the way the Our Father was prayed in Holy Mass in Prussia.

Although the Our Father was not printed out in the liturgical directives given in the 1525 *Artickel*, it can be said for certain that it was to be sung in German by the priest at the altar, with the choir answering by singing the Doxology in German.

The paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, the so-called 'Königsberg Our Father', provides evidence that the phrase 'on earth as in heaven' was indeed part of the Lord's Prayer in the Duchy of Prussia in the 16th century. According to sources, Johannes Briesmann wrote this paraphrase some time between 9 February and 27 March 1524. Simon Grunau included the prayer in his *Cronika und beschreibung*, attesting that it was approved by Bishop von Polentz, who introduced it to the Königsberg congregations in Lent of 1524. Polentz decreed that it had to be used in place of the 'Prayer of Mary' (Mariengebete). The paraphrase of the Our Father included the petition '*Dein will geschehe auf erden wie in dem himel*.'

The 1545 Old Prussian Catechism

Vater vnser der du bist jm himmel. Geheyliget werde dein name. Zukomme dein Reich. Deyn wille geschee auff erden als jm himmel. Unser teglich brodt gib vns hewtte. Und verlass vns vnser schulde, als wir verlassen vnsern schuldigen. Und nicht einfüre vns jnn versuchunge. Sonder erlöse vns von dem vbel. Amen.

The 'Königsberg' Our Father

Vater unser... Der du bist in den himeln... Geheiligt werde dein name!.. Zukome uns dein reich... Dein will geschehe auff erden wie in dem himel... Unser teglich brodt gib uns heute... Vorgib uns unser schuld!.. Als wir unsern schuldigen vorgeben... Und führe uns nicht in vorschung... Sondern erlöse uns von dem ubel... Amen.²⁴

²⁴ Das Königsberger Vaterunser. In *Urkundenbuch zur Reformationgeschichte des Herzogthums Preußen*. Bd. 2: *Urkunden*. Theil 1: 1523 bis 1541 (Publicationen aus den K. Preußischen Staatsarchiven, Bd. 44). Hrsg. von Paul TSCHACKERT. Leipzig, 1890, S. 52–53; [GRUNAU, Simon.] *Simon Grunau's Preussische Chronik*. Herausgegeben von M[ax] PERLBACH, R[udolf] PHILIPPI, P[aul] WAGNER. Bd. II. Leipzig, 1889, S. 740–742. Caspar Huberinus' *Kleine Catechismus*, published in Königsberg in 1555, also includes the phrase '*Dein will geschehe, auff Erden wie im Himel*' (Thy will be done on earth as in heaven) in the Third Petition. However, this does not mean that the Lord's Prayer in Huberinus' catechism provides evidence

Some additional evidence about the use of the Third Petition in this form is also found in the 1537 edition of the *Kurtz Ordnung des Kirchendiensts*, etc. (Short Order of the Church Services, etc), the liturgical ordinance of the city of Riga and the Livonian Confederation. The text of the Lord's Prayer included a similar phrase: '*Dyn wille gesche vp erden alsz jm hemmel.*'

The 1537 edition of the *Kurtz Ordnung* for the city of Riga and Livonia
 Vader vnse de du byst jm hemmel, Gehylliget werde dyn name. To kame vns dyn ryck,
 Dyn wille gesche vp erden alsz jm hemmel Vnse dagelyke brod gyff vns hütten, Vnd
 vorygff vns vnse schülde, alsz wy vorgehen vnser schuldigeren, Vnde vöre vns nicht jn
 vorsökinge (*Dat Chor antwerdet*) Sunder erlös vns van dem öuel. Amen.²⁵

It should be noted that Prussia and the Livonian Confederation had always been closely connected. These ties became even closer when Johannes Briesmann was sent from Königsberg to Riga to carry out the orderly progress of the Reformation, and to establish a liturgical standard for Livonian worship. The order of the Mass in the 1537 *Kurtz Ordnung* was virtually identical to that in Prussia, and the text of the Our Father agreed in general with the form used in Prussia, with some minor adjustments to bring it into conformity with the German language used in Riga. This indicates that both the Teutonic Knights in Prussia and the Livonian Brothers might have used similar German forms of the Lord's Prayer.²⁶

The Third Petition of the Our Father in such a form continued to be in use among Old Prussians until the 1545 Old Prussian 'Simple Catechism' was superseded by Luther's *Enchiridion*, provided in the Old Prussian tongue by Pastor Abel Will of the Pobethen parish, and published in 1561. To what extent this text of the Lord's Prayer was used among Germans in the Duchy of Prussia is still a matter for further investigation, since the 1525, 1544, and 1558 Church Orders do not provide the full text of the Lord's Prayer. The 1568 *Kirchenordnung und Ceremonien* was the first Prussian

of such usage in Königsberg and Prussia, since the early editions of his catechism were in no way linked to Prussia. The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer in such a form was already included in the 1543 Augsburg edition. Cf. HUBERINUS, Caspar. *Der Catechismus. Mit vil schönen sprüchen / vñ Historien der hailigē schriftt gegründet / Allen frummen Haußvättern seer nutzlich / für jre Jugent zügebrauchen*. Augspurg, [1543], S. Gv–Hij; HUBERINUS, Caspar. *Der Kleine Catechismus[.] Mit vil schönen Sprüchen heiliger schriftt gegründet / für die Jugent zu gebrauchen*. Königsperg, 1555, S. liiij–lv.

²⁵ *Kurtz ordnung des Kirchendienstes sambt zweyen Vorreden / de erste an den Leser / die ander von Ceremonien / An den Erbarn Radt der löblichen Stadt Ryga jn Leyfflandt. Mit den Psalmen vñ Götlichen lobgesungen / die jn Christlicher versamlung zu Ryga ghesungen werden / auffz neue corrigert vnnd mit vleyß gemert*. Rostock, 1537, S. Gv.

²⁶ *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen...* Bd. 5: Livland. – Estland. – Kurland. – Mecklenburg. – Freie Reichsstadt Lübeck mit Landgebiet und Gemeinschaftsamt Bergedorf. – Das Herzogthum Lauenburg mit dem Lande Hadeln. – Hamburg mit Landgebiet. Leipzig, 1913, S. 9.

agenda to provide the full text of the Our Father. It corresponded in full with the Lord's Prayer in the 'Short Preface' of Luther's *Large Catechism*.²⁷

Slightly more perplexing is the repetition of the phrase '*gab seynen jünger*n' with reference to the Cup Words in the Sacrament of the Altar. There is no precedent for this usage in any German Lutheran Catechism, or in Luther's translation of the Eucharistic Words of Christ, as found in the *Deutsche Messe* of 1526 and his Catechisms. Lutheran Church Orders and Catechisms generally followed Luther's usage. There was one important exception, *Kirchen-Ordnung im Churfurstenthum der Marcken zu Brandenburg* (Church Order for the Electoral Duchy of the Margraviate of Brandenburg), the 1540 Mark-Brandenburg liturgy of Joachim II. In this liturgy the phrase '*gab seinen jünger*n' is found with reference to the Cup Words.

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The 1545 Old Prussian Catechism

Desselbigen gleychen nam er auch den Kelch, nach dem Abendmal, dancket vnd gab seynen jüngeren vnd sprach, Nemet hin, vnd trincket alle daraus, dieser kelch ist das newe Testament jnn meynem blut, das fur euch vergossen wirdt, zur vergebung der sunden. Solches thut, so oft ihrs trinckt, zu meinem gedechtnis.

The 1540 Church Order of Electoral Brandenburg

Desselben gleichen nam er auch den kelch nach dem abendmal, danket und benedeiet in und gab seinen jüngeren und sprach: Trinket alle daraus, das ist mein blut des neuen testamentes, das vor euch und vor vil vergossen wird zur vergebung der sunden, solchs thut, so oft irs trincket, zu meinem gedechtnis.²⁸

Joachim II was concerned to keep as much of the text and ceremony of the Medieval Mass as a pure understanding of the Gospel would allow. Modern scholars might describe his Mass as liturgically very conservative, and second only to the Mass of John III's 1576 *Red Book* in its inclusion of Medieval elements. In the Mark-Brandenburg translation of the consecration of the cup, the phrase '*gab seinen jünger*n' reproduces the Latin '*deditque discipulis suis*' (and gave it to his disciples), found in the Medieval Canon of the Mass both in the Bread Words and the Cup Words. The phrase '*vor vil*' (for many), which Luther had dropped, was also included in the recitation of the Verba. Of course, the Mark-Brandenburg Church Order does not reproduce the Roman Canon, but it does include these two elements.

It is clear that the Prussians did not follow Mark-Brandenburg. The Reformation began in Prussia long before the days of Joachim II in Mark-Brandenburg. The liturgical

²⁷ [LUTHER, Martin.] *Deutsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus.)* 1529. Vorrede. In *WA*, Bd. 30, Abt. 1, S. 131; *Kirchen Ordnung vnd Ceremonien. Wie es in vbung Gottes Worts / vnd reichung der Hochwirdigen Sacrament / in den Kirchen des Herzogthumbs Preussen soll gehalten werden.* Königsberg, 1568, S. 36.

²⁸ *Kirchen Ordnung im Churfurstenthum der Marcken zu Brandenburg / wie man sich beide mit der Leer vnd Ceremonien halten sol.* Berlin, 1540, S. K ff.

directives of the *Artickel der Ceremonien* were approved in 1525, a year before the appearance of the *Deutsche Messe*, Luther's first liturgical service which included the Verba in German. The Prussian liturgical directives instructed the priests to sing the Words of Consecration in German. The directives also specifically noted what parts of the Roman Canon were to be eliminated. It appears that the priests continued to use their Roman Missals, translating from Latin to German, and eliminating what was not in accordance with the 'Wittenberg Gospel'. The Latin text said '*deditque discipulis suis*' and they said '*gab seynen jüngern*'.²⁹ It appears that at least some Prussian Lutheran pastors were now used to singing '*gab seynen jüngern*' twice: once over the bread and once over the cup. It seems likely that they continued to do so, especially if they had adopted chants which had incorporated this wording. Speratus' *Constitutiones synodales evangelicae* in 1530 stated that some parts of the service were to be taken from the Latin Mass or Luther's German Mass. However, he did not dictate a particular form of the Words of Institution as mandatory.³⁰

The first definitive wording of the Verba in German was given in the 1544 Prussian Church Order *Ordenung vom eusserlichen Gotsdienst und artickel der Ceremonien ...* (Order for the Public Divine Service and Article of Ceremonies ...). It followed Luther's wording '*gab jhn den*'.³¹ This traditional Lutheran form of the Verba was included in all subsequent Prussian Church Orders.

The Old Prussian Catechism and the 1544 liturgy were products of the same 1543 ducal decree, but they were edited independently. There was only a short time between the public appearance of the new liturgy and the appearance of the Old Prussian Catechism. By the time that liturgy appeared, the Old Prussian Catechism was probably already at the press and ready to be printed. Little thought was given to any need to change these few words at the last minute. When the second edition appeared later that year in 1545, corrections were limited to the Old Prussian text, and the German text was left to stand as it was.

The Ten Commandments, the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, and the citation of the Words of Christ concerning Holy Baptism were not liturgical, but rather catechetical texts, and reflected the form of those texts used to instruct catechumens. The traditional German texts of these were of long standing. From long before the Reformation, priests had been required to teach their people the Ten Commandments and the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, and the wording of these had long since been established. The wording of the Ten Commandments, however, conforms more to that found in Luther's *Small Catechism*.

²⁹ THOMPSON, Bard. *Liturgies of the Western Church*. New York, 1972, p. 74.

³⁰ COSACK, C. J. Op. cit., S. 116.

³¹ *Ordenung vom eusserlichen Gotsdienst und artickel der Ceremonien wie es jnn den Kirchen des Hertzogthums zu Preussen gehalten wirt*. [Königsberg], 1544, S. c-cij.

So too, the *Symbolum Apostolicum* mostly follows Luther's Catechism. It was Luther who translated '*Sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*' as '*ein heylige Christliche kirche*' (the Holy Christian Church).³² The phrase '*Maria der jugkfrauen*' (Mary the Virgin) in place of '*der jugfrawen Maria*' as translated by Luther, corresponds to the Medieval Latin original text (*natus ex Maria Virgine*).³³ The '*natus ex Maria Virgine*', along with the unusual term '*Nidergestigen*', seems to have survived from pre-Reformation times.

The phrase '*Unser herr Christus sprach zu seinen jüngern*' in the Words of Christ instituting Holy Baptism is unique to the Old Prussian Catechism. No analogy can be found in catechetical writings by Luther, who always used the phrase '*Da unser Herre Christus spricht, Matthei am letzten*'.³⁴ It should be noted that Jan Malecki, in his 1546 Polish-language Catechism, also introduced the Words of Christ concerning Baptism with a similar phrase: '*Rzekł pan Jesus wczniom swym*' (The Lord Jesus said to his disciples).³⁵

Conclusions

It appears that there was no single source from which the Old Prussian-language Catechism was composed. The 1543 decree of Duke Albert, ordering the catechisation of his subjects, did not specify Luther's *Small Catechism* as the single source for catechesis in the Duchy of Prussia. Consequently, the editors of the 1544–1547 Lutheran Catechisms made their own decisions concerning the sources and the texts in their books.

It is beyond question that the Old Prussian Catechism is built on Luther's catechetical principles, as is articulated in his catechetical writings, and more specifically in the Short Preface to the *Large Catechism*, which served as the structural model for the Old Prussian book.

1. Reinhold Trautmann correctly established that the source of the Decalogue in the Old Prussian Catechism was Luther's 1531 *Small Catechism*. The wording of other parts of the Catechism definitely shows Luther's strong influence; however, at the same time, it indicates its resemblance to Medieval and Early Reformation Prussian catechetical and liturgical texts.

³² [LUTHER, Martin.] Enchiridion. Der kleine Catechismus für die gemeine Pfarrherr und Prediger. 1529. In *WA*, Bd. 30, Abt. 1, S. 297.

³³ *Ibid.*, S. 295.

³⁴ [LUTHER, Martin.] Enchiridion. Der kleine Catechismus für die gemeine Pfarher und Prediger. 1531. In *WA*, Bd. 30, Abt. 1., S. 380.

³⁵ *Druki mazurskie...*, s. 40.

2. The *Symbolum Apostolicum* also largely follows Luther's Catechism, but the phrase '*von Maria der jungkfrauen*' (of Mary, the Virgin), which corresponds to the original Medieval Latin text, and the unusual term '*Nidergestigen*', suggests that the source of the *Apostolicum* was a Prussian catechetical text.

3. The wording '*Deyn wille geschee auff erden als himmel*' (Thy will be done on earth as in heaven) of the Our Father cannot be found in Luther's catechetical writings; however, it corresponds to the text in the Medieval Mass '*Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra*.' The 'Königsberg Our Father' and the Lord's Prayer from the 1537 Riga liturgy indicate that the phrase 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven' was not uncommon in Prussia and Livonia, and suggests that its source was the Our Father, chanted from the altars in Prussia, as directed by the 1525 Prussian Church Order.

4. The words instituting Holy Baptism correspond to Luther's text, except the introductory phrase '*Unser herr Christus sprach zu seynen jüngern*' (Our Lord Christ said to his disciples), where Luther wrote '*Matthei am letzten*'. It is not entirely clear whether it was an arbitrary change introduced by the editor, or whether it was an introductory form commonly used in Prussia. Jan Malecki, in his 1546 Polish-language Catechism, also introduced the Words of Christ concerning Baptism with a similar phrase: '*Rzekł pan Jesus vcźniom swym*' (The Lord Christ said to his disciples).

5. The Words of Christ spoken over the cup in the Catechism agree with Luther's, except the phrase '*dancket vnd gab seynen jüngern*' (and gave it to his disciples). There is no evidence for this usage in Luther's translation of the Eucharistic Words of Christ, as found in the 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, and his Catechisms, or indeed in any German Lutheran Catechism. This wording comes from the Medieval Mass, which obliged the celebrant to speak the words '*deditque discipulis suis*' twice: at the consecration of the bread, and again over the cup. This suggests that the source was the Words of Institution chanted in the Mass in Prussia. A similar wording in the Mark-Brandenburg agenda of 1540 indicates that the origin of this change was liturgical rather than catechetical.

There is outstanding evidence of Luther's influence in the Old Prussian Catechism, and in many cases it corresponds with his 1531 *Enchiridion*. However, the Old Prussian book should be considered an independent document built on a variety of sources, including Medieval and early Reformation Prussian catechetical and liturgical texts. It can be suggested that the form of the Our Father and the Words of Christ over the bread and the cup may be the only surviving witnesses to the form and wording of these elements in the early decades of the Reformation in Prussia.

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PIRMOJO IR ANTROJO KATEKIZMŲ PRŪSŲ KALBA (1545) ŠALTINIAI

Darius Petkūnas

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Santrauka

Kokius šaltinius naudojo pirmojo ir antrojo katekizmų prūsų kalba sudarytojas šalia teksto prūsų kalba kitoje atvarto pusėje pateiktam vokiškajam katekizmui? XX a. pradžioje šiuo klausimu pasisakęs Reinholdas Trautmannas nustatė, kad pirmosios šio katekizmo dalies šaltinis yra 1531 m. Martino Lutherio Mažasis katekizmas. Tačiau svarstydamas apie likusių keturių dalių šaltinius, vokiečių slavistas susidūrė su sunkumais, mat vokiškajame tekste jis aptiko žodžių ir frazių, kurių M. Lutherio katekizmuose nebuvo. Nors kituose M. Lutherio raštuose jam pavyko rasti atitikmenų, prielaida, kad katekizmo prūsų kalba sudarytojas, ruošdamas vokiškąjį tekstą, savo paties sprendimu galėjo keisti M. Lutherio katekizmo tekstus frazėmis ar žodžiais iš kitų jo raštų, yra abejotina.

Panašu, kad vieno šaltinio, iš kurio buvo sudarytas katekizmas prūsų kalba, nebūta. 1543 m. hercogo Albrechto potvarkis, nurodęs katechizuoti jo valdinius, neįvardijo M. Lutherio Mažąjo katekizmo kaip privalomo tokios katechizacijos šaltinio. Tad 1544–1547 m. Prūsijos liuteroniškų katekizmų sudarytojai patys rinkosi, kokius šaltinius naudoti.

Neabejotina, kad katekizmas prūsų kalba buvo sudarytas sekant M. Lutherio katechizavimo principais, išdėstytais jo raštuose, ypač „Trumpoje pratarmėje“ Didžiajam katekizmui; katekizmui prūsų kalba tai tapo struktūriniu modeliu. Maža to, reikia pritarti R. Trautmannui, kad Dekalogo šaltinis katekizme prūsų kalba ištis buvo M. Lutherio 1531 m. Mažasis katekizmas (*Enchiridionas*). Vis dėlto formuluotės kitose katekizmo dalyse, nors ir rodo didelę M. Lutherio įtaką, paremtos kitais viduramžių ir ankstyvojo Reformacijos laikotarpio Prūsijos katechetiniais ir liturginiais dokumentais.

Potvarkiai katechizuoti liaudį Vokiečių ordino valdose Prūsijoje buvo skelbiami dar iki Reformacijos, todėl XVI a. pradžioje ten jau turėjo cirkuliuoti „nusistovėję“, „tradiciniai“ Dekalogo, Apaštalo tikėjimo išpažinimo ir *Tėve mūsų* tekstai. Nuo 1525 m. Viešpaties maldos ir Altoriaus Sakramento pašventinimo žodžiai tapo sudėtinė mišių vokiečių kalba dalimi, tad katekizmą prūsų kalba turėjo veikti ir liturginiai tekstai.

Straipsnyje aptariami tokie konkretūs šio poveikio pavyzdžiai:

1. Apaštalų tikėjimo išpažinimo tekste, nors jis daug kur paremtas M. Lutherio katekizmu, atpažįstamos Prūsijos katechetinio teksto įtakos. Jas rodo frazė „von Maria der jungk-frawen“, atitinkanti originalų viduramžių tekstą lotynų kalba, ir neįprastas terminas „Nidergestigen“.
2. *Tëve mūsų* dalyje frazės „Deyn wille geschee auff erden als himmel“ M. Lutherio katechetiniuose tekstuose nėra, bet ji atitinka viduramžių mišių tekstą „Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra“. „Karaliaučiaus *Tëve mūsų*“ ir Viešpaties malda iš Rygos 1537 m. liturgijos rodo, kad Prūsijoje ir Livonijoje ši frazė nebuvo nežinoma; jos šaltinis, regis, buvo *Tëve mūsų*, giedotas iš altorių Prūsijoje, kaip nurodė 1525 m. Prūsijos bažnytiniai nuostatai.
3. Žodžiai Šventojo krikšto dalyje atitinka M. Lutherio tekstą, išskyrus įvadinę frazę „Unser herr Christus sprach zu seynen jüngern“, kur M. Lutheris rašo: „Matthei am letzten“. Nėra iki galo aišku, ar pokytį atliko sudarytojas, ar tai buvo įvadinė forma, tuo metu paplitusi Prūsijoje. Janas Maleckis Katekizme lenkų kalba (1546) irgi pradeda Kristaus žodžius apie krikštą panašia fraze: „Rzekl pan Jesus wczniom swym“.
4. Kristaus žodžiai, ištarti paėmus taurę, atitinka M. Lutherio tekstą, išskyrus frazę „dancket vnd gab seynen jüngern“. Šios frazės nėra nei M. Lutherio *Deutsche Messe* (1526), nei jo katekizmuose ar apskritai jokiame vokiečių liuteronų katekizme. Frazė buvo kilusi iš viduramžių mišių, kurios reikalavo, kad celebrantas ištartų žodžius „deditque discipulis suis“ dukart: šventinant duoną ir šventinant taurę. Tai liudytų, kad šie Altoriaus Sakramento pašventinimo žodžiai buvo kilę iš Prūsijoje laikytų mišių. Panaši frazė Brandenburgo markgrafystės agendoje (1540) rodytų, kad pakeitimo kilmė yra labiau liturginė nei katechetinė.