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LUDWIG MARTIN RHESA –
A DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR
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AND THEOLOGIAN OF THE PRUSSIAN
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Annotation. The Reverend Doctor Ludwig Martin Rhesa (Lith. *Liudvikas Martynas Rėza*) was professor and vice-rector at the University of Königsberg in the early decades of the 19th century. This study examines his early years, his studies at the University of Königsberg, and his subsequent service to the church and university as an ordained pastor, translator, interpreter, and theologian. Fragments of his theological work are examined in an effort to better understand his theological thoughts and his attitudes toward the academic theology of his day, as well as his attitude towards the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Prussian Union. Rhesa's biography and writings revealed him to be more than a collector of Lithuanian folklore and popular cultural personality. A professor with a pastoral heart, Rhesa was a serious scholarly theologian whose writings are of continuing value.

Keywords: Rhesa, Rėza, Prussian Lutheran Church, University of Königsberg, Prussian Union, Agenda.

Little is widely known of this major literary and intellectual figure in Lithuanian history apart from the contributions he made to Lithuanian culture through his groundbreaking studies in linguistics and folklore. Himself a lover of poetry and author of lyrical works, some of which were later set to music, it was Rhesa who first brought to

public attention the inspiring writings of Kristijonas Donelaitis (Lat. *Christian Donalitiūs*). He published the first edition of Donelaitis' epic poem *Metai* (*The Seasons*), in an edition which included both the original Lithuanian text and, opposite it, his own translation of that text into the German tongue. It was this German translation which brought the work of Donelaitis to international attention. In addition he was an early collector and publisher of Prussian Lithuanian folk songs. His research kept alive the knowledge of a tradition which would otherwise have been largely forgotten. He was the head of the group which radically revised the Lithuanian translation of the Old and New Testament on the basis of the latest manuscript evidence. Their work was published in 1816 and a revised translation appeared in 1824. In these translations he was able to employ his considerable linguistic skills, which included knowledge of the Biblical languages.

While lovers of Lithuanian culture may know something of his linguistic and academic skills, it is seldom acknowledged that Rhesa's principle vocation was the Holy Ministry. He was an ordained pastor of the Lutheran Church in Prussia. Research into Rhesa's ecclesiastical confession and theological position has also been neglected. He lived in a period of great intellectual and spiritual ferment. Rhesa himself would be puzzled that later generations have paid so little attention to his work as a theologian and pastor. He said of himself that he was of Lithuanian birth¹. This would make him the only native Lithua-

¹ Although in his 1810 biography Rhesa states that he was of Lithuanian birth (*e gente lithuana*) (Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum ad Buxtorfii et Wolfii diatribas de abbreviaturis hebraicis Sylloge I. Qua lectiones cursorias a viro plurimum reuerendo, M. Ludouico Rhesa, Theol. Prof. extra ord. designato et V. D. M. in arce Fridericiana, publice habendas indicit D. Sam. Theoph. Wald, Collegii Fac. Theol. h. s. Decan., Regiomonti, 1810, p. 11), not all present day scholars are agreed concerning his origins. Further writings concerning Rhesa's nationality: Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvikas Rėza*, Vilnius: Vaga, 1969, p. 15–16; Silva Pocytė, „Martynas Liudvikas Rėza Nepriklausomos Lietuvos lietuviškoje spaudoje 1918-1940 metais“, in: *Martynas Liudvikas Rėza: epochų atspindžiai*, sud. Silva Pocytė, Nijolė Strakauskaitė. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos Universiteto leidykla, 2007, p. 54–65; Nijolė Strakauskaitė, „Martynas Liudvikas Rėza tautinio ir lokalinio identiteto fone“, in: *Martynas Liudvikas Rėza:**

nian to reach the highest echelons on leadership in the university and the consistory of the Prussian Church. He may be considered one of the top three scholars to have achieved a leading position in the Faculty of Theology in the University of Königsberg. He stands together with Stanislovas Rapolionis (Lat. *Stanislaus Rapagellanus*) and Abraomas Kulvietis (Lat. *Abrahamus Culvensis*), who were first among the theologians of the Prussian Church, equal in stature to Johannes Briesmann, Paulus Speratus, and Johannes Gramann (Poliander), all three of whom had come to Königsberg from Wittenberg.

Before the Soviet occupation major attention was given to Martynas Mažvydas (Lat. *Martinus Mosvidius*), Donelaitis, and other major literary figures, and to a somewhat lesser extent to other important Prussian Lithuanian writers. During the Soviet Era attention was given only to those men who could be considered significant literary figures in the history of Lithuanian culture. The fact that these were men of the church was an embarrassment of which the Soviets were loath to speak. In 1969 there appeared a monograph on Rhesa entitled *Liudvikas Rėza* by Albinas Jovaišas. Had Jovaišas gone into any detail about Rhesa's work as a theologian and churchman, his monograph would never have been published. He decided to mention Rhesa's ecclesiastical connections only in passing and stated that, although Rhesa supported the struggle of the bourgeois against the feudal lords, he did not boldly support the emancipation of the proletariat and did not involve himself in the ongoing struggle of the people against the ruling class². After independence came, Jovaišas wrote a second work in which he had more to say about Rhesa's churchmanship, but he could not go deeply into the matter because of his own lack of expertise in theological matters³. Several articles and translations of

epochų atspindžiai, sud. Silva Pocytė, Nijolė Strakauskaitė. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos Universiteto leidykla, 2007, p. 79.

² Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvika Rėza*, p. 67.

³ Albinas Jovaišas, „Napoleono karų liudytojas, akylas gyvenimo stebėtojas, patrauklus pasakotojas“, in: *Liudvikas Rėza, Žinios ir pastabos apie 1813 ir 1814 metų karo žygius iš vieno Prūsijos armijos kapeliono dienoraščio*, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2000, p. 9–52.

Rhesa's works have since been published by Liucija Citavičiūtė. Through her careful study and analysis of the materials available in archives and libraries she awakened greater interest in Rhesa.

The aim of this present study is to give more careful attention to the theological work that Rhesa produced on the basis of his theological and linguistic studies. Important too were his contributions to the critical study of the history of the Christian Church in Lithuania and Prussia. Attention will also be given to his theological stance as that is revealed in his works. The reader may look to the works of Jovaišas and Citavičiūtė for the details of Rhesa's biography. In this present article only biographical facts related to the aim of the study will be given attention.

UNIVERSITY STUDIES AND ORDINATION TO THE HOLY MINISTRY

Ludwig Martin Rhesa was born in the village of Karwaiten (Lith. *Karvaičiai*) in Kurische Nehrung (Lith. *Kuršių nerija*) on January 9, 1776. Karvaičiai, which has long since disappeared under the shifting sands of the Curonian Spit, was the only village in that region to have its own church. Little is known of Rhesa's family or its connection with the local church. His father was an innkeeper and member of the coast guard. As such it was his responsibility to provide help for ships experiencing misfortune. He also had charge of those who collected amber which could always be found in the sand after Baltic storms. Rhesa wrote that he knew little or nothing about his mother, because she had died when he was two years old⁴. His father remarried, but he died of tuberculosis when Ludwig was only eight years old. Ludwig was then sent to live with Böhm, a relative and postman in Rossitten (Lith. *Rasytė*). Rhesa was a good student and the local schoolmaster saw in him great possibilities for intellectual development. Böhm and

⁴ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum*, p. 11.

the teacher put him into the hands of Pastor Christian David Wittich (Lith. *Kristijonas Dovydas Vitichas*) in Kaukehmen (Lith. *Kaukėnai*). Wittich, who was also a close relative by marriage, was by that time the precentor of the local church and later he would be its pastor⁵.

Like other Prussian Lithuanian clergy of that age Wittich was a Pietist of the Halle school. His composition “Jus Brolei ir Seseles, duokit Diewui Szirdeles” (“Dear brothers and sisters give your hearts to God”)⁶ appeared in many editions of the leading Prussian Lithuanian Pietist song books *Wisokios naujos Giesmes arba Ewangeliszki Psalmi* (*Various New Hymns or Evangelical Songs*). Wittich undertook to tutor his young charge in the Latin language. After his confirmation young Rhesa expressed a desire to study and Wittich enrolled him in the Löbenicht Latin school in Königsberg, a school which prepared its pupils for admission to the university. In the Latin school Rhesa added to his Latin the study of Greek, history and philosophy and became acquainted with the Biblical languages.

On March 25, 1795 Rhesa enrolled as student in the faculty of theology at University of Königsberg. His special interests were history, philosophy, and near eastern languages (oriental studies)⁷.

From the time of its founding in the middle of the 16th century, the University of Königsberg had been identified with a strong Orthodox Lutheran theology. However the Reformed king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm I, had forced the introduction of Pietism into the university; paving the way for the introduction of Rationalism. This came as a result of the tolerant religious and philosophical attitudes of King Friedrich II, who was of a very different spirit from his father. He was a deist in his religious views and regarded Jesus as a member

⁵ F. M. Schubert, „Aus dem Jahresberichte der Königl. Deutschen Gesellschaft zu Königsberg für d. J. 1854“, in: *Neue Preussische Provinzial-Blätter*, t. 7, Königsberg, 1855, p. 247.

⁶ *Wisokios naujos Giesmes arba Ewangeliszki psalmi*, Szilokarcziama: Otto Sekunna & Sohn, 1920, p. 263.

⁷ Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvikas Rėza*, p. 15.

of the Jewish sect of the Essenes, whose moral philosophy had been influenced by the Greek philosopher Zeno. In his view, the authentic, simple views of Jesus had been grossly distorted by the Ecumenical Councils of the fourth century which had transformed primitive Christianity into an elaborate doctrinal system⁸. He opened the door for the introduction of French philosophy and various streams of religious and philosophical liberalism into Prussia.

Immanuel Kant, professor of Philosophy at Königsberg and preeminent among the new thinkers, was himself the descendent of Pietists but he made Königsberg the preeminent rationalist university in German speaking lands. The introduction of rationalism into Prussia brought in its wake a generation of rationalistic theologians including the Neologists Ernesti Michaelis Semler, Johann Joachim Spalding, Wilhelm Abraham Teller, Johann Gottlieb Töllner, August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack, Johann Gottfried Herder, and others.

The spirit of Rationalism required a new interpretation of Christianity and its significance. The existence of God, the positive value of membership in the church and participation in religious activities were not to be denied, for they could be understood to contribute to man's moral betterment. However, Christianity itself was to be viewed as the highest form of natural religion, conveying truths which could not be adequately expressed in dogmatic assertions. Theology needed to be reevaluated; what ran counter to human reason must be rejected and moral improvement must be the chief concern.

Such was the intellectual and spiritual *milieu* into which Rhesa was introduced when he matriculated in the university. The spirit of tolerance which the Pietists had come to prize prevailed. Rhesa attended Kant's lectures and was much impressed, but he himself was reluctant to move beyond Pietism to embrace wholly the Rationalist spirit. The Bible would continue to serve as source and norm in his

⁸ *Friedrich der Große und die Philosophie: Texte u. Dokumente, mit e. einl. Essay hrsg. von Bernhard Taureck*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986, p. 75.

theology and spirituality. Other professors and many church leaders were far more anxious to promote the new learning without hesitation.

After the death of Friedrich II in 1786 the religious climate in Prussia changed. His successor Friedrich Wilhelm II held views which were diametrically opposed to those of his predecessor. In 1788 he issued his decree: "Edict, die Religions-Verfassung in den Preussischen Staaten betreffend" ("Edict Addressing the Religious Condition in the Prussian States"). The decree, which was prepared by Johann Christoph Wöllner, opposed the liberal interpretation of Christian doctrines and stated that administrative measures would be taken against Prussian university professors and church leaders who promoted such views⁹. A second decree, issued that same year, called for the censorship of all publications¹⁰. No longer would Neology be tolerated in Prussia. From that time on professors and ecclesiastics who held unorthodox views would need to keep them private.

Immanuel Kant regarded the new regulations with distain. In 1793 he went ahead with the publication of his third critique of reason *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*). Kant drew attention to four supposed services toward God which must be rightly understood, lest they become ends in themselves. Thus, rightly understood, prayer expresses the desires of the heart and mind that one become a person whose actions are pleasing to God. The true value of it is that it makes man aware that there is a God and that he is to be served in a manner pleasing to him. Attending church, the second service, must be seen to be an act of public celebration of the service of God which takes the individual outside himself to consider his obligations to the larger community. So too Baptism should be a ceremonial celebration by which the individual is accepted into the community and is placed

⁹ Walther Hubatsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche Ostpreussens*, t. 3, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht, 1968, p. 254–259.

¹⁰ Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: a biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 339.

under obligation to live the moral life. Fourth, Holy Communion must be understood to be both an act which remembers the Founder of the Community (the Church) and celebrates the equality of its members. Anything other than this would be counterproductive and would foster clericalism¹¹.

Kant soon found that he had made an error in calculation. The government's position was clear and straight forward. As early as 1792 he had been warned and now a royal communication addressed him directly: "If you continue to resist, you can certainly expect to experience unpleasant consequences."¹² The handwriting was on the wall. Kant no longer spoke or wrote about his liberal religious ideas, and in 1796 he ceased to lecture in the university.

More influential than Kant in Rhesa's intellectual development was the influence of Johann Gottfried Hasse who lectured on the languages of the Near East, most especially Syriac, Arabic, Samaritan, and Ethiopic¹³. Although Hasse was suspected of holding rather fanciful new theological notions of the rationalistic sort, he was widely acclaimed as an exemplary teacher. He was full professor of theology in the university beginning in 1788, and in 1790 he was made rector of the cathedral school and member of the consistory. The 1788 decree forced Hasse to make a choice. He was accused of publicizing Neological opinions, and he had to decide whether he would maintain those views and as a consequence lose his position, or adjust his views in order to retain his professorial chair. He chose to adjust his opinions, much to the chagrin of his university colleagues who accused him of violating his conscience¹⁴.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundary of Pure Reason*, Edinburgh: T. Clark, 1838, p. 265–275.

¹² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On religion: speeches to its cultured despisers*, transl. and ed. by Richard Crouter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. XV.

¹³ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Religion and rational theology*, transl. and ed. by Allen Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001, p. XVIII.

Also influential in Rhesa's development was Christian Jacob Kraus, a celebrated student of Kant, who lectured on practical philosophy and introduced to the German audience the economic theories of Adam Smith.

Six other professors of the faculty were also renowned educators. Karl Ehregott Mangelsdorff was professor of rhetoric and history and later of poetry. Samuel Gottlieb Wald served as professor of theology and later of Near Eastern languages and theology. Rhesa found Wald to be a lucid interpreter and exegete. Gotthilf Christian Reccard was a professor of immense theological erudition in doctrinal theology. His was also widely read in other fields. Johann Ernst Schulz was trained in moral theology and based his views upon Kant's philosophy. The professor of church history and church law was Johann Hartmann Christoph Gräf who wrote concerning the use of the catechism authorized for use in Prussia. Also influential as professor of poetry, pedagogy, history, and practical philosophy was Karl Ludwig Pörschke. These were all students of Immanuel Kant, men of widely ranging interests, who served as teachers and guides for Rhesa during his student years¹⁵. The most potent influences on Rhesa came from Kant, Hasse, and Kraus, as he noted in the dedicatory poems which stand in his collection of German lyric poetry, published in his *Prutena, oder Preussische Volkslieder* (*Prutena, or Prussian Folk Songs*)¹⁶.

After Rhesa graduated from Königsberg University in 1799 he served for nine months as a tutor. Then he received a call to serve as military chaplain (*Feldprediger*) in the Königsberg Garrison Church. He accepted the call and was ordained to the holy ministry in the church on August 17, 1800. Aware of the need to provide pastoral services for Lithuanian soldiers as well as German speaking soldiers in

¹⁵ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum*, p. 12-13.

¹⁶ Ludwig Rhesa, *Prutena, oder Preussische Volkslieder und andere vaterländische Dichtungen*, Königsberg: Gedr. bei H. Degen, 1809, p. 108, 118, 150.

the garrison, he added Lithuanian services and sermons to his duties in 1807. In 1811 he was made chaplain to the Prussian brigade¹⁷.

During this period he diligently continued his studies, remembering the wise counsel of his teacher Hasse, giving special attention to the moral teachings of Kant and the study of Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldean, and Arabic. He completed his dissertation and publicly defended it on April 17, 1807 and was awarded the title Doctor of Philosophy. He was aided by August Wilhelm Keber. The readers were Johann Theophil Bujack and Edward Leopold Schultz. His dissertation was entitled: *De librorum sacrorum interpretatione morali a Kantio commendato* (The Moral Interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures recommended by Kant)¹⁸.

Rhesa was then invited to lecture as a private docent (Germ. *Privatdozent*) in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, with special concentration on the Psalms and the Book of Isaiah. He lectured secondarily also in church history and New Testament exegesis¹⁹.

On the basis of his linguistic studies Rhesa became increasingly critical of the existing translations of the Sacred Scriptures in the Lithuanian language which had been produced in 1735 and 1755. These translations, prepared under the supervision of Johann Jacob Quandt, were little more than translations of Luther's German Bible which made no use of the many advances in the knowledge of the biblical tongues or the manuscripts newly available. In addition Rhesa considered these translations stylistically inadequate and linguistically inferior. To prepare a new edition would be a mammoth undertaking requiring the support of a Bible Society such as did not exist among the Lithuanians. He met Wilhelm von Humboldt, head of the Department of Cults

¹⁷ F. W. Schubert, *op. cit.*, p. 250–251.

¹⁸ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De librorum sacrorum interpretatione morali a Kantio commendato. Dissertatio philosophica quam die XVII aprilis a. MDCCCVII in Auditorio Maximo publice defendet Ludovicus Rhesa assumto socio Augusto Wilhelmo Keber contra opposcentes juvenes humanissimos Johannem Theophilum Bujack, Eduardum Leopoldum Schultz*, Regiomonti: Hartung, 1807.

¹⁹ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum*, p. 14–15.

and Education at the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, who visited in Königsberg in 1809. Humboldt pledged his strong support of the project. Rhesa now began work on the establishment of a Lithuanian Bible Society. It received its charter in 1810. Among its members were Ludwig Ernst Borowski, superintendent and later bishop of the church in East Prussia, Samuel Gottlieb Wald, professor and member of the consistory, Archdeacon August Werner, and Pastor Carl Friedrich Cunnow. As members of the editorial board he chose Christian Gottfried Zippel (Lith. *Kristijonas Gotfrydas Cipelis*), pastor at Niebudszen (Lith. *Nybudžiai*), Johann Gottfried Jordan (Lith. *Jonas Gotfrydas Jordanas*), pastor of Walterkehmen (Lith. *Valtarkiemis*) and Gerwischkehmen (Lith. *Gerviškėnai*) and Pastor Heinrich Hübsch (Lith. *Henrikas Hiubšas*). Jordan had been a close friend of Pastor Donelaitis and had in his possession Donelaitis' manuscripts. Added to the commission in 1811 was Samuel Theodor Zippel (Lith. *Samuelis Teodoras Cipelis*), a military chaplain in Königsberg and son of Christian Gottfried. Several other Lithuanian pastors served as close advisors. The work was interrupted by the fact that, as chaplain, Rhesa needed to accompany the Prussian brigade in Napoleon's march on Moscow²⁰.

Plans were revealed in 1809 to close down the Lithuanian Language Seminar in Königsberg. The seminar had provided special training for candidates preparing for service in the Prussian Lutheran Church as well as for those who would be serving in governmental positions among the Lithuanians. Rhesa insisted that this seminar was critical and presented a plan for its reorganization under his direction. On January 6, 1810 the king appointed him to be director and teacher in the reconstituted seminar²¹.

²⁰ Martynas Liudvikas Rėza, „Lietuviškos Biblijos istorija“, in: *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra*, 23 knyga, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2007, p. 265–269.

²¹ Martynas Liudvikas Rėza, *Lietuvių kalbos seminaro istorija*, parengė, vertė, įvadą bei komentarus parašė Liucija Citavičiūtė, (ser. *Ištakos*), Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2003, p. 75–95. Plačiau apie tai žr.: Liucija Citavičiūtė, *Karaliaučiaus universiteto lietuvių kalbos seminaras: istorija ir reikšmė lietuvių kultūrai*, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2004.

In the same year Rhesa began publishing short works concerning the beginnings of Christianity among Lithuanians. The first study, entitled: *De primis vestigiis religionis christianae inter Lituanos propagatae* (*The First Beginnings of the Propagation of the Christian Religion among the Lithuanians*) appeared in 1810. Rhesa would later state that he undertook this work because so much of the history of the beginnings of Christianity in Lithuania was shrouded in darkness. He noted the importance of the writings of Maciej Strykowski (Lith. *Motiejus Strijkovskis*) and Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz (Lith. *Albertas Vijūkas-Kojalavičius*). However, it was not until 1813, while visiting the library in the University of Breslau (Pol. *Wrocław*) that, for the first time, he could take into his hands a copy of the work of Kojalowicz²². In his own eight page article he dealt briefly with the state of Lithuanian paganism before the introduction of Christianity and efforts to introduce the Christian faith, including the fierce opposition that arose against it²³.

In 1810 the first of his studies in the languages of the Old Testament was published under the title *Supplementorum ad Buxtorfii et Wolfii diatribas de abbreviaturis hebraicis Sylloge I.* (*Supplements to the Discourses of Buxtorf and Wolf on Hebrew Abbreviations, Summary I.*) This work was to serve as a supplement to the work on Hebrew abbreviations which had been published by Johann Buxtorf (Lat. *Buxtorfius*) in Basel in 1613 and 1640. Buxtorf had provided his readers with explanation of the abbreviations employed in the works of Talmudic scholars. Rhesa made use also of the sections on the same subject in volumes two and four of the work of Johann Christoph Wolf (Lat. *Wolfius*) published in Halle in 1748. In addition he sited the sources he used in making decisions about the meaning of these

²² Martynas Liudvikas Rėza, „Lietuviškos Biblijos istorija“, p. 200.

²³ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis vestigiis religionis christianae inter Lituanos propagatae. Sectio prior in Dierum Pentecostalium piam memoriam scripta et Academiae Regiomontanae Cuiibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu exhibita, Regiomonti: Typ. Acad. Hart., 1810.*

abbreviations. His sources include not only the works of Buxtorf and Wolf, but also the *Masora magna* (*Large Masoretic Text*) and the works of several scholars, including Valentin Schindler, Christoph Gottlieb Murr, and others²⁴. The purpose of his publication was to facilitate his teaching and the work of preparing a corrected translation of the Old Testament. Although Hebrew scribes would never under any circumstances abbreviate the text of the sacred writings or allow a single word to be altered, the Talmudic scholars made ample use of such abbreviations in their commentaries of the text. The work also includes a short autobiography of Rhesa together with a note dated April 10, 1810 by Dr. Samuel Theophil Wald, the dean of the faculty, stating that Dr. Rhesa had now been given the title Doctor of Sacred Scriptures together with the privilege of teaching as a member of the faculty extraordinary. He stated that his inaugural lectures would be given on April 14, 15, 16, and 17 and included among them would be lectures on his dissertation and his *Prutena*.

Two dissertations by Rhesa on the subject of Biblical hermeneutics appeared in 1811. The first was entitled: *De Parallelismo sententiarum poetico in libris Novi Foederis obvio* (*The Poetical Parallelism of Maxims Employed in the Books of the New Testament*). It included his preliminary observations on the unique character of Hebrew and delineated the four types of parallelisms in Hebrew poetry as they are found in the Scriptures. According to the title page, this dissertation was given in a public lecture at which the opponents were Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Barz, a theological candidate at Coburg in Pomerania, and Edward Wilhelm Anderson, a Prussian Lithuanian theological candidate. Presiding was Johann Christoph Wedeke, doctor of theology and member of the consistory. The dissertation was given on April 19, 1811. Note is taken of the parallelism of synonyms in which two or more members describe the same thing, antithetical parallelism in which one member contradicts the other, parallelism of degrees

²⁴ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Supplementorum*, p. 1–10.

where each succeeding member builds upon what has gone before, and syntactical parallelism in which individual members deal with aspects of a common theme such as in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3 ff.) in 1 Corinthians 13²⁵.

The second dissertation, entitled *De Parallelismi poetici usu in libris N. T. interpretandis* (*The Interpretation of the Use of the Poetical Parallelisms in the Books of the New Testament*), describes the usage of the four types of parallelism in the New Testament and cites examples of their usage. Rhesa presented this lecture on April 26, 1811. Respondent was student Johann Carol Tomascig of Rastenburg and opponents were theological candidates Mauritz Julius Eduard Kartscher of Strehlen in Silesia and Johann Simon Weiss of Rastenburg. According to the title page of his dissertation, Martin Ludwig Rhesa had now taken the name Ludwig Gediminas Rhesa. Gediminas had been a famous Lithuanian Duke and Rhesa was now emphasizing his Lithuanian ancestry. Apparently it bothered him little that Gediminas was and ever remained a pagan outside the church²⁶.

²⁵ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De Parallelismo sententiarum poetico in libris Novi Foederis obvio. Sectio prior. Dissertatio Hermeneutica quam Auctoritate S. V. Ordinis Theologici pro summis quos dicunt in Theologia honoribus, Praeside Viro summe reverendo, doctissimo Ioh. Christophoro Wedeke, Theol. Doct. et Prof. Ord. Reg. a Consiliis Consist. Concionat. aulico supremo etc. d. 19. April. MDCCCXI. publice defendet Ludovicus Gedeminus Rhesa, Doct. Philos. et Lib. Art. Mag. Prof. Theol. P. E. O. desig. Verbi diu. Minist. in Arce Fridericiana et Legionis Torment. Contra Opponentes, Iuvenes Humanissimos Ioannem Fridericum Wilhelmum Barz, Colberg Pomeran. Th. C. Eduardum Wilhelmum Anderson, Lituan. Bor. Th. C., Regiomonti: Typis Hartungianis, 1811.*

²⁶ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De Parallelismi poetici usu in libris N. T. interpretandis. Sectio posterior. Dissertatio Hermeneutica quam Auctoritate S. R. Theologorum Ordinis pro loco Prof. Theol. in Acad. Albertina rite capessendo d. 26. Aprilis. MDCCCXI. publici defendet Ludovicus Gedeminus Rhesa, Theol. et Philos. Doct. Prof. Th. P. E. O. desig. Past. in arce Fridericiana et Legionis Torment. Assumpto ad respondendum socio, Iuvene ornatissimo, Ioanne Carolo Tomascig, Rastenburg Boruss. Th. C. Opponentium partes susceperunt Iuvenes humanissimi, Mauritius Iulius Eduardus Kartscher, Srtehlen Siles. Th. C. et Ionannes Simon Weiss, Rastenb. Boruss. Th. C., Regiomonti: Typis Hartungianis, 1811.*

RHESA'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS AS REVEALED
IN HIS WRITINGS 1812-1815

Rhesa's duties as brigade chaplain interrupted his academic career between 1812 and 1815. In 1812 the Prussian army was attached to the military forces of Marshal Jacques McDonald and was put under the command of General Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg. The army began its march toward St. Petersburg as a part of Napoleon's Russian assault. Yorck's army was never able to cross the Daugava River and after the ignominious failure of Napoleon to conquer Russia and the retreat of his forces from Moscow, General Yorck in a dramatic move switched his allegiance and the Prussian army now stood against Napoleon. In March 1813 Prussia declared war on Napoleon and Rhesa accompanied the brigade on its march to France in pursuit of the French troops. He later published anonymously the diary of his experiences as a military chaplain. In its pages he never names himself, nor does he make any attempt to glorify his role as a chaplain, and yet it is only in this short work that some insight is given into his personal character, his view of the contemporary scene, and the theological stance of this young 37 year old pastor, academic, and theologian. He left no other personal memoirs.

On the battle field and in the trenches he did not espouse the academic views of a university professor. He served as a pastor preaching to men who within a few days or even hours might lose their lives on the field of battle. This was no place for academic theology. In the trenches God and the Devil met in open conflict. Out in the fields or in any available shelter Rhesa would set up his field altar, celebrate the liturgy, absolve the penitents, commune the faithful, and proclaim the saving work of Christ. He used the liturgy which had been produced for the use of chaplains in the Prussian army which was found in the 1789 *Preussische Kirchen-Agenda, etc.* (*Prussian Church*

Agenda, etc.) in the section “Für die Militair-Gemeinen” („For the Military Congregations”)²⁷.

He gladly took every opportunity to listen to the sermons of other preachers, some of them well known, and in his diary he commented on their styles of preaching and the content of their sermons. He gave particular attention to their outward mannerisms in the pulpit and in their daily lives, belying the Pietist temperament he had learned in the household of Pastor Wittich. He never lost it.

In his comments he wrote of Philipp Jakob Spener and August Herman Francke that they were great men whose examples continued to inspire him. He thought them to be equal to Luther, Melancthon, and the other reformers in the work of rebuilding and renewing the church. Both Spener and Francke had preached a practical Christianity that showed itself in outward actions which were “unmistakably” Christian. To their thinking the Word was not enough and the Sacraments were insufficient; they must be supplemented by a strong, definitive Christian example. He offered the example of a visit to the Bohemian Brethren congregation in Berlin. The pastor acted in a meek and yet fatherly manner. He spoke humbly, with a shining face, and explained the practical application of Christian teachings²⁸. Rhesa wrote that it was as though he were visiting a congregation in the earliest days of the apostles. He was deeply impressed that the pastor had turned a part of his own home into a prayer house in which the people could gather, in a manner similar to that found in Prussian Lithuania where the people gathered during the week to hear the Word and pray together. He went on to say that until the pastors in his homeland ceased to be mere preachers and dispensers of the sacraments and became true men of God as evidenced by their personal piety, the Kingdom of God would not draw near. As an aside

²⁷ *Preußische Kirchen-Agenda, die liturgischen Formulare der lutherischen Gemeinden in Preußen enthaltend*, Königsberg: Hartungschens Hofbuchdruckerey, 1789, p. 113–130.

²⁸ Liudvikas Rėza, *Žinios ir pastabos*, p. 75.

he noted that although John Chrysostom had been a great orator the practical exercise of Christianity in his day had dwindled²⁹.

About prayers printed on the pages of the book he was not much interested. He would, of course, use those prayers that were absolutely obligatory but much preferred that all prayer, even that of the pastor, should come from the heart. Concerning the service at Jastrow in Pomerania he stated that the sermon was inspiring in its encouragement of the soldiers to bravery in battle, but the prayers which followed were wooden and hollow. "The simple words which come from the heart," he wrote, "are much better than majestic words written in a book. It is like the dew on the meadow which nourishes the tender shoot."³⁰

With characteristic Pietist tolerance toward other confessions he visited the Quaker meeting house in London. There he found people quietly seated with heads bowed humbly searching their hearts. After a time one woman arose from her place and spoke spirit-filled words from the depths of her heart. Never, Rhesa wrote, had he seen such deep piety in all his life, even though the church officially spoke of the Quakers as heretics³¹.

The image of the pastor formed in Rhesa's mind and heart was the typical Pietist picture of a man of practical Christian action. He was deeply disappointed when he met in Hesse pastors who were indistinguishable from other men. He remarked that he had spent an evening in the company of three men and never knew until a day later that they were clergymen. Nothing they had said or done had given him the slightest clue. The pastors wore colorful clothing instead of clerical garb. They looked and acted like men of the world. If one were to see them in a village, he would consider that they were probably heading for the forest with their dogs for a day of hunting.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

They were illiterate in that their theological training was inadequate and apart from it they knew little of the world. They did not even know where Memel was. To one of them Rhesa jokingly said: "It is beside the Caspian Sea" to which the fellow replied: "O my God, you have come such a long way."³² The clergy were not apt to teach, the catechumens and confirmands learn little or nothing of the catechism. He remarked that the daughter of one pastor did not even know the Ten Commandments. She was confirmed anyway. He said that in Hesse he would rather be an artisan than a preacher.

One might expect that the sermons of Rhesa would follow the familiar pattern of emotional Pietist preaching which was meant to move the listener to conversion. Conversion once accomplished must ever be renewed, lest it be lost. The stern preaching of the Law would be followed by the sweet consolation of the Gospel and this would be followed in turn by strong admonitions concerning the fruits of faith in the hearts and lives of the converted. They must be sober and pious people who have turned their backs on the pleasures of secular life and want nothing to do with anything frivolous.

Rhesa states that the sermon must convey one clear central thought based upon the text elaborated and applied. He had no use for preaching which, while proclaiming Christ as Savior and Lord, never went on to say clearly what this would mean in the life of the believer.

He much favored the pulpit tone which the clergy commonly used in his day because its sing-song style (Germ. *Kanzeltone*) made the words easier to understand. The Prussian churches were large and there was no other way of amplifying the voice of the preacher than by the use of this sing-song pulpit tone. Since he was a poet himself he also favored the use of poetic quotations from spiritual sources to illustrate sermon points. Rhesa was not against the use of written sermons, but thought little of prayers read from a book.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

As was common at that time his own sermons might last an hour or more, but he would punctuate them with hymn verses and prayers for a change of pace. It must have been a surprise to him when visiting a church in London, probably St. Paul's Cathedral, he heard the Reverend Mister Willson preached for 90 minutes without stopping³³.

In a Roman Catholic church in Nance, France, he saw what he described as an appalling display of theatricality. He noted in his diary that the sermon should never be a mere theatrical performance with much gesticulation and outward display. The preacher must remember that he is a teacher, not a virtuoso performer. The serious spirit of Lutheranism would never allow for such horseplay³⁴. He wrote that pastors serving several parishes should prepare a separate message for each of them. He viewed with chagrin that in Hesse pastors who served four or five parishes simply read the same Sunday sermon in each parish and thought that it could hardly be pleasant to the preacher to hear himself saying the same thing over and over again³⁵.

He thought it demeaning to their office that preachers in Saxony were required to preach annually before their superintendent. He stated that it not only demeaned the ministry, it also degraded the significance of preaching. However, this was in fact an ancient practice in many parts of Germany where pastors were required not only to preach before their ordinary congregations but also to demonstrate by examination their continuing theological competence. Dr. Martin Chemnitz, whom the Jesuits called the "Second Martin," wrote an Enchiridion to aid his pastors in reviewing theology in preparation for their examinations.

Although he maintained a pietistic spirit, the times in which Rhesa lived had moved beyond pietism in theology, liturgy, and preaching. The spirit of the new age was thoroughly Rationalistic and gave little

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162–163.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

credence to the supernatural. The central truths of the Christian faith were thought to be of little interest or concern to men of the new age. The church, it was said, must adapt or it would soon become completely irrelevant. The preaching of the Rationalists transformed Jesus from Savior and Lord to moral exemplar and teacher, a man of resolution willing to give up his life for his ideals whose true followers are those who seek to follow his example. The church was thought to be a voluntary society, an assembly of those who, in the words of Friedrich Schleiermacher, recognized their total dependence upon God. As such the church was no longer confessed, as in former times, to be the creation of God. The new view was that it was the creation of man and Christianity was viewed as a religious system, an ordered and disciplined way of life, rather than a way of faith. Accordingly, Rhesa was much displeased by the preaching he heard from pulpits in Hesse where moralistic sermons were concerned with politics and morality. He observed that the people came to church as thirsty men seeking waters which come from heaven, and they were given to drink from empty cups³⁶.

While in Berlin Rhesa was able to hear two famous preachers – August Hanstein and Conrad Gottlieb Ribbeck. Their reputations as great preachers were well known. His own observations about their preaching were somewhat reserved. Both were thoroughly rationalistic in their theology and preaching. Preachers said what polite society in Berlin expected to hear. He was impressed with Hanstein's ability to captivate his audience by his words and his manner of presentation. Rhesa heard him preach about the role of Jesus as an example of bravery in a time of conflict. Hanstein pointed out that the highest aims of the fatherland could only be achieved by following the example of Jesus and his Gospel teachings. Rhesa noted that it seemed to him that Hanstein gave more attention to how he spoke than what he actually said. Whatever he said was made

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

to seem supremely important even if it was completely insignificant and this became clear only when one sat down to read his words. What sounded good in the hearing, seemed far less significant in the reading³⁷. Ribbeck's style was quite different. Rhesa appreciated his style of preaching which was calm, quite, humble, and without the distraction of annoying mannerisms. So too, the poetic melodiousness of his delivery was pleasing to hear. He was able to bring to life what otherwise would be mere dry philosophy in such a way that his hearers could take it to heart. In neither case did Rhesa give much attention to the content of their message³⁸.

With a spirit of toleration for other confessions Rhesa regarded Reformed and members of the Bohemian Brethren as brothers separated from him only by some insignificant historical and theological matters which would doubtless soon be overcome. He was supportive of the efforts of his king to unite the Lutherans and the Reformed in one church and he was certain that eventually all matters of contention and division between them would disappear.

He tried to be tolerant also of the Roman Catholic Church, but with less success. Although he admired the piety of many Roman Catholics, he was suspicious of it. He thought he detected in them a certain duplicity and hypocrisy and regretted that they were not as tolerant toward Protestants as Protestants were toward them. He noted also that many Roman Catholic clergy seemed to have little or no understanding of Protestantism and church history. He was taken aback when in France he met a Roman priest who had never even heard of the Augsburg Confession.

He noted with some interest the thousands of pilgrims who traveled to the shrine of the Apparition of the Virgin Mary in Bohemia and expressed with admiration that the experience of the pilgrimage seems to have a good effect on the pilgrims. He regretted that since

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

the days of the Reformation there had been no such pilgrimages among Lutherans. He remarked that those who went on pilgrimage returned home with a sense of well being and piety and with the conviction that during the coming year they would be kept safe from danger³⁹. He remarked favorably that in Marburg he found a church used by both Lutherans and Roman Catholics. He seemed to think that this meant there were joint worship services in which people of both confessions participated. He wished that this example would be followed elsewhere, but his understanding of the nature of the situation was probably inaccurate. In such churches Lutherans and Roman Catholics would worship separately from each other and communed from separate altars⁴⁰.

The Mennonites, he stated, were a sect but he found them to be a pious people whose homes were orderly and clean. He probably called them a sect based on the fact that they were pacifists and eschewed the possession of weapons of warfare and took no oaths. He also expressed great admiration for the Quakers whom he found to be a deeply pious people of spotless reputation.

During the westward campaign Rhesa visited many churches in Prussia, Poland, the German lands, France, and England. He evaluated them according to the measure of sanctity which he felt he could perceive in them. He expressed high regard for many Roman Catholic churches that he visited. Their towers were tall and could be seen from afar. They were places of prayer and devotion where nothing was allowed to intrude on their purpose. Protestant churches, he regretted, were often small and shabby. Few had proper towers; their steeples looked as though they had been hastily assembled and stuck to the roof with glue. He especially regretted that in Hesse every village had its impoverished little church. It was much better in Prussia, he stated, for there people from as many as 20–30 villages

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

worshipped together in one large church and came to it as though they were making the journey to Jerusalem⁴¹.

The church, he said, must be a place of earnest purpose, a place of worship, not of concerts and entertainments. Even more, such secular ceremonies as the taking of oaths ought not to be carried out in church before the altar. He expressed appreciation for religious statuary and crosses along the roads in Prussian Roman Catholic Ermland (Pol. *Warmia*) because these provided a point of reference between the secular and sacred worlds, the material and the spiritual, earth and heaven⁴².

Finally, Rhesa was distressed that the further West he traveled, the more secularized the world around him seemed to become. He complained that in Hesse none said grace before they ate, not even the nobility and leaders in society who ought to be setting a good example for the peasants. Confirmation instruction had been impoverished to the point that those who were confirmed knew little about Christianity. In Wetzlar religious instruction in the schools had been replaced by moralistic lessons. In France the situation was even worse. There the Lord's Day was the biggest market day of the week. Those who went to the theaters could afterwards easily find prostitutes ready and willing to entertain them further. The Devil was thought of in positive terms and cursing and the misuse of the name of God were commonplace. England, however, was different. There the Lord's Day was still strictly kept, all shops and businesses were closed, and nowhere could one hear the discordant sounds of singers and dancers and other entertainments⁴³.

In the early months in 1815 Rhesa returned to Königsberg bringing with him the good news that while in England he had been able to make contact with the British Foreign Bible Society and had

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 66–67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

secured the sum of 200 Pounds Sterling to continue the work of revising the Lithuanian translation of the Bible. Before the war he and his commission had virtually completed their work on the historical books of the Old Testament, including the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the books of Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles. Much work remained to be done and the support of the Bible Society was a great encouragement to move forward.

Lithuanian pastors on the commission were invited to study carefully the text of the Scriptures comparing the present Lithuanian translations with Luther's German Bible, marking carefully every passage in which they were not agreed. Where there was no agreement Rhesa would himself study carefully the manuscripts of the Scriptures whether Hebrew or Aramaic, or, in the case of the New Testament, Greek. All available manuscripts of these texts would be studied together with the most ancient versions in Chaldean, Arabic, and other tongues. Where there were discrepancies between the original languages and these versions he would need to determine which text was best. He studied the commentaries, even those of writers influenced by Rationalism. He also carefully examined the manuscript of Jonas Bretkūnas (Germ. *Johann Bretke*) and found in it much he could appreciate. He would then present his suggestions for revision to his editorial commission. No changes would be permitted without the consent of the commission. By the beginning of 1816 the work was completed. Later that year 3,000 copies of the revised Bible were printed. When all costs were counted up, it was found that not all funds had been expended. Accordingly, it was decided to print 3000 additional copies of the New Testament. Rhesa stated his delight that so much had been accomplished for so good a price and that it would now be possible to make the Bible available to Lithuanians at a low price. To those who were poor copies were to be given *grates*⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Martynas Liudvikas Rėza, „Lietuviškos Biblijos istorija“, p. 270–274.

In the same year, 1816, Rhesa also published his *Philologisch-kritische Anmerkungen zur Litthauischen Bibel, etc.* (*Philological-Critical Remarks on the Lithuanian Bible*) and a short *Geschichte der Litthauischen Bibel* (*History of the Lithuanian Bible*) as supplements to the Bible. The first article was meant to forestall any arguments concerning his translation and to show his readers why some of their favorite passages had needed to be revised. He provided evidence from the original text, the versions, and the commentaries to back up his revisions. He stated that it had not been his desire to be innovative or to introduce arbitrary changes. This work was meant primarily for pastors, precentors, teachers, and other educated lovers of God's Word. He noted that some of them already were well acquainted with the original texts and might at first be tempted to take exception with his decisions. In the earlier Lithuanian text of Revelation 18:13 merchants of the earth were described as possessing, among other things, the corpses of men. Rhesa stated that this was a mistranslation of Greek *σώματα* (*soma*) referring to able bodied slaves in the merchants' households⁴⁵.

The second supplement was written because little or nothing had earlier been written about the history of the Lithuanian Bible translations. It was meant to be a contribution to the understanding of the history of Christianity among northern peoples. He stated that he had decided to include in his Bible Pastor Karl Gotthard Keber's (Lith. *Gotardas Karolis Keberis*) translation from German and August Herman Francke's little treatise on how to read the Bible, which had originally been included in Carl Hildebrand von Canstein's 1713 German Bible. Many had asked for it and it clearly deserved wider circulation. Francke had been a well known Pietist professor at Halle University and his writings were very popular among the Prussian Lithuanians⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Ludwig Rhesa, *Philologisch-kritische Anmerkungen zur litthauischen Bibel als Erläuterungen zu der bei der neuen Ausgabe veranstalteten Umarbeitung des litthauischen Textes von D. L. J. Rhesa, Professor der Theologie und Prediger*, [d. 1], Königsberg: Hartungschens Hofbuchdruckerei, 1816, p. 77.

⁴⁶ Martynas Liudvikas Rėza, „Lietuviškos Biblijos istorija“, p. 272.

These two supplements were subsequently reviewed positively by Berlin University professor Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette in the *Jenaische allgemeine Literaturzeitung* (*General Literature Periodical of Jena*) 1818 – an indication that even theological liberals could appreciate his erudition⁴⁷.

RHESA'S ACADEMIC ACTIVITY IN THE UNIVERSITY

By 1816 Rhesa's health was beginning to deteriorate. He found it necessary to resign his military chaplaincy in order to devote himself wholly to his academic work. In 1818 he was appointed to a full time position as professor of theology in the university and 10 years later, in 1828, he would be designated primary (*primarius*), or first, professor of theology.

He continued his academic work in theology, philology, church history, and the beginnings of Christianity in Lithuania. In 1819 he published a tractate on the Synoptic Gospels, entitled: *De trium Euangeliorum in canone Noui Testamenti priorum fonte ac origine* (*Concerning the Original Font and Course of the Three Gospels in the Canon of the New Testament*). It contained a dissertation presented in the chief auditorium of the university on April 15, 1819. According to the title page Franz Benjamin Fürchtegott Bobrik, a Prussian theological candidate for the holy ministry, was respondent and criticisms were offered by theological candidates Johann Karl Friedrich Engel of Königsberg University, Karl Friedrich Skrzeczka, and Gustaw Heinrich Monbilly from Prussian Lithuania.

In this essay Rhesa addressed an issue much discussed in academic theological circles in his day. He reviewed textual studies done by John Mill, Johann Rudolf Wettstein, Johann Jakob Griesbach, Andreas Birch, Christian Friedrich Matthäi, and others who had studied the

⁴⁷ *Jenaische allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, Nr. 58, April 1818, p. 1–8.

manuscript tradition of the Synoptic Gospels. He stated that these Gospels must be examined interiorly as well as exteriorly, and that the various theories being put forward to explain the relationship among the three Gospels needed to be thoroughly examined as well as the question of the source of the “Synoptic Tradition.” He examined the points of consensus between the synoptics, as well as those passages in which the evangelists went their separate ways, as well as those where any two agreed against a third. He gave attention also to the Hebrew matrix from which the evangelists wrote and examined questions concerning the original “Hebrew” version of Mathew. He concluded by noting that the discussion concerning the origins of the Gospel tradition should not be regarded as out-of-bounds, since Luke himself began his Gospel account by noting that already in his time many had written and that it was necessary that he should now provide a clear account of the Gospel. Ever careful, Rhesa noted that much that has been written had been based on mere supposition⁴⁸.

Rhesa’s last surviving theological work was published in 1819. It was entitled: *Observationum exegetico-criticarum in Vaticinia Ezechielis. Specimen primum. (Exegetical Critical Observations on the Prophecies of Ezekiel. First example.)*. The work was published in a university booklet, printed on the occasion of the appointment of Ludwig August Kaehler as regular professor of theology and August Hahn as an extraordinary, or adjunct, professor.

Rhesa’s paper was limited to observations concerning the opening words of Ezekiel and in particular the second and third words in the Hebrew text “In the thirtieth year.” He offered a short review of

⁴⁸ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De trium Euangeliorum in canone Novi Testamenti priorum fonte ac origine, Dissertatio critica, quam Auctoritate S. R. Ordinis Theologorum pro Loco in eodem rite occupando d. XV Aprilis MDCCCXIX, ab hora X. In Auditorio maximo publice defendet Ludovicus Jedeminus Rhesa, Theol. et Philos. Doct. Prof. pub. ord. design. respondete Francisco Benjamino Fuerchtegott Bobrik, Cand. Minist. verb. div. e Prussia occidentali et opponentibus Joanne Carolo Friderico Engel, Theol. Cand. Regiomontano. Carolo Friderico Skrzeczka, Theol. Cand. Lycensi. Gustauo Henrico Monbilly, Theol. Cand. Lithuano, Regiomonti: Typis academicis Hartungianis, 1819.*

commentators from the various eras who wrote concerning this, including Ephraem Syrus and such Reformation and post-Reformation writers as Jerónimo de Prado, Juan Bautista Villalpando, Johann Friedrich Stark, Hermannus Venema, and others. Quotations were included from Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, Latin, Arabic, and Greek. In his observations Rhesa cited also other passages in Ezekiel concerning particular times at which God spoke through the prophet. He also briefly included a comparison of the Hebrew calendar with the modern western calendar along with observations concerning the text, its chronology and some textual variants in the Hebrew codices and versions⁴⁹.

The theological writings of Ludwig Rhesa in the period from 1810 to 1819 were primarily related to isagogics and linguistics. It was only in one short treatise that he dealt with agreements and divergences in the narratives of the synoptics. Apart from that he appears to have limited himself to critical comparison of the textual traditions both in the biblical languages, the translation of those traditions in the early versions, and the remarks of commentators both ancient and modern. In this way he was able to use methodologically the work of students of the Scriptures of his own and earlier periods without espousing either the philosophical premises on which they built or the final theological conclusions they espoused.

The Enlightenment pervaded and transformed all German universities in the 18th century including both Königsberg and Halle where the Pietist tradition gave way to Rationalism. Younger universities in Berlin and elsewhere espoused a theologically liberal and secularist positions from the day their doors opened.

⁴⁹ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Observationum exegetico-criticarum in Vaticinia Ezechielis. Specimen primum quo Lectiones cursorias a Viris plurimum reuerendis Ludouico Augusto Kaehler Theol. Prof. Ord. design. Regis a Consiliis Consistor. Superintend. et Eccles. Loebenicensis V. D. M. et Augusto Hahn Philos. D. et L. A. M. Theol. Prof. Extraord. design. Societatis histor. theol. Lipsiensis Sodali, Dieb. VII. et VIII. Octobr. Hor. XI. in Auditorio Societatis Teutonicae publice habendas indicit D. Ludouicus Jeddeminus Rhesa Colleg. Facult. Theol. h. t. Decanus, Regiomonti Borussorum: Typis Hartungianis, 1819.*

In general Pietists reacted to the new situation either by surrendering their positions and becoming Rationalists or by denouncing academia and university studies all together. Rhesa did not follow either path. He maintained a basically Pietist outlook and limited his academic interests to the areas already indicated. He understood that in addition to his university responsibilities he still had important work to do for the benefit of the church.

Rhesa's use of the results of the work of liberal theologians of his day have led some to conclude that he simply was one of them, a child of his age and nothing more, an advocate of historical criticism willing to go wherever it would take him and to accept its conclusion that the Bible was nothing more or less than ancient literature⁵⁰. True enough he was willing to make use of the works of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, the father of the modern historical critical method, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, the pioneer researcher on the Pentateuch, and Johann Gottfried von Herder, a thoroughgoing secularist in his Biblical works. Herder regarded the books of the Bible as the works of men, to be interpreted as such as would be the case with any other old book. Herder rejected revelation and every form of supernaturalism and stated that to read the biblical text allegorically was unwarranted and misleading. These and other academic theologians claimed that it was their purpose to set theology on a new and more substantial foundation. Other critics were not very positive in their evaluation of the work. It seemed to them that the new theologians were simply attempting to salvage theology as an academic discipline so that it might retain its place in the university.

Rhesa was able to maintain his position in the university with integrity and to make use of Herder's *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (*The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*), 1782–1783, and de Wette's *Kommentar über die Psalmen* (*Commentary on the Psalms*), 1811, without sacrificing his faith. He was circumspect in his use of historical criticism and its methodology and made careful distinctions. He concentrated

⁵⁰ Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvikas Rėza*, p. 177–178.

his attention on the transmission of the text and the problems which attended that transmission and the translation of the original text from one manuscript to another and from the original language to the versions. This is how he defined historical criticism, a definition not wholly in line with that of other scholars. In his memoirs he recalled that while in Luckau in 1813 he had met a young theologian, the Archdeacon M. Marcus, an expert on new theological developments. The young man showed him a journal *Analecten für das Studium der exegetischen und systematischen Theologi* (*Fragments for the Study of Exegetical and Systematic Theology*), edited by Professor Dr. Karl August Gottlieb Keil. Rhesa's reaction was that he could not agree with such radical conclusions. He stated that the Bible was God's Word and that it was necessary that some should rise up and speak out against such works that consider the Bible only historically and not religiously. "This," he said, "is a good sign for God's kingdom."⁵¹

In 1819 Rhesa turned his attention once again to the history of the introduction of Christianity among the Lithuanian people and to short biographies of the principle leaders of the Reformation in Prussia and more particularly in Königsberg. He followed his 1810 article with a paper, entitled: *De religionis christianae in Lithuanorum gente primordiis* (*The Earliest Stage of the Christian Religion among the Lithuanians*) 1819⁵². Yet another study in the series appeared one year later, 1820, under the title: *De Religionis Christianae in Gente Lituatorum Initiis* (*The Beginnings of the Christian Religion among the Lithuanians*)⁵³. Both the 1819 and 1820 articles dealt with the difficulties which

⁵¹ Liudvikas Rėza, *Žinios ir pastabos*, p. 89.

⁵² Ludovicus Rhesa, *De religionis christianae in Lithuanorum gente primordiis. Pars altera Feriis Paschalibus Anni MDCCCXIX, in piam Resurrectionis Jesu Christi memoriam, Academiae Regiomontanae Civibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu proponitur*, Regiomonti: Typis academicis Hartungianis, 1819.

⁵³ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De religionis christianae in gente Lituatorum initiis, Sectio tertia. Programma, Feriis Pentecostalibus, Academiae Regiomontanae Civibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore atque Senatu academico propositum*, regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1820.

hindered the early introduction of the Christian faith among the Lithuanians as well as the Baptism of King Mindaugas and his internal and external policies. He dealt also with Political events of that time in Prussia and Livonia and more particularly the tensions between the Lithuanians and the Brothers of the Sword to the North and the Teutonic Knights to the south. He noted the resurgence of paganism among the Lithuanians, the assassination of Mindaugas, and the attitude towards Christianity taken by later rulers. He gave some attention to the important work of Franciscan friars in the planting the church among the people, as well as some particular aspects of Lithuanian paganism, and the pagan temple at *Romuva*.

Many other articles by Rhesa were published in university booklets which appeared to mark important occasions. In the Pentecost 1822 booklet there appeared a short article by Rhesa, entitled: *Epistolae Lutheri, Melanchthonis et Erasmi Roterodami, hactenus, una Lutheri excepta, quantum scimus, ineditae, tum exemplar diplomatis indulgentiarum vetustissimum* (*Letters of Luther, Melanchthon, and Erasmus of Rotterdam which, with the Exception of Luther's Letter, We Know not to have been Edited, Together with an Example of Very Old Diploma of Indulgences*). The first part consisted of short letters by Luther, Melanchthon, and Erasmus of Rotterdam. Luther's letter was a short resumé of the position of the reformers concerning the Mass, Holy Baptism, images, church ceremonies, and the use of Latin and the vernacular in the liturgy, as well as references to the disorders caused by Andreas Karlstadt. The brief letters of Melanchthon and Erasmus were followed by a second part which was a short letter of Melanchthon addressed to Melchior Isinder of the Königsberg Faculty who was actively involved in opposing the erroneous teachings of his faculty fellow member Andreas Osiander. The third part was a letter of indulgence of the Order of St. John, Hospitallers, and included also a form of Absolution to be used at the point of death⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Piam celebrationem Sacrorum Pentecostes civibus commendant Prorector, Cancellarius idemque Director ac reliquus Senatus Universitatis*

One year later Rhesa turned his attention to leading personalities in the earliest period of the Prussian Reformation. The first to be considered was Dr. Johannes Briesmann. Rhesa wrote of him in a short essay entitled: *Vita Brismanni Doctoris theol. et verbi div. conc. primi sacrorum restauratoris in Prussia* (*The Life of Briesmann, Doctor of Theology and the Divine Word, the First Restorer of the Sacred in Prussia*). This study, published in the Pentecost 1823 paper, was a short but copiously noted biography of Johannes Briesmann who had come from Wittenberg to Königsberg in 1523 at Luther's recommendation. He served as preacher in the cathedral and, with the consent of Bishop Georg von Polentz, he worked with Paulus Speratus and Johannes Gramann (Poliander) for the Reformation of the church. He took a leading role in the reformation of the Prussian liturgy in 1525. From 1527 to 1531 he was in Riga working with Pastor Andreas Knopken to bring order to the chaos created by those who had sought to reform the church by force. Briesmann's 1530 *Kurts Ordnung des Kirchendiensts*, etc. (*Short Order of the Divine Service*) with ceremonies and hymns was in time officially accepted by the "principal" cities of the Livonian Confederation – Riga, Dorpat, and Tallinn (Germ. *Reval*). After returning to Königsberg in 1531 he worked together with Speratus and Gramann in their struggle against Kaspar Schwenckfeld and his disciples. He took a leading role in the establishment of the University of Königsberg and in the same year was actively involved in the publication and adoption of the Prussian Church Order of 1544. After the death of Bishop Georg von Polentz of Samland Briesmann was made president of that diocese and superintendent of the university. He died in October 1549, shortly after the beginning of the Osiandrian controversy. The 21 pages of this article consist mainly of citations and notes⁵⁵.

Albertinae. Insunt tum epistolae Lutheri, Melancthonis et Erasmi Roterodami, hactenus, una Lutheri excepta, quantum scimus, ineditae, tum exemplar diplomatis indulgentiarum vetustissimum, Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungii, 1822.

⁵⁵ Darius Petkūnas, „Livonijas liturgiskās tradīcijas 16–18 gadsimta“, in: *Vidzeme, baznīca, sabiedrība laikmetu mainā*, Valmiera: Vidzemes Augstskola, 2009, p. 39–45.

The second article, entitled: *Vita Pauli Sperati, Doct. Theol. et primi Concionatoris aulici Regiomont* (*The Life of Paul Speratus, Doctor of Theology and first Preacher of the Court of Prussia*) gives a short overview of the life and work of Bishop Paulus Speratus. It was published in the Reformation edition of the Königsberg University paper in 1523 and follows the same format as the earlier article. As in the article on Briesmann there is little text but many citations. Rhesa noted that Speratus, a doctor of theology, served as a canon and preacher at Würzburg from 1512 until 1520 when, in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, he publicly preached against the requirement of celibacy, monastic vows, and other errors. For this he was declared a heretic and criminal. His message was more warmly received in Moravia where he was given a pastorate and served until he was declared a heretic by the Bishop of Olmütz. He was condemned to be burned at the stake. Influential patrons made it possible for him to flee the country on the promise that he would not return. He went to Wittenberg where he became a close associate of Martin Luther and assisted in the publication of the first Lutheran hymnal in 1524. In that same year he was called by Albrecht to come to Königsberg where, in 1525, he worked with Johannes Briesmann in the production of the first Prussian Church Order in 1525. Subsequently he worked with Briesmann, Gramann (Poliander), and others in counteracting the influence of Anabaptists and Spiritualists. Rhesa noted in his article that Speratus was an erudite philosopher and theologian who read widely in the church fathers and the scholastic theologians. He was active in the opening period of the Osiandrian Controversy and died in August 1553. Included with the article is a compendious listing of his writings⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis q. d. sacrorum reformatoibus in Prussia. Programma II, quo Festum reformationis Prussicae saeculare in Memoriam primae Euan-gelicae concionis Regiomonti habitae, die XXVII et XXVIII Sept. A. MDCCCXXIII. pie celebrandum Ciuibus Academiae Albertinae indicunt Prorektor Cancellarius Director et Senatus Academicus. Inest vita Pauli Sperati, Doc. theol. et primi Concionatoris aulici Regiomont., Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1823.*

The third article, *Vita Joannis Poliandri* (*The Life of Johannes Poliander*), appeared in print in a university booklet published at Eastertide 1824. In it Rhesa noted that Gramann (Poliander) had served as secretary to Johannes Eck in the Leipzig Disputation between Luther and Eck in 1519. Impressed by Luther, Poliander became a student at Wittenberg where he excelled in German poetry, creating paraphrases of Psalms, the most famous of which was *Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren* (*Now Praise My Soul the Lord*). Luther recommended him to Duke Albrecht who called him to work with Paulus Speratus and Johannes Briesmann in Königsberg. He served as pastor in the Altstadt Church and was actively involved in overcoming the influence which Schwenckfeld and other Anabaptists had gained in Prussia. The copiously footnoted article also included a bibliography of some of his major works⁵⁷.

The fourth and fifth articles described the life and work of Georg von Polentz, the bishop of Samland. The first article, entitled *Vita Georgii a Polentis, primi ecclesiae evangelicae Episcopi usque ad annum 1525 enarrata* (*The Life of Georg von Polentz, the First Bishop of the Evangelical Church up to the Year 1525*), appeared in a short booklet published by the university in Christmastide 1825⁵⁸. The second article, *Vita Georgii a Polentis inde ab anno 1525 enarrata* (*The Life of Georg von Polentz from the Year 1525*), appeared in a university booklet published at Christmastide 1827⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis sacrorum reformatioribus in Prussia. Programma III, quo Sacra Paschalia pie celebranda Cuius Academiae Albertinae indicunt Prorector, Cancellarius, Director et Senatus Acad. Regiomontanae. Anno MDCCCXXIV. Inest vita Joannis Poliandri*, Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1824.

⁵⁸ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis sacrorum reformatioribus in Prussia. Programma IV, Natalitiis Jesu Christi Academiae Regiomontanae Civibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu propositum. Anno MDCCCXXV. Inest vita Georgii a Polentis, primi ecclesiae evangelicae Episcopi, usque ad annum 1525 enarrata*, Regiomonti: Typis academicis Hartungianis, 1825.

⁵⁹ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis sacrorum reformatioribus in Prussia. Programma V. Natalitiis Jesu Christi Academiae Regiomontanae Cuius a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu propositum. Anno MDCCCXXVII. Inest vita Georgii a Polentis inde ab anno 1525 enarrata*, Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1827.

The first article began with a short genealogical table of the Polentz family. Georg studied law at Bologna and, after serving as secretary to the papal curia, entered the service of the emperor Maximilian. Albrecht invited him to come to Königsberg and in 1518 he nominated him to become bishop of Samland. Papal permission came in July 1519. Polentz was much influenced by Johannes Briesmann who tutored him in Lutheran doctrine and at Christmas 1523 the bishop preached a sermon in Königsberg cathedral which showed that he had learned the doctrine of the Gospel. On January 28, 1524 he issued the mandate which stated that henceforth portions of the liturgy should be read in German and that his priests should study carefully the writings of Dr. Martin Luther⁶⁰. This heralded the coming of the Reformation to Prussia which would be accomplished in 1525. He was instrumental in the implementation of the 1525 Prussian Church order after it was approved by the territorial assembly. From this time the Lutheran Mass would be used throughout the Samland diocese. He was actively involved in the formulation of Articles of Visitation and sponsored the visitation of the Prussian parishes in 1528–1529. In 1531 he participated in the Rastenburg Colloquium which exposed the errors of Peter Zenker and Fabian Eckel of Liegnitz. Both articles were copiously footnoted and the second article included a copy of the epitaph which marked the grave of von Polentz after the interment of his earthly remains in the cathedral on April 29, 1550.

The sixth article in the series, *Vita Joannis Amandi* (*The Life of Johannes Amandus*), appeared in a university booklet published at Eastertide 1829⁶¹. In it Rhesa turned his attention to the controversial Johannes Amandus who incited the lower classes in Königsberg to

⁶⁰ *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation*, ed. by B. J. Kidd, Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1911, p. 188–189.

⁶¹ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis sacrorum reformatioribus in Prussia. Programma VI, quo Sacra Paschalia pie celebranda Civibus Academiae Albertinae indicunt Prorector, Cancellarius, Director et Senatus Acad. Regiomontanae. Anno MDCCCXXIX. Inest vita Joannis Amandi*, Regiomonti: Typis academicis Hartungianis, 1829.

implement the work of the Reformation not by preaching but by violent action. The article began with a short biography of Amandus who had become a monk, and after diligent study had been promoted to the degree of doctor of theology. Amandus, who had been born in Pomerania, was designated by the Pope to be a preacher of indulgences in that region. He was very effective in arousing the crowds and all went well until he began to preach against the arrogance and luxurious style of life of Fabian von Lossainen, the bishop of Ermland (Pol. *Warmia*). He fled to Wittenberg where he came to Luther's attention. The reformers sent him to preach in Holstein, but, with the urging of Friedrich von Heydeck, Albrecht invited him to come to Prussia. Bishop Georg von Polentz approved his installation as preacher in the Altstadt Church in Königsberg. On Advent Sunday in 1523 he celebrated Mass in German and persuasively preached in the language of the people. By that time serious tension had developed between the Franciscans and the Königsberg reformers, and in his sermons Amandus went far beyond the bishop and Briesmann in inciting the mob to violence against the friars. Although more moderate voices had already accomplished much in the Altstadt Church and the cathedral, so that the images of the saints and their altars had been discarded and only one common Mass was being celebrated daily in accordance with the institution of Christ, Amandus was not satisfied. On Easter Sunday 1524 he so inflamed his hearers that a mob soon formed. The next day the cloister and friars were assaulted, the choir was broken into and the image of St. Francis was torn from its place. On Tuesday Amandus declared to the crowds: "Long enough have the Franciscans enjoyed your food and drink. Now you must go and enjoy theirs."⁶² The crowd broke into the cloister and either destroyed or stole everything they could get

⁶² Paul Tschackert, *Urkundenbuch zur Reformationsgeschichte des Herzogthums Preussen*, t. 1, (*Publicationen aus den K. Preussischen Staatsarchiven*. t. 43), Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1890, p. 82.

their hands on. The lives of the friars were spared only through the intervention of the mayor and city council. Later, in 1524, Amandus was expelled from the territory and made his way to Danzig, Stolp (Pol. *Ślupsk*), and Stettin (Pol. *Szczecin*). He was apprehended in Garz and subsequently sent back to Wittenberg. Rhesa quoted the judgment Luther declared against Amandus in the early days of 1525. Luther supported the banishment of the preacher, since one who preaches the Gospel is to proclaim Christ rather than the power of the people. Evidently Amandus showed some amendment of attitude, for Luther subsequently recommended him to Nicolaus von Amsdorf, who in turn recommended him to the city of Goslar where in 1528 he became city superintendent and reformed the church's worship and the school system. Rhesa noted that some had suspected that in his latter days Amandus espoused Zwinglian notions concerning the Lord's Supper, but no evidence of that has ever been presented. To his biographical article Rhesa added a copy of the letter of Amandus to Königsberg written at Christmas 1524. As in the early articles Rhesa furnished numerous lengthy footnotes.

In his seventh article Rhesa directed his attention to Jacob Knade (Knothe) who, like Amandus, espoused radical views. His views, however, were theological rather than popular. The article *Vita Jacobi Cnathi* (*The Life of Jacob Knade*) appeared in a short booklet published by the university in Pentecosttide 1830. Rhesa noted that Knade had been born in Danzig and had been called to serve in the church of St. Peter. He took a wife as early as 1518. In punishment Mathias Drzewicki, Bishop of Cujavia (Pol. *Kujawy*), imprisoned him for six months and deprived him of both his wife and his parish. Knade could not be said to have been strongly influenced by the theology of Luther. His own theological opinions were influenced by radical theologians such as Schwenckfeld whom Knade, together with Friedrich von Heydeck, supported. At the Colloquium at Rastenburg he identified himself with the views of Fabian Eckel and Peter Zenker.

Appended to this short biography was the correspondence between Knade and Pastor Balthasar Weiland (Lat. *Guilandinus*) concerning the presence of Christ in the bread and wine and the adoration of the sacramental signs. Knade could not agree to either. He sought to support his position with quotations from Augustine, Tertullian, Origen, Bernard, Chrysostom, and others, including Melancthon and Luther. Weiland's refutation stated categorically that not only had he misquoted Luther but, in any case, it was not from the testimony of the fathers of the church that doctrine was to be established but only from the Sacred Scriptures themselves⁶³.

In this series of articles Rhesa showed himself to be a scholar who carefully examined the source material and presented his findings together with ample evidence from the sources to support his statements. As a result he came to be regarded as a reliable interpreter whose judgments could be cited by other writers. Even after the passing of almost two centuries his works are still worthy of citation and not least because his articles include so much primary source material.

Within three years of the publication of the Lithuanian Bible in 1816 Rhesa was at work on a revision to correct its inadequacies. The work of revision was instituted and supported by the Königsberg Lithuanian Bible Society. Working with him on the editorial committee were Pastor Christian Daniel Hassenstein (Lith. *Kristijonas Danielius Hasenšteinas*) of Piktupönen (Lith. *Piktupėnai*) and Pastor Karl Heinrich Malkwitz (Lith. *Karolis Henrichas Malkvicas*) of Ragnit (Lith. *Ragainė*). After the death of Christian Daniel Hassenstein his place was taken by his son Friedrich Gottlieb (Lith. *Fridrichas Gotlybas Hasenšteinas*), pastor of the Lithuanian church in Tilsit (Lith. *Tilžė*). Publication of the second edition was delayed by the unavailability of sufficient printing material and other factors. However, 5 000

⁶³ Ludovicus Rhesa, *De primis sacrorum reformatioribus in Prussia. Programma VII, S. Pentecostes Festo Civibus Academiae a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu propositum. Inest vita Jacobi Cnathi*, Regiomonti: Typis academicis Hartungianis, 1830.

copies did appear in print in 1824, together with an additional 5 000 copies of the New Testament. Again the publication of the Bible was accompanied by the appearance in 1824 of the short booklet, entitled: *Philologisch-kritische Anmerkungen zur Litthauischen Bibel, etc* (*Philological-Critical Remarks on the Lithuanian Bible*). In it Rhesa stated the rationale which had guided the work of the editorial board. Also included was a listing of significant changes in the second edition⁶⁴.

THE ATTITUDE OF RHESA CONCERNING THE PRUSSIAN UNION AND ITS AGENDA

By the middle of the second decade of the 18th century plans were well underway for the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the nailing of the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church (Germ. *Schlosskirche*) in Wittenberg by Dr. Martin Luther. It was to be celebrated not as the anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, commemorating Luther's insistence that only the Word of God could and would create, build, unify, and reform the church, but rather as the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, a day to be equally as important to the spiritual descendants of Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, as to the Lutherans. Rhesa would play a significant role in the celebration of a new kind of Reformation Day in Königsberg in 1817.

By cabinet order, dated September 27, 1817, King Friedrich Wilhelm III, summoning the memory of Electors Johann Sigismund, Georg Wilhelm, and King Friedrich I, as well as King Friedrich Wilhelm I and Friedrich Wilhelm II, stated that it had been the heartfelt and pious desire of all of them that the Lutheran and Reformed Churches should unite into one Evangelical Christian Church. This work he now took upon himself and he would accomplish it by the word of his

⁶⁴ Ludwig Rhesa, „Vorrede“, in: *Biblia, tai esti Wissas Szwoentas Rasztas Seno ir Naujo Testamento*, Tilžė: Endriki Post, 1824.

mouth. Commanding no one, he declared, he simply wanted to utter his deeply felt desire that his Reformed and Lutheran subjects should worship and commune together at the same altar and at the same time⁶⁵. Forcing no one but inviting everyone to follow his example, he declared that he himself intended to do just that on Reformation Day. He was uniting the Lutheran and Reformed Congregations of the Court and Garrison parishes at Potsdam into one Evangelical and Christian Church and together they would partake with him of the Lord's Supper. It was his hope that the whole nation would be inspired by his royal but humble example and would do the same everywhere throughout the realm.

The real author of this cabinet order was the king's Potsdam Royal Court preacher, and later Bishop, Rulemann Friedrich Eylert⁶⁶. In the cabinet order the king speaks words written by Eylert. Soon after Eylert would speak the king's words stating that, as was known to all, this union would represent the fulfillment of Luther's dream. On the first day of the celebration, October 31, 1817, Eylert preached to the fully packed Court and Garrison Church in Potsdam. His text was Hebrews 13:7 *Remember your teachers, who have spoken the Word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and follow the example of their faith*. His message was that Luther, Calvin, and indeed all the reformers could be honored in no higher way than by this union of two great confessions in one church. On the second day, when the royal court reassembled in Wittenberg, Eylert preached again. His words were nothing less than an apotheosis of Luther. He addressed him personally in his sermon as though he had been canonized and declared worthy to be invoked by man as a true saint. These were the words of the king spoken by the mouth of the preacher. Friedrich

⁶⁵ Christian Charles Josias Bunsen, Susanna Winkworth, *Signs of the times: letters to Ernst Moritz Arndt on the dangers to religious liberty in the present state of the world*, London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1856, p. 502–504.

⁶⁶ *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters of Hermann Sasse*, t. 2: 1941–1976, Saint Louis: CPH, 2002, p. 273.

Wilhelm III venerated Luther as a man; he particularly admired his steadfastness and charismatic attractiveness. He had little use for his doctrine. It was a new reformed and rehabilitated Luther that the king wished to present to his Prussian kingdom, which now consisted in half of all German lands⁶⁷.

Two days of celebrations like those of the king were held in Königsberg and elsewhere. On November 1 there was a solemn service and sermon in the Altstadt Church. The university followed with a special celebration. In addition to festal orations it was the occasion of the granting of doctorates and other promotions of the sort that universities engage in on days of convocation. Rhesa took the occasion to distribute and read to the assembly a lengthy poem after the classical model, entitled: *Der Geist Luthers an die evangelischen Deutschen* (*The Spirit of Luther to the German Protestants*).

The poem appeared under a citation from 2 Kings 2:12 “*My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!*” These were the words of Elisha as the Prophet Elijah was being taken up into heaven in the fiery chariot. The poem celebrated Luther as a man sent from God to cleanse the church of human tradition and in the Spirit of Elijah to replace those traditions with the heavenly teachings of Jesus. He called Luther the German Elijah, just as Bretkūnas had in his *Postil* 200 years earlier⁶⁸. Luther was the strong man of sense and courage who did not fear death or the raging of the Devil and sought to bring in the new and heavenly Jerusalem. Only in the present day have men come to understand the full significance of his work. Together with him are many Elishas of very different temperament: Philipp Melancthon, George Spalatin, Johann von Staupitz, Johannes Brenz, Johannes Bugenhagen, Nicolaus von Amsdorf, and even Martin Bucer (of whom Luther had no high opinion – “You are of the different

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273–275.

⁶⁸ *Jono Bretkūno postilė*, parengė Ona Aleknavičienė, Vilnius: Lietuvių kalbos instituto leidykla, 2005, p.155.

mind”). After them came the hymn writers Paul Gerhardt, Simon Dach, and Christian Fürchtegott Gellert. Included in the company were Philip Spener, the author of the *Pia Desideria* (*Pious Desires*), and the great Pietist theologian August Hermann Francke. Included also were men of the academy – all of them keeping alive the spirit of Luther. Spreading beyond Prussia to Westphalia, Bavaria, and Württemberg this same spirit was forming a new Germany in which men would no longer call themselves Lutheran or Zwinglian, but all would name one Master only. The spirit of this Luther, this German Elijah, was still alive, Rhesa declared, and still at work, and this day, this new Sabbath, would celebrate it. Having once again established God’s Word Luther had, as it were, been carried up into heaven. At this Rhesa with tears in his eyes cried out: “My father, my father, abide with us, that a double portion of your Spirit may rest upon us.”⁶⁹

The poem was a great success and was printed in several prominent journals of the day. It appears to have epitomized the spirit of the age in which Rhesa lived, the spirit of his teacher Kant combined with his study of the Bible, now issuing in a great poetic tribute, the foretaste of the Romanticism which was beginning to dawn. His picture of the spirit of Luther could hardly be sustained historically. It would soon become evident that Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and Bucer had not been of one mind and the confessions had not forgotten it. Many Lutherans and Reformed would react negatively toward the union.

In 1822 the Prussian Church had been shaken by the so-called *Agenda Controversy* (Germ. *Agendenstreit*). Although Rhesa did not participate directly in the controversy, he supported the introduction

⁶⁹ *Geschichte der dritten Jubelfeier des Reformationsfestes wie solche zu Königsberg in Preußen begangen worden ist: Mit Programmen, Predigten, Reden und Gedichten / von Borowski, Bujack, Cunow, Dinter, Ebel, Friccius, Gotthold, Krause, Lachmann, Lehmann, Möller, Reidenitz, Rhesa, Rosenkrantz, Struve, Vater, Wald, Weiß, Wendland, Weyl*, Herausgegeben von Dr. K. L. Struve, Director des Stadtgymnasium, Königsberg: Universitätsbuchdruckerei, 1819, p. 251–259.

of the new liturgy into Prussian Lithuanian parishes by translating it into Lithuanian in 1825. Later he would again use his linguistic skills in the preparation of a Lithuanian edition of the 1829 Prussian *Agenda*.

In his invitation to the Lutherans and Reformed to join together in a single ecclesiastical fellowship, King Friedrich Wilhelm III declared that, while the churches would practice pulpit and altar fellowship, the Lutherans would still remain Lutheran and the Reformed would remain Reformed. Internally they would remain as they always had been, but outwardly they would stand united in a single Prussian Protestant or Evangelical Church. This was no precipitous step. As early as 1802 a committee had been formed to prepare a single form of worship to be used in both confessions. The committee's work was interrupted during the Napoleonic wars but the goal remained in view. In 1814, when the integrity of Prussia could once again be asserted, the work again went forward. Three years earlier, in 1811, the king had begun the work of gradually outlawing the outward distinctive features of the two confessions. Henceforth Reformed clergy would be required to lay aside their weekday dress and stand before the table of the Lord wearing the garment associated with the learned professions, the black *Talar* and white *Beffchen*. The Lutherans would be required to lay aside their albs, surplices, chasubles, and copes and adopt the *Talar*, which they had previously worn only for preaching, as their only clerical vestment⁷⁰. Further steps needed to be taken to bring the confessions into outward conformity. Both confessions would need to employ a single form of worship. The king was not altogether satisfied with the liturgy his committee proposed in their 1815 report⁷¹. He was widely considered to be a competent

⁷⁰ Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *The Survival of the Historic Vestments in the Lutheran Church after 1555*, Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1956, p. 86.

⁷¹ Erich Foerster, *Die Entstehung der preussischen Landeskirche unter der Regierung König Friedrich Wilhelms III.: nach den Quellen erzählt. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirchenbildung im deutschen Protestantismus*, t. 1, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1905, p. 223–224.

amateur liturgiologist. He had studied the historic liturgies of Christian churches and particularly admired Luther's liturgical writings. Within the Lutheran family of church orders he particularly liked the 1540 Mark-Brandenburg Church Order of Joachim II which contained catholic elements. He found them to provide a sense of continuity with the pre-Reformation era which were at the same time esthetically pleasing. Although he was a member of the Reformed confession he believed that the liturgical tradition of the Lutherans better captured the ecclesiastical spirit of Evangelical Christianity⁷².

Friedrich Wilhelm III was in no position to impose any liturgy on his evangelical subjects. He could, however, prescribe a form of worship to be used by his military forces, and so he took the first step toward a common liturgy by publishing in 1816 a form of worship to be used in the Garrison Churches in Potsdam and Berlin. Before long he extended the requirement to all garrison congregations in the realm. What had begun as a small booklet grew by 1821 into an entire agenda, entitled: *Kirchen-Agende für die Königlich Preussische Armee* (*Church Agenda for the Royal Prussian Army*).

Now the king was ready to warmly recommend that its use be extended also to the cathedral church in Berlin. The title of the agenda now became: *Kirchen-Agende für die Hof- und Domkirche in Berlin* (*Church Agenda for the Court and Cathedral Church in Berlin*). A second edition appeared in 1822. The king was now prepared to suggest to his two evangelical confessions that they might want to make use of this agenda in their congregations as well. He stated in a cabinet order of February 19, 1822 it was to be understood by all that there would be no compulsion in this matter⁷³. However, to encourage the churches and pastors he saw to it that copies of the agenda were distributed far and wide to all ecclesiastical authorities, consistories,

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 230–231.

⁷³ Friedrich Brandes, *Geschichte der evangelischen Union in Preussen*, t. 2: Die Zeil der Unionsstiftungen, Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873, p. 348.

and superintendents throughout the realm. The handwriting was on the wall; it was the will of the king that this agenda should in the course of time be used everywhere and by all.

If the king thought that his obviously superior liturgical agenda would be eagerly adopted, he soon found that he had been too optimistic. Neither the Lutherans nor the Reformed were willing to take it to their bosoms. The Reformed were not enthusiastic about using a liturgy which was Lutheran and which contained elements which they condemned as “catholic.” Lutherans did not like the liturgy for several reasons. They insisted that it was not the king’s prerogative to produce such a work and they felt compelled to reject the liturgy because it gave the Our Father in a form which differed from that found in Luther’s Small Catechism. It began with *Unser Vater* rather than *Vater unser*, a point of distinction which the Lutherans viewed as extremely important. In addition the formula for the distribution of the sacrament was equivocating; it did not clearly state that the sacramental gifts given and received are the very body and blood of Christ. Both Lutherans and Reformed were angered by the requirement that the time of the service be limited to one hour and that the members of the congregation were now reduced to the role of spectators with the pastor and choir performing the liturgy. The only role left for the congregation was to sing hymns. This too became a point of contention among the Prussian Lithuanians because they wanted to sing whole hymns – even those with 17 stanzas, while the new liturgy prescribed that only parts of hymns should be sung. Those of Pietist background love to sing and now they were given little opportunity to do so. In addition few Lithuanian congregations had choirs. Of the more than 400 churches in East Prussia only 50 pastors were willing to follow the king’s suggestion in 1822. The consistory felt obligated to follow his wishes and in its rescript on October 17, 1822 it recommended that the congregations alternate week by week between the old and the new liturgies. It also stated

that only priests and deacons who were willing to follow this direction would henceforth be appointed and installed. The first church in Königsberg to fall into line was the castle church. On Christmas day 1823 Bishop Ludwig Ernst Borowski introduced the new rite. This had the desired effect. By 1824 the number of congregations in East Prussia conforming to the king's wishes had risen to 285⁷⁴. On May 28, 1825 the king issued a cabinet order declaring that it was obvious that the new liturgy was a great success, since out of 7782 churches in the Prussian provinces 5343 had already adopted it. That it was not being used everywhere and by all could only be the result of misunderstandings and lack of information. The king charged all governments in the realm to clarify this matter so that all could see that this liturgy was based upon Scripture and the Reformation, and that its use would bring great blessings. On October 29, 1825 the Königsberg consistory dutifully decreed that all parishes were obliged to use the new rite and that no candidates would be ordained or certified who did not pledge themselves to do so⁷⁵.

The Lithuanian seminar at the University of Königsberg, and its Director Rhesa were made responsible to ensure that all Lithuanian speaking parishes in Prussia were provided with the Lithuanian translation of the agenda. The translation was completed in 1825. The Polish seminar was given the same responsibility and produced a Polish translation which corresponded exactly the German title: *Agenda Kościelna dla Kościoła nadwornego i Katedralnego w Berlinie* (*Church Agenda for the Court and Cathedral Church in Berlin*). Rhesa did not go quite that far. He named the book: *Agenda tai esti Suraszimas Pagraudėnimū ir Maldū Lietuwōs Bažnycziosa skaitomū* (*Agenda, that is the Written Exhortations and Prayers to be Read in*

⁷⁴ Walther Hubatsch *Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche Ostpreussens I*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht, 1968, p. 285.

⁷⁵ Adolf Heckert, *Handbuch der kirchlichen gesetzgebung Preussens*. Für geistliche, kirchenpatrone, verwaltungsbeamte und juristen. Herausgegeben von Adolph Heckert, t. 1, Berlin: Heymann, 1846, p. 299.

Lithuanian Churches). No doubt this change made the work more acceptable to his Lithuanian pastors. It was published together with the supplementary prayers which the king had published in 1823. This section was entitled: *Pridejimas Maldū, Žodžiū szwento Raszto etc. isz senujų Agendū surinktū, Nedėldienomis ir Szwentėmis prie Liturgiōs skaitomū su patrumpinta Liturgia* (*Appendix of Prayers and Words of the Holy Scriptures, etc. Compiled from Old Agendas to be Read in the Liturgy on Sundays and Holy Days along with an Excerpt from the Liturgy*). Now the Lithuanians had the Prussian Union liturgy in their own tongue.

The number of congregations in East Prussia using the new rite now increased. By end of 1826 339 pastors serving 347 churches adopted it and 72 pastors serving in 63 churches still refused to comply. In 1827 more pastors conformed – the number of pastors who adopted the agenda rose to 343, but the number of churches using it dropped to 329⁷⁶.

Resistance still continued in other Prussian provinces as well, and the king recognized that absolute uniformity would never be achieved. In a conciliatory gesture he formally announced on January 4, 1829 that each province was permitted to publish and use its own edition of the agenda which might differ in minor details from the 1822 rite. In East Prussia a committee of twelve clergymen representing various regions had been at work since 1827 to consider possible changes⁷⁷. They decided that the length of the service could be determined by the congregation. So too local congregations could

⁷⁶ Walter Wendland, *Ludwig Ernst von Borowski, Erzbischof der evangelischen Kirche in Preußen, ein Beitrag z. Geschichte d. ostpreuß. Kirche im Zeitalter d. Aufklärung von Walter Wendland, Pastor in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.* (ser. *Schriften d. Synodal-kommission f. ostpreuß. Kirchengeschichte*; sqs. 9.), Königsberg: Kommissionsverlag Fer. Beyers Buchhandlung, 1910, p. 64.

⁷⁷ Erich Foerster *Die Entstehung der preussischen Landeskirche unter der Regierung König Friedrich Wilhelms III.: nach den Quellen erzählt. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirchenbildung im deutschen Protestantismus*, t. 2, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907, p. 164.

decide whether or not to include the exorcism in Baptism and a catechetical message after the sermon. Kneeling for communion should be everywhere encouraged and, where it had not already become the practice, it should be introduced gradually. In congregations with meager financial resources the altar candles might be lit only on high feasts but everywhere the two candles were to be on the altar at all times. Every congregation must acquire a Bible to be placed on the altar. Prayers from the old liturgy could be said. The form of the Our Father was to conform to Luther's Catechism. These recommendations were approved on April 14, 1829 and as the result 395 pastors out of 401 churches in East Prussia now adopted the agenda⁷⁸. It was published in 1829 under title: *Agende für die evangelische Kirche in den Königlich Preussischen Landen mit besonderen Bestimmungen und Zusätzen für die Provinz Preußen (Agenda for the Evangelical Church in the Royal Prussian Lands with Special Regulations and Editions for the Province of Prussia)*. Among those who signed the consistory's preface was Rhesa, who that year became a member of the consistory.

The Reformed refused to waiver in their opposition. Of the 14 Reformed churches in East Prussia 11 refused to use it⁷⁹.

The revised agenda needed to be published in the Lithuanian language and once again it was Rhesa who took the task upon himself. 165 copies were printed in 1830 under the title: *Agenda, tai esti Knygos Pagraudėnimū ir Maldū ewangelizkosa Bažnyciosia Lietuwos skaitytinū (Agenda that is the Books of Exhortations and Prayers to be Read in the Evangelical Churches of Lithuania)*⁸⁰.

1830 was the 300th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession and the king expressed his desire that all evangelical congregations in his realm should mark the occasion by celebrating the Lord's Supper as given in the new agenda. Furthermore, he decreed

⁷⁸ Walther Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁸⁰ Walter Wendland, *op. cit.*, p. 66; Walther Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

that henceforth the designations *Lutheran* and *Reformed* were to be entirely discarded. Henceforth the people of Prussia would be known as *Evangelicals*, and United Prussian Church would be the *Evangelical Church* (Germ. *Evangelische Kirche*)⁸¹. This declaration provoked a strong reaction among many Lutherans, particularly in Silesia where Johann Gottfried Scheibel was professor of theology at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Breslau. Scheibel protested loudly. In 1834 the king proclaimed that the use of any old agenda was henceforth forbidden, and the consistories declared that pastors who did not conform would be defrocked⁸². If they continued to serve as pastors, they would be taken into the state courts to be dealt with as criminals. There is no evidence to suggest that any Prussian Lithuanian pastors refused to comply to the new orders. The 1830 agenda became the standard in all Prussian Lithuanian congregations.

RHESA'S INTELLECTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HIS TWILIGHT YEARS

Rhesa continued his intensive studies of church history and theology to the close of his days. At the request of the Prussian consistory Rhesa undertook the publication of a short biography of each of the pastors who had served in the Eastern and Western Prussian Churches. The work appeared in two parts, both of which were published in 1834. The first was entitled *Kurzgefasste Nachrichten von allen seit 1775 an den evangelischen Kirchen in Ostpreussen angestellten Predigern* (*Short Report on the Pastors Serving the Evangelical Church in East Prussia since 1775*). This volume was meant to supplement the 1777 work of Daniel Heinrich Arnoldt⁸³ with material on later

⁸¹ Adolph Heckert, *op. cit.*, p. 300–306.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 306–307.

⁸³ Daniel Heinrich Arnoldt, *Kurzgefasste Nachrichten von allen seit der Reformation an den lutherischen Kirchen in Ostpreußen geestandenenen Predigern*, Hrsg. von Friedrich Wilhelm Benefeldt, Königsberg: Hartung, 1777.

pastors, including updated material on Gottfried Ostermeyer (Lith. *Gotfridas Ostermejeris*), Kristijonas Donelaitis, and other pastors who had served in East Prussia since that time. The second volume which dealt with West Prussian pastors was entitled: *Kurzgefasste Nachrichten von allen seit der Reformation an den evangelischen Kirchen in Westpreussen angestellten Predigern (Short Report on the Pastors who have Served the Evangelical Church in West Prussia Since the Reformation)*. It was based on Rhesa's own studies.

Several articles written as a result of Rhesa's research are either no longer available or are difficult to find and obtain. Unavailable is the lecture Rhesa delivered in a meeting of the Royal German Society in Königsberg on the occasion of the 300 anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. It was entitled *Uebergabe der Augsburgischen Konfession, namentlich aus welchen Gesichtspunkten wir dasselbe zu betrachten haben (The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession, in particular from what Perspective We Should Consider It)*. Knowledge of this lecture comes chiefly from the report of it by Vaclovas Biržiška⁸⁴. The article *Historia Augustanae Confessionis in Prussia (The History of the Augsburg Confession in Prussia)*, written two years later, may be a new edition of the earlier lecture. It appeared in print in a university booklet published at Eastertide 1832.

Other articles not easily obtainable or perhaps no longer extant include a short study on Marcus Antonius Flaminius' (Lat. *Marcan-tono Flaminio*) interpretation of the Psalms in *De M. Ant. Flaminio Psalmorum interprete Provisio*, published in 1813. A short examination on the unity of the church as understood by Reformation writers appeared in 1830 under the title *Inest meditation de unitate ecclesiae, a reformationis auctoribus non sublata sed plenius restituta*. In 1830 Rhesa published an early study on the beginnings of the

⁸⁴ Vaclovas Biržiška, *Aleksandrynas: Senujų lietuvių rašytojų, rašiusių prieš 1865 m., biografijos, bibliografijos ir biobibliografijos*, t. 2: XVIII–XIX amžiai, Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros fondas, 1990, p. 335.

Anabaptist movement, entitled: *Commentatio de primordiis studiorum fanaticorum Anabaptistarum saeculo XVI*, and in 1832 a study on the origins of the Königsberg Cathedral *Commentatio de origine Ecclesiae Cathedralis Regiomonti* appeared. In 1833 he published in Königsberg *Commentationis de duplici Psalmi XVIII exemplo*, which consisted of comments on the two versions of Psalm 118 found in the Old Testament. An examination of the phrase “A light to enlighten the nations” (Luke 2:32) appeared in his study *De verbo phōs eis apokalypsin ethnōn Luc. 2, 32* in 1834. He also published in Königsberg in 1834 an article, entitled: *Qua ostenditur, doctrinam de diabolo, aptissimam Theologiae V. T., penitus abhorreere a Theologia Christiana*. It was a study of the teaching concerning the Devil which was accepted in Old Testament theology but which could no longer be regarded as pertinent from the standpoint of Christian theology⁸⁵.

The three later studies on the Anabaptist Movement appeared in 1834, 1836 and 1838. They were final articles in his series on the history of the Reformation in Prussia. Having devoted himself to the major figures instrumental in the establishment of the Lutheran Reformation, he used these articles to consider the radical reformers and gave particular attention to the circumstances surrounding the synod at Rastenburg of June 8–9, 1531 and major protagonists involved.

As elsewhere in German speaking lands the Lutheran Reformation first attracted the educated and then the middle class. It attracted few among those who were completely uneducated. They lived in a different world, a world of superstition and class hatred. Even after the defeat of the peasants in the rebellion of 1524–1525, in which social and economic factors predominated over any doctrinal considerations, the spread of radical notions among the uneducated in the cities continued unabated, and soon it began to attract some in the higher classes of society as well.

⁸⁵ These works of Rhesa along with his 1807 dissertation were not available to the author at the time when this study was prepared.

In Prussia the Anabaptists, who represented the so-called left wing of the Reformation, found in the person of Duke Albrecht's friend Friedrich von Heydeck a strong protector. With his help many Anabaptists made their way as refugees to Prussia. Among them were Schwenckfeldians who had for a time found refuge in Liegnitz, but had later been expelled. Heydeck thought them to be very spiritual and himself became an Enthusiast. He also undertook to find preachers of the same mind to come to Prussia. Among them was Peter Zenker, an enthusiast preacher who had been expelled from Danzig. It was Heydeck's plan that Zenker should take up the pastorate of the Johannisburg parish, however, no pastor could be called or installed without the express confirmation of the bishop. The Pomesanian Bishop Speratus insisted that Zenker must provide him with a written confession of his theological orthodoxy, especially concerning the Word of God, the Lord's Supper, Original Sin, and Holy Baptism. Zenker presented a confession based upon the writings of the Augsburg Anabaptist preacher Michael Keller (Lat. *Cellarius*). This confession ran counter to the Augsburg Confession in every part and Speratus refused to approve his installation. Von Heydeck used his influence on Albrecht to overrule the bishop and Speratus then decided that the matter would be taken up at the next synod at Rastenburg on June 8–9, 1531⁸⁶.

Rhesa regarded the controversy concerning Zenker to be a significant milestone in the history of the Lutheran Reformation in Prussia, and he devoted no less than three articles to it.

The first article appeared in 1834 in a university booklet published at Pentecost under the general title: *Historiae Anabaptistarum et Sacramentariorum in Prussia, e documentis adhuc incognitis adumbratae, initia* (*History of the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians in Prussia based upon the Documentary Evidence. The Opening Phase*). In this article Rhesa provided an overview of the relationship between the

⁸⁶ Paul Tschackert, *op. cit.*, p. 190–195; Walther Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 67–71.

Prussian Church and its bishops on the one hand and the attempts of opponents to introduce novelties, particularly concerning the relationship between the written Scriptures, preaching, and the Word of God, the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper, Original Sin and its effects, and the practice of infant Baptism. These were matters concerning which Lutherans and Sacramentarians could not agree. Their consideration was central in Speratus refutation of Peter Zenker's confession. Speratus stated that the so-called external word, the word which the ministers of Christ preach, is indeed the Word of God, a living and eternal testimony. It was not some new or other Word of God that they proclaimed. The word heard by the congregation was indeed the Word of God. So too the bread and the wine at the Eucharist must be confessed to be the very body and blood of Christ present by sacramental union, so that the body born of Mary, the body which hanged on the cross, was received by communicants. This was incomprehensible to human reason, but faith looks not to reason but to the Words of Christ. Original Sin was much more than a simple defect of nature. It was a deep-seated sin inherited from Adam from which the Second Adam, Christ, must come to save man. Concerning the Baptism of infants and baptismal regeneration, the words of the Apostles, the testimony of the Ancient Fathers, Cyril, Gregory of Nazianzus, Dionysius, Cyprian, and Augustine among others stand firmly in support of the church's confession⁸⁷.

The second article, published by the university in the Christmas season 1836, appeared under the same general title. In it Rhesa deals more deeply with the position taken by Zenker and the Anabaptists on the four chief points in question. His intention was to provide an historical overview of the circumstances which led to the contention

⁸⁷ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Historiae Anabaptistarum et Sacramentarium in Prussia, e documentis adhuc incognitis adumbratae, initia. Programma I. Festo Pentecostes A. p. Chr. Nat. MDCCXXXIV. Academiae Albertinae Civibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu Universit. I. Regiomontanae propositum*, Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1834.

in the Synod at Rastenburg. He particularly notes Speratus' refutation of Zenker's view of John 6 as the *sedes doctrinae* of the Lord's Supper, stating that it was clear that the sacrament was not the subject in this chapter⁸⁸.

The third article, entitled: *Historiae Anabaptistarum et Sacramentariorum in Prussia Partic. III (History of the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians in Prussia Part III)*, appeared at Christmas 1838, two years before Rhesa's death, in a university booklet. In it he examined more closely the position of Zenker and its foundations in the teachings of Keller.

He included in his presentation a seven point refutation of the position taken by Keller and Zenker with special emphasis on the Lord's Supper. (1) The Words of Institution cannot be understood to be parabolic. They must be taken as they stand as an historical narrative. (2) Neither are the words of Christ to be understood allegorically, as Schwenckfeld insists, when he builds his presentation on John 6. (3) The words of the evangelists and St. Paul must be taken as they stand; none of the holy writers seek to provide a special interpretation of their meaning. (4) The fathers of the church take the words of the apostles as they stand without employing the interpretive methods of allegory or other literary devices. (5) The divine and human natures are conjoined in the person of Christ without intermixture, and so too in the sacrament the bread and wine are conjoined with the body and blood (*unio sacramentalis*). (6) The sacramentarians cannot agree about the meaning of the Words of Christ. Schwenckfeld inverts the words: "My body is this," that is to say – food for the soul. Luther's view shows the errors of Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, Andreas Karlstadt, and the Schwenckfeldians, no two of whom agreed. (7)

⁸⁸ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Historiae Anabaptistarum et Sacramentariorum in Prussia, e documentis adhuc incognitis adumbratae, initia. Programma II. Natalitiis Jesu Christi Anni MDCCCXXXVI. Academiae Albertinae Civibus a Prorectore, Cancellario, Directore et Senatu Universit. Regiomontanae propositum*, Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1836.

Nothing is impossible to the Word of God. Human reason is not able to understand how Christ, sitting at the right hand of God, can at the same time be present in the sacrament. Faith does not deny it but devoutly meditates on it⁸⁹.

In all three articles Rhesa shows that Bishop Speratus sought to avoid schism and heresy in the Prussian Church. Through the philanthropy of the duke many Protestants found refuge in Prussia and brought with them views which diverged greatly from the Augsburg Confession. The bishop found it necessary to address this situation in the colloquium at Rastenburg on December 30–31, 1531 and again later. In 1535 Duke Albrecht mandated that the unity of doctrine and the church must be maintained. The Prussian Church order of 1525 had to be upheld and the Church of the Augsburg Confession alone could be the legitimate church in Prussia⁹⁰. Those who did not agree with the Augsburg Confession must either leave or keep their views strictly to themselves. Pockets of Schwenckfeldians survived into the 18th century but the church was left in peace.

The careful scholarship of Professor Rhesa was widely acknowledged in academic and ecclesiastical circles and other writers often cited his works. With the encouragement of Karl Lieven, vice-president of the Russian Bible Society and from the 1828 minister of education in the Tsar's government, Rhesa was called to the faculty of theology in the University of Dorpat (Est. *Tartu*). He understood that Rhesa would be most helpful to him in his attempts to put an end to the rationalist theologizing which was then dominant in the university. Lieven had begun his reformatory program when in 1817 he was appointed curator of the Dorpat educational region. As a result

⁸⁹ Ludovicus Rhesa, *Natalitia Jesu Christi Anni MDCCCXXXVIII pie celebranda Civibus Academicis indicunt Prorektor, Director et Senatus Academiae Regiomontanae. Inest: Historiae Anabaptistarum et Sacramentariorum in Prussia Partic. III., auctore Ludov. Rhesa, Theol. D. et Prof. primar., Facult. Theol. Sen., Consist. reg. a consil. cet., Regiomonti: Typis Academicis Hartungianis, 1838.*

⁹⁰ Walther Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

of his efforts some rationalist theological professors were forced to relinquish their positions and others retired early⁹¹. He was a Pietist and regarded Rhesa as the most suitable candidate for a professorial chair at Dorpat. However, Rhesa declined to leave Königsberg, stating that he wanted to remain in his homeland and continue to work for the benefit of its peoples⁹².

Rhesa enjoyed a long and distinguished academic career at the University of Königsberg. Beginning in 1819 he served several times as dean of the faculty of theology. Included among his terms of service were the winter semesters of 1821–1822 and 1822–1823, the summer semesters of 1825, 1828, and 1840, as well as the winter semesters of 1826–1827, 1829–1830 and 1831–1832. In the winter semesters of 1820–1821, 1824–1825, and 1830–1831 he served as the vice-rector, the chief operating officer in the university. The designation “rector” was an honorary title which from 1807 was given to the next in line in the royal family⁹³. In 1829 Rhesa was made a member of the Royal Prussian consistory⁹⁴, and in 1832 he was given membership in the Leipzig Historical-Theological Society (Germ. *Historisch-theologische Gesellschaft zu Leipzig*). He received special medals and decorations for his military and academic services in 1814, 1818, and 1840⁹⁵.

Ludwig Rhesa came from humble beginnings. He was taken as an orphan into the home of family members and enjoyed no advantage of high pedigree. He proceeded by his own dedicated efforts to master difficult subjects and win a place of honor in the academic and ecclesiastical communities of his day. His contributions to the education of his students, particularly in theology, history, and philology, as well as in the literature of the Lithuanian people won him the tribute of his

⁹¹ Erik Amburger, *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Russland*, Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1961.

⁹² F. W. Schubert, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁹³ Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvikas Rėza*, p. 41.

⁹⁴ F. W. Schubert, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁹⁵ Albinas Jovaišas, *Liudvikas Rėza*, p. 50.

contemporaries. No other man who identified himself as a Lithuanian was ever granted the responsibility of vice-rector directing the daily operations of one of the greatest European universities.

Rhesa devoted himself entirely to his work; he never married. He died in the closing days of summer 1840 in Königsberg at the age of 64 years⁹⁶.

Īteikta: 2010-10-09

Priimta: 2010-11-15

⁹⁶ F. W. Schubert, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

Darius Petkūnas

LIUDVIKAS MARTYNAS RĖZA –
ŽYMUS KARALIAUČIAUS UNIVERSITETO MOKSLININKAS
BEI PRŪSIJOS LIUTERONŲ BAŽNYČIOS TEOLOGAS

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamas Karaliaučiaus universiteto vicerektoriaus, teologijos profesoriaus bei kunigo Liudviko Martyno Rėzos gyvenimo kelias. Jame apibendrinami Rėzos jaunystės metai, jo studijos Karaliaučiaus universitete bei vėlesnė dvasinė tarnyba Prūsijos Liuteronų Bažnyčioje, taip pat įvertinami jo 1812–1815 metų teologinių pažiūrų fragmentai. Ypatingas dėmesys straipsnyje skiriamas Rėzos publikuotų darbų analizei to laikotarpio kontekste, vertinama jo akademinė veikla Karaliaučiaus universitete, jo laikysena Prūsijos unijos atžvilgiu, ypač publikuojant 1825 ir 1830 metų lietuviškas unijines agendas, bei jo moksliniai darbai gyvenimo saulėlydyje.

Rėzos teologinis ir istorinis palikimas rodo, kad mokslininkas buvo ne tik populiarus Prūsijos lietuvių tautosakos rinkėjas ar Mažosios Lietuvos kultūros mylėtojas. Pagrindinis jo pašaukimas buvo dvasinė tarnystė Prūsijos evangelikų liuteronų Bažnyčioje bei teologinė ir akademinė veikla Karaliaučiaus universitete.