

Vanags, Pēteris, *Luterānu rokasgrāmatas avoti: Vecākā perioda (16. Gs-17 gs. sākuma) latviešu teksti (The sources of the Lutheran handbook: latvian texts of the older period [16th and beginning of the 17th centuries])* Stockholm, Memento; Rīga, Mantojums, 2000, 432 pp.

In the foreword, Vanags writes that it was his intention to study Latvian texts of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, but that there was a lack of precise information about the originals from which the Latvian translations were made, information that could illuminate a number of unclear cases. This book is an attempt to fill that void.

The introduction describes the beginnings of the Reformation in Riga. As Vanags points out, one of Martin Luther's fundamental theses was to preach the gospel in the language of the people. This stimulated the translation not only of the Old and New Testaments, but also the translation or composition of other religious texts in many languages. The year 1521 marks the beginning of the Reformation in Riga, when Andreas Knopken (or Knoepken) began to preach in the Evangelical spirit. Possibly, Knopken compiled Riga's first German hymnal (1529), some hymns of which were translated and published in the first Latvian hymnals. Dating from this epoch is the first mention of possible Latvian books or texts. In 1525, the Catholic town council of Lübeck confiscated from some traders some Livonian (dialect) Latvian and Estonian Lutheran books and missals in a barrel destined for Riga. There may have been a translation by Nicolaus Ramm or some other clergyman of the Latvian congregation, which would correspond roughly to the Lutheran service order that Sylvester Tegetmeyer had drawn up in the spring of 1525. There exists, unfortunately, only a mention of this, since the book itself has not been found. In 1530, however, there appeared in Riga Johann Briesmann's *Kurtz Ordnung des Kirchendienstes (Short Church Service Book)*, which could serve as the basis for texts for services in Latvian.

Chapter One discusses the development of the German hymnals and the various translations made from them. The author writes that Low German editions of the Riga hymnal are known from the years 1530, 1537, 1548, 1559, 1567, 1574 and 1592 with supplements from 1552 (?), 1567, 1592 and 1596. In 1587 the Curonian church handbook was published, the hymnal part of which was entitled: *Vneudsche Psalmen und geistliche Lieder oder Gesenge welche in den Kirchen des Fürstenthums Churland und Semigallien in Liefflande gesungen werden. M.D. LXXXVII* (Non-German psalms and spiritual songs or hymns which are sung in the churches of the duchy of Curonia and Semigallia in Livonia. 1587.) This hymnal contains 58 hymns and corresponds to the newer German agendas of 1567 and 1574, thereby showing the close relationships between these two hymn books. In 1615, a new Lutheran church handbook, which contained a hymnal, was published in Riga: *Psalmen und geistliche Lieder oder Gesenge welche in den Kirchen Gottes zu Riga und anderen örtern Liefflandes mehr in Lieffländischer Pawrsprache gesungen werden. Gedruckt zu Riga in Liefflandt bey Nicolaus Mollin 1615* (Psalms and spiritual songs or hymns which are sung in the churches of God in Riga and other places in Livonia mostly in the Livonian peasant language, printed in Riga at Nicolaus Mollin, 1615.) This hymnal, containing about 150 songs, is much larger than the 1587 Curonian hymnal. The 1615 Riga hymnal contains the complete works of the Riga Latvian congregation, works translated during the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. A comparison of songs from the Latvian hymnals with the originals in the Riga German hymnals reveals a whole set of songs that may have been translated from the first or second German hymnals or other sources of the 1530s. Such songs may be divided into five groups: (1) The three dated hymns of Nicolaus Ramm and Johannes Eck in the 1615 edition; (2) Sixteen hymns with textual peculiarities corresponding to the 1530 and 1537 editions of the German hymnal; (3) Five psalms, with an uncertain connection to the initial translation from the 1530 edition, that were later revised according to the 1537 (or later) editions; (4) thirteen hymns with texts corresponding not only to the first two editions, but also to the following (1548) edition of the Riga German hymnal; (5) nineteen hymns or other texts that may have been translated within a broader time frame, but for which an early translation is not ruled out. Tables show exactly which hymns and psalms encountered in the Latvian hymnals are also encountered in the 1530 and 1537 Riga German hymnals. It could well be then, that Latvian translations were made from these early German translations, perhaps by Johannes Eck, chief pastor of St. Jacob's church from 1534-1543 (or 1551?).

In chapter Two Vanags writes that if one considers that practically all the Latvian hymns are translated from Riga German hymn books and not from other sources, by comparing the German editions of various years, i.e., the time of the appearance of the hymns as well as the differences in the German texts in the various editions, one can determine reliably enough the age of a large portion of the Latvian hymns. Vanags compares the texts of the hymns that appeared in the 1587 Curonian and/or the 1615 Riga hymnals with a proposed German original in parallel columns. The hymns are listed in alphabetical order by the title or the first word of the first line of the Latvian translation and according to the sequence of letters in the Latvian alphabet. The following aspects of each hymn are discussed: the author or translator of the German text, the earliest known date of publication, the year when the German hymn appeared in a Riga hymnal, the history of the hymn, a comparison of the Latvian translation with the German original, and a possible date and author for the translation. Thus for example, we encounter: (1587 Curonian hymnal) *Abßelo thöw mannis O Kunx Dews/ Peetcz touwe lelel ßeelestibe*; (1615 Riga hymnal) *Abßelo töw mannim O Kunx Dews/ petz touwas lelas ßeestibas*: (1530 Low German text) *Erbarm dy myner o Here Godt / I na dyner groten barmherticheyt* (Have thou mercy upon me, o Lord God, according to thy great compassion.) Vanags notes that this is a rendering of Psalm 51 by Erhart Hegenwalt and published in German for the first time in 1524. According to Vanags, the Latvian translations are close to one another, but the differences in orthography and text do not allow one variant to be considered the basis for the other. Various philological considerations lead Vanags to conclude that the translation was made by Johannes Eck from the 1530 Riga German hymnal and later edited, or that the translation was made later from another original.

Martin Luther's famous hymn 'A mighty fortress is our God', based on Psalm 46, was published in Low German in the 1530 Riga hymnal and in a Latvian translation in the 1615 Riga hymnal. A second Latvian version was attached to the Curonian 1587 hymnal preserved in the Tartu library. The hymn begins: (1587 Tartu) *Wens slippers pils gir muse dews, / Wens labs erodtze vnd sckyde*; (1615 Riga) *WEna stippra Pils gir mufo Dews / wens I labbs Eroths vnd brunnas*; (1548 Riga [Low German]) *EYn vaste Borch ys vnse Godt| eyn gude weer vnd wapen* (A mighty fortress is our God, a good defense and armament.) Vanags concludes that both Latvian texts are independent translations and that the exact times of translation are impossible to establish. Still, certain characteristics show that the source is not the Riga 1530 or 1537 hymnal, but probably the 1548 edition. In any case, in the course of time, the text was edited and the endings corrected.

Chapter Three discusses the writing of the Lutheran Catechism and its sources. Vanags writes that, in spite of indications that a Latvian Catechism was published in the middle of the sixteenth century, the first extant printed Lutheran Catechism is the 1586 Curonian Catechism or the Enchiridion. *Der kleine Catechismus: Oder Christliche zucht für gemeinen Pfarherr vnd Prediger auch Hausueter etc. Durch D. Martin. Luther. NUn aber aus dem Deudschen ins vndeudsche gebracht vnd von wort zu wort wie es von D.M. Luthero gesetzt gefasset werden. Gedruckt zu Königsperg bey George Offerbergern Anno M.D. LXXXVI* (Enchiridion. The small Catechism: Or Christian education for common pastors and preachers as well as heads of households etc. By Dr. Martin Luther. Now, however, translated from German into non-German and prepared word for word as it was written by D.M. Luther, Printed in Königsberg at George Offerbergern's in the year of Our Lord 1586.) Here, for example Vanags writes that the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in the 1586 Curonian Catechism: *Muuße Thews/exkan to Debbes* is one of the most difficult to explain. The text is quite different from the existing versions in the Lutheran Catechisms: (High German) *Vater unfer der du bift jm himel*; (Low German) *Vater unfe de du bift ym Hemmel*. This points to an earlier medieval tradition, and some sixteenth-century Latvian translations point to such an original, e.g., *Tewes muss kas tu es exca[n] debbesiss* (Bruno) and *teweß mueß kha tu ese exkan debbesyß* (Ghisbert). During the Reformation there is, however, also another German tradition which corresponds to that found in the Latvian 1587 Curonian and the 1615 Riga church handbooks: *Unser Vater in dem Himmel*. From 1520, this is used in various editions: the Catechism of the Bohemian Brothers, Melancthon's *Handbüchlein* (1523), from 1522 on in Luther's own translation of the New Testament (Matthew 6, 9; Luke 11, 2) and many other publications. In fact, Luther was subject to sharp criticism for changing the traditional word order, although he left that word order in later Bible translation editions. On the other hand, in the catechetical works generally the version corresponding to the older tradition is retained. In the Catechism, the Latvian variant reflects well the Lutheran point of view and probably derives from an early translation in the 'twenties of the fifteenth century.

Chapter Four is a study of the collections of Bible readings for specified days (perkopes). The second part of the 1587 Königsberg Latvian church handbook is entitled *Euangelia vnd Episteln aus dem deudschen in vndeudsche Sprache gebracht so durchs gantze Jar auff all Sontage vnd fürnemsten Feste in den Kirchen des Fürstenthumbs Churlandt vnd Semigallien in Lieffland vor die vndeudschen gelesen werden. Mit der Historien des Leidens vnd Ausserstehung vnsers HErrn Jesu Christi aus den vier Euangelisten. Gedruckt zu Königsperg in Preussen bey George Offerbergern. M.D. LXXXVII* (Gospels and epistles translated from German into non-German so that they may be read to the non-Germans on all Sundays and the most important holy days in the churches of the duchy of Curonia and Semigallia in Livonia. With the history of the Passion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ by the authors of the four gospels. Printed in Königsberg at George Offerbergern's in the year 1587.) This was reprinted practically without change in the 1615 Riga edition. In his discussion of the differences between the High and the Low German versions of Luther's Bible translation, Vanags writes that frequently the Latvian translation was made from the Low German, rather than the High German. For example, compare the Latvian (Luke 1, 50): *Vnde winge Szeelestibe palleek mußige no wene Radde litzce Otre* which corresponds to the Low German *Vnde syne Barmherticheit waret jümmer van einem Geslechte tho dem andern* (And his mercy protects always from one generation to the next) more closely than to the High German *Vnd seine Barmhertigkeit wehret jmer fur vnd fur* (And his mercy protects always for ever and ever).

Chapter Five concerns the selection that is placed in the 1587 collections of gospels and epistles between Maundy Thursday and Easter and entitled: *PASSIO. Von dem Leiden vnd Sterben vnsers HERN vnd Heilandes Jefus Christi nach den vier Euangelisten Aus Deudscher sprache in Vndeudsche gebracht durch Godthard. Reymers Predi. zum Bouschenburg. Anno 1587* (The Passion. From the suffering and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists. Translated from the German language into non-German by Godthard Reymer, pastor at Bauska. In the year 1587). For the most part, Reymer's Latvian translations are closer to the Low German than the High German, e.g., *Kad nu Jesus to Eticke py ßōw yemis by/ßatcy thas* corresponds more closely to the Low German *Do nu Jhesus den etick tho sick genamen hadde/ sprack er* (when Jesus had taken the vinegar to himself, he said) than to the High German *Do nu Jhesus den esig genomen hatte/ sprach er* in which the words 'to himself' are missing. There are a few places, however, where the Latvian translation corresponds to the High German rather than the Low German, e.g., *vnde eßaka bhedates/ tryseeeth vnd bayloth* corresponds to the High German *vnd fieng an zutrawern vnd zittern vnd zagen* (and began to grieve, to tremble and to quail) more closely than to the Low German *vnde höff an tho trurende/ tzeterende vnd tzaghafftich tho werden(de)* (and began to grieve, tremble and to be fearful.)

Vanags concludes that the Latvian Lutheran texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were created during a rather long period in the sixteenth century in the form of manuscripts that were gradually supplemented. The first Latvian Lutheran hymnals were based on hymns translated from Low German sources of the sixteenth century. The first manuscript of a hymn book dates from the 'thirties of the sixteenth century, when from the German 1530 and 1537 editions more than fifty texts may have been translated that became the basis for later editions. The manuscript was gradually supplemented in the course of the sixteenth century and published for the first time in 1587 in Königsberg, as edited by four Curonian pastors. In the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, various pastors supplemented the manuscripts used in Riga, and these were eventually published in 1615 as the Riga Latvian hymn book.

The German original for the first part of the 1586 Riga Latvian Catechism has not been discovered. The text of the Ten Commandments in this Catechism was apparently first translated in the sixteenth century and then later partially harmonized with the Lutheran Small Catechism version. The text of the Creed is close to the Low German variant of the Small Catechism; therefore, it is possible that it was made in the first years of the Reformation. The text of the Lord's Prayer is also close to Luther's version of the Small Catechism, but contains some special characteristics. The rites of baptism and forgiveness of sins were translated slightly later, apparently from Luther's Low German edition, but in the text of the holy Communion there is an older layer dating from the 'twenties of the sixteenth century. In general, this first Catechism can be regarded as an independently compiled text, the basis of which was furnished by works of the 'twenties of the sixteenth century as well as Low German editions of Luther's Small Catechism in later years.

The 1587 Curonian texts of Bible readings for specified holy days were translated from the Low German Lutheran Bible translation in the first half of the sixteenth century. Without a doubt, the 1587 text was revised and reedited according to later Low German editions.

Already in the 'twenties of the sixteenth century the first Latvian translations of the Evangelical church service appeared, and in the 'thirties the most important necessary texts were translated. Traces of the oldest translations are encountered in various fragments of the Catechism. There are also traces in early hymn translations, in the pericopes and the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in the 'twenties of the sixteenth century the first Latvian translations of the Lutheran church service had already appeared, and in the 'thirties all of the important necessary texts had been translated. Translations of some of the hymns are undoubtedly early also.

However, none of these translations were fixed, since the pastors of Latvian congregations in Riga and elsewhere constantly supplemented them with new hymns and catechetical texts. At the same time, the quality of the translation and the language improved. Thus the manuscripts of the church service books of the Latvian Lutheran congregations were formed until the publication of the 1586—1587 Curonian church service book and the only slightly different 1615 Riga edition. These printed editions marked the beginning of early Latvian publishing, when the printed form of the book played a definite role.

Following the conclusions is a list of the main sources, a bibliography and an English summary.

This book is a first-class, exhaustive and authoritative work on this subject, a model of careful research and good scholarship. I found only one misprint: on p. 406 *in der Kirchen Gottes zu Riga* should apparently be corrected to *in den Kirchen Gottes zu Riga*. The same title is correctly rendered on p. 43. The book is nicely printed and bound, and is a pleasure to read. Vanags is to be congratulated on his achievement.

**William R. Schmalstieg**  
The Pennsylvania State University