

# LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 16, No.3 - Fall 1970

Editors of this issue: Antanas Klimas, Ignas K. Skrupskelis

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## LITHUANIA AND LITHUANIANS IN THE NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA

### INTRODUCTION

One of the extraordinary Library of Congress numbers of our generation is catalogue reference #6622292. This inscription identifies the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, copyrighted by the Catholic University of America, and published by the McGraw - Hill Book Company, Incorporated. The immense scholarly venture spanning fifteen volumes, was prepared from 1959 to 1966 in cooperation with 4,000 contributors. The university and publishers are to be commended for an undertaking of such vast dimensions.

The twin purpose of this writing is to offer a description of Lithuania found in this storehouse of information, and to express a companion commentary. Given the unusual scope and challenge of assembling an encyclopedia, a predictable margin of errors and omissions must be expected. Remarks presented here are made in a spirit of respect for the great reservoir of learning encased within this valuable source.

### I

There are three major articles pertaining to the subject of this paper: 1) "Lithuania". 2) "Lithuanian Literature". 3) "Lithuanians in the United States". The first article consists of a general introduction followed by these headings:

Christian Origins  
Growth and Danger (1387-1569)  
Great Development (1569-1795)  
Under Czarist Control (1795-1918)  
1918-1940  
Since 1940

This opening notice takes up five columns, and bears two illustrations: ecclesiastical Lithuania as of 1966, and a wayside cross of Utėna. Authored by Rev. Paulius Rabikauskas, S.J., the article concludes with a half column bibliography. "Lithuanian Literature" spreads over ten columns, including subheadings of single columns each on "language" by Anthony Salys and "folk literature" by John P. Balys. Four illustrations adorn this second major entry, showing: 1) Motiejus Valančius, 2) Žemaitė, 3) Vydūnas. 4) Faustas Kirša. There is appended a bibliography of half a column. Antanas Vaičiulaitis is credited with this lengthy article. The third notice occupies only two columns on U.S. Lithuanians attributed to Antanas Kučas.

Separate, brief entries appear on the following topics:

Antanas Baranauskas  
Saint Casimir  
Kristijonas Donelaitis  
Franciscan Sisters of the  
Providence of God (OSF)  
Jagiello (*i. e.* Jogaila)  
Archdiocese of Kaunas  
Krėvė  
Maironis  
Poor Sisters of Jesus Crucified  
and the Sorrowful Mother  
Sisters of Saint Casimir  
Sruoga  
Vaižgantas

Throughout the NCE, there are scattered reference to Lithuaniana. *E.g.* the Chicago Catholic daily newspaper, *Draugas*, is noted in the material on the Catholic Press. Lithuanians are mentioned in the pages on the dioceses of Worcester and Springfield (both in Massachusetts). In historical notices, there are about a dozen passing remarks on Lithuania.

One pleasantly observes several Lithuanian contributors writing on titles within their field of competence other than Lithuaniana. The list includes scholars such as Casimir C. Gečys on "Nihilism"; Rev. Walter C. Jaskiewicz, S.J. on "Catherine II (Great), Empress of Russia" and "Peter I (Great), Emperor of Russia"; Rev. Antanas J. Liuima, S.J. on "Pierre de Berulle"; and Rev. Paulius Rabikauskas, S.J. on "Names of Popes".

— II —

The last-named author was a wise choice for the principal historical article. Father Rabikauskas is recognized among Lithuanian scholars as a historian of first rank. His ready access to Vatican archives in Rome where he teaches, helps him to stay highly knowledgeable in the latest findings in his field.

Antanas Vaičiulaitis not only accounts for the second major article, but also is author of all eight separate entries about Lithuanian writers. This contributor's credentials are unassailable. He is known among Lithuanians as an indefatigable writer, journalist, translator, and apostle of literature.

Antanas Kučas was the one obvious choice for his offering. He has been gathering material about U.S. Lithuanians for some years, and is thoroughly immersed in his specialty.

At this point, one is forced to admit a clear imbalance between the Vaičiulaitis article and the two other principal notices. "Lithuanian Literature" is eight columns long (exclusive of the material on language and folk literature). Add the eight distinct entries on writers, and there are thirteen and a half columns on literature alone. Much as Lithuanians welcome such extensive coverage, still the NCE is not an encyclopedia of world literature. The name "Catholic" in the title of this reference work justifies the reader in expecting a preponderance of such material. Several of the writers who are subjects of separate articles hardly qualify as candidates for a Lithuanian Catholic "Who's Who" roster. In any case, it does seem that more space should have been allowed to Father Rabikauskas for his "lead" article wherein he could have had a freer hand in describing outstanding episodes in the history of the Catholic Church of Lithuania.

The disproportion of space given to literature emerges from another viewpoint. There is total silence in the NCE about serious music of Lithuania. Yet there seems no particular reason for giving one art form considerable attention, while treating its sister-art like an illegitimate child. It would be only fair to permit at least some small notice to Lithuania's composers of symphonic, chamber, operatic, and especially church music, to say nothing of listing a few of the outstanding performers of vocal and instrumental music. A similar case can be deduced for Lithuanian art, especially ecclesiastical art. In fairness, to the publishers, let me say I have already called this lacuna to their attention, and they have cordially received my constructive criticism.

Articles on St. Casimir and Jagiello were written by Rev. Ladislas Siekaniec, O.F.M., evidently a priest of Polish background. One respectfully regrets several memory lapses in these notices on matters of more than ephemeral interest to Lithuanians. In the paragraph on St. Casimir, the NCE says: "He was the third son of King Casimir IV of Poland and Elizabeth, an Austrian Princess". As long as the contributor took the time to describe St. Casimir's mother as "Austrian", is it asking too much to let the reader know that the father of the saint was a Lithuanian?

Later on, in the article about Jagiello, there are two omissions and one serious inaccuracy. The first hiatus one may discern is that this leader is mentioned as becoming king of Poland, but there is no word about his already being the Lithuanian Grand Duke, and Lithuanian by birth. In the same article, there is comment about the famous Battle of Grunwald in 1410 against the Teutonic Knights. The NCE remarks that "Jagiello's forces broke the power and prestige of the order". Yet, the fortunes of Jagiello were interwoven with those of his cousin, Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, politically and religiously during most of their lives. The fact is that Vytautas had an equal if not greater role in this decisive victory over the Knights.

Finally, in speaking of the Council of Constance, the NCE states: "... Poles arrived with Catholic delegates from hitherto pagan Lithuania and Samogitia.. ." This statement simply won't do. The word "hitherto" is the fly in the ointment. The term is terribly misleading. It implies that there was no Christianity in Lithuania before 1414, the year when the Council began. The fact is that Jagiello himself received Baptism in 1386, and soon after established a diocese in Vilnius, Lithuania. Over a century earlier, the first Lithuanian king, Mindaugas, was baptized in 1251, and thus sponsored at least the beginnings of the Christian Faith. One is tempted to wince at these flaws, since they concern not controverted issues, but facts accepted by historians familiar with fourteenth and fifteenth century times.

In the United States, there have been four principal communities of religious women of Lithuanian origin. Three of these have a brief paragraph in the NCE. For some reason, the Immaculate Conception Sisters, headquartered in Putnam, Connecticut are overlooked. Yet they surely deserve some notice in view of their labors among the sick, the pre-school children, summer camp students, and with the press.

Among the male religious communities, there is passing comment about the Marian Fathers in the article of the same name. Meanwhile, there is no trace of the Jesuits based in Chicago, nor of the Franciscans with centers in Kennebunkport, Maine and Brooklyn, New York. Both of these groups are known and respected among Lithuanians for their pastoral and cultural endeavors. They rate a place in the NCE, too.

The volume containing the index to the other fourteen books disavows any attempt to give a total classification. This is understandable. A computer service to track down literally every mention of a particular subject would add unnecessarily to the cost, and produce a tome of unwieldy bulk. In the index under "Lithuania" there are 23 references. Items 1-414 and 6-355a are erroneous.

The chief shortcoming of the NCE on Lithuaniana, in my opinion, is the neglect of Grand Duke Vytautas. This giant of Lithuanian history towers over all other kings and dukes. His achievements in church matters alone command attention. One thinks of his efforts at the Council of Constance; his precocious, ecumenical attitude of tolerance toward subjects of the Orthodox and other religious traditions within his domain; and his steps toward reunion of the Orthodox with Rome. Against the background of eight separate entries of Lithuanian writers, the absence of an article on Vytautas becomes even more pronounced.

I am confident the publishers will honestly weigh the possibility of incorporating the critical points of this paper in a future supplementary volume.

*Rev. William Wolkovich*