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Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia, 1185-1227

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ABSTRACT

This essay provides an analysis of information given in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia concerning thirty-two named Catholic missionaries associated with the German mission in Livonia in the period 1185-1227. Even though the chronicle often provides little more than their names, the regions where they worked, and in some cases, their deaths, a prosopographical approach enables some trends to be discerned. Most missionaries seem to have been secular priests, but significant numbers were drawn from the Cistercian Order and the Sword Brethren. An investigation of their activities (and in many cases, deaths) illuminates the changing pattern of the Catholic mission.

KEYWORDS

Livonia/Mission/Prosopography

Between the years 1185 and 1227 the eastern Baltic territories of Livonia and Estonia were incorporated within Latin Christendom, a process which involved both the imposition of government by Christian institutions and the acceptance of the Christian faith (at least formally) by most of the indigenous populations¹. A remarkable feature of these events is how much the character of Christianization changed during this period of just over three decades. The first missionary centre in Livonia was established around 1185 at Üxküll (mod. Ikšķile), some 30 km upstream from the mouth of the River Dūna (mod. Daugava), under the leadership of Meinhard (d. 1196), an Augustinian canon from the monastery of Segeberg in Holstein, who was consecrated as first bishop of Livonia by Hartwig II, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. Meinhard's mission was an entirely peaceful enterprise, relying solely on preaching to the local Livish population as a means to conversion; it met with little success during his ten-year episcopate. The second bishop, Berthold of Loccum (d. 1198), inaugurated armed crusades to Livonia, which henceforth became a regular support for the mission. The third bishop, Albert of Buxhövdn (d. 1229), constructed a new settlement at Riga which now became the seat of the Livonian bishopric. He continued to recruit crusaders, but also established a permanent military force in the form of the Sword Brethren, a military order on the model of the Templars. Up to 1198, the only converts had been found among the Livs who inhabited the shores of the Gulf of Riga between the rivers Dūna and Gauja. However, by using the twin means of mission and military force, by 1215-1216 Albert had succeeded in imposing Christianity on the originally pagan peoples beyond the Livish-inhabited areas: to the east, the Livs of Metsepole and Idumea, the Letts and the Wends; to the south, the Selonians and part of the Semgallians; and to the north, the Estonians of the provinces of Saccalia and Ugaunia. The

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this essay: HCL = Heinrichs Livländische Chronik (Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae), ed. L. Arbusow, A. Bauer, MGH, *Scriptores rer. Germ.*, 31, Hannover 1955²; LUB = Liv-, Esth-, und Curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten, Abt. 1, ed. F. G. von Bunge et al., 12 vols, Reval 1853-1910. On the wider historical background, see: E. CHRISTIANSEN, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier, 1100-1525*, London 1980; Gli Inizi del cristianesimo in Livonia-Lettonia: Atti del colloquio internazionale di storia ecclesiastica in occasione dell'VIII centenario della Chiesa in Livonia (1186-1986), Roma, 24-25 giugno 1986, ed. by M. Maccarrone, Città del Vaticano 1989; N. BLOMKVIST, *The Discovery of the Baltic: The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (AD 1075-1225)*, Leiden 2004; B. BOMBI, *Novella plantatio fidei: Missione e crociata nel Nord Europa tra XII e XIII secolo*, Roma 2007; T. KALA, *The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World, in Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150-1500*, ed. by A.V. Murray, Aldershot 2001, pp. 3-20; S. EKDAHL, *Crusades and Colonisation in the Baltic*, in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. by H. J. Nicholson, Basingstoke 2005, pp. 172-203. As is customary in modern scholarship, names of places in modern Latvia and Estonia are given in their German forms, with their modern equivalents in parentheses.

conquest of the northern Estonian provinces and islands took longer. In 1206 King Valdemar II of Denmark made an abortive attempt to conquer the island of Ösel (mod. Saaremaa), and in 1219 returned with an army to northern Estonia which established a permanent Danish presence at Reval (mod. Tallinn) and supported a new, rival Christian mission sponsored by the Danish archbishopric of Lund. The rivalry between the German and Danish churches, as well as the fierce resistance of the northern Estonian tribes, meant that the conquest of Estonia was not completed until 1227². This left the new missionary field divided. Livonia, the southern Estonian provinces of Saccalia, Ugaunia, Rotalia (also known in German as Wiek) and the island of Ösel formed dominions of the bishop of Riga and the Order of the Sword Brethren, with separate jurisdictions; the northern Estonian provinces of Harria, Jerwia and Vironia were subject to the Danish crown³.

Given the tumultuous and increasingly warlike character of the process of Christianization, it is scarcely surprising that most research relating to these events has concerned itself with questions of political and ecclesiastical relationships and warfare, rather than the actual mission to pagans and neophytes⁴. Since these events occurred before the foundation of the Dominican and Franciscan orders, which became the main institutions dedicated to the work of mission, it is uncertain how far the Livonian church could draw on missionaries with appropriate skills and training.

We are fortunate to have a detailed source for the entire period up to 1227 in the form of the *Chronicon Livoniae* by the priest Henry of Livonia, who was himself resident in the country from around 1205 and an eyewitness to many of the events he describes. The early chapters of this chronicle give several detailed and sometimes amusing descriptions of encounters between missionaries and pagans, but as his narrative progresses, reports of missionary activity become more formulaic, and are far outweighed by accounts of military campaigns, political negotiations and legations⁵. The amount of information recorded about individual missionaries and their activity varies considerably. We are relatively well informed about the three bishops of Livonia (Meinhard, Berthold and Albert) as well as the suffragan bishops appointed by Albert, namely Theoderic of

² This is a necessarily brief and simplified account of the conquest and conversion of Livonia. Greater detail can be found in the following works: Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland, ed. by M. Hellmann, Sigmaringen 1989; R. ZÜHLKE, Zerschlagung, Verlagerung und Neuschaffung zentraler Orte im Zuge der Eroberung Livlands, in Leonid Arbusow (1882-1952) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland, ed. by I. Misāns, K. Neitmann, Köln 2014, pp. 165-185; F. BENNINGHOVEN, Der Orden der Schwertbrüder: Fratres Milicie Christi de Livonia, Köln 1965; T.K. NIELSEN, The Missionary Man: Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Baltic Crusade, 1206-21, in *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier* cit., pp. 95-118.

³ N. SKYUM-NIELSEN, Estonia under Danish Rule, in *Danish Medieval History: New Currents*, ed. by N. Skyum-Nielsen, N. Lund, Copenhagen 1981, pp. 112-135; A. SELART, Die Kreuzzüge in Livland Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts und das dänische Königshaus, in *Narva und die Ostseeregion/Narva and the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. by K. Brüggemann, Narva 2004, pp. 125-137.

⁴ Notable exceptions are: P.P. REBANE, From Fulco to Theoderic: The Changing Face of the Livonian Mission, in *Muinasaja loojangust omariikluse läveni: Pühendusteos Sulev Vahtre 75. sünnipäevaks*, ed. by A. Andresen, Tartu 2001, pp. 37-68, reprinted in *The North-Eastern Frontiers of Medieval Europe: The Expansion of Latin Christendom in the Baltic Lands*, ed. by A.V. Murray, Farnham 2014, pp. 85-116; C. SELCH JENSEN, The Nature of the Early Missionary Activities and Crusades in Livonia 1185-1201, in *Medieval Spirituality in Scandinavia and Europe: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Tore Nyberg*, ed. by L. Bisgaard, C. Selch Jensen, K. V. Jensen, J. H. Lind, Odense 2001, pp. 121-138; C. SELCH JENSEN, The Early Stage of Christianisation in Livonia in *Modern Historical Writings and Contemporary Chronicles*, in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. by T. M. S. Lehtonen, K.V. Jensen, Helsinki 2005, pp. 207-215; T. KALA, Rural Society and Religious Innovation: Acceptance and Rejection of Catholicism among the Native Inhabitants of Medieval Livonia, in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. by A. V. Murray, Farnham 2009, pp. 169-190.

⁵ For a conspectus of scholarship on Henry and his chronicle, see *Crusading and Chronicle Writing: A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, ed. by M. Tamm, L. Kaljundi, C. Selch Jensen, Farnham 2011. There is a new edition with facing page translation into Italian: *Enrico di Lettonia, Chronicon Livoniae: La crociata del nord (1184-1227)*, ed. and trans. by P. Bugiani, Livorno 2005.

Treiden and Hermann of Buxhövdn (for Estonia) and Bernard of Lippe (for Sengallia). By contrast, for the majority of missionaries who preached the Gospel among the pagan peoples or ministered to neophytes, Henry's chronicle only gives a brief indication of their names together with the year and region of their activity. Henry records only one other named missionary during the episcopate of Meinhard (1185-1196), namely the famous Theoderic; probably the others had died or been killed by the time he came to write his account. Greater detail is usually only provided in special circumstances, such as accounts of violent death.

Given the nature of this source material, a prosopographical approach to the evidence may be useful. That is, we can define a group of persons with one or more common characteristics, and bring together and analyse data on the complete group; this approach means that when combined, even disparate and exiguous pieces of information can illuminate wider historical trends⁶. The aim of this essay is therefore to compile and analyse information on all known missionaries associated with the bishopric of Livonia in the period 1185-1227⁷. This is by no means a straightforward task, since it is not always easy to establish which of the priests and monks named by Henry was actually a missionary. The first two bishops, Meinhard (no. 21) and Berthold of Loccum (no. 6) spent most of their time preaching to the Livs of the Düna basin, but their successor Albert of Buxhövdn (no. 1) was primarily an administrator and diplomat who spent considerable time away from his diocese, recruiting crusaders and lobbying for support in the bishoprics of northern Germany and at the Curia. However, his suffragan bishops in Estonia, Theoderic of Treiden (no. 32) and Hermann of Buxhövdn (no. 15), and in Sengallia, Bernard of Lippe (no. 4) and Lambert (no. 19), were appointed to areas that had predominantly unconverted populations and were therefore presumably expected to spend time negotiating with or preaching to the pagans; this would certainly be likely in the case of Theoderic, who by 1200 was probably the most experienced missionary still alive in Livonia, having been part of the preaching mission since its beginning. The number of clerics arriving in Livonia increased after the appointment of Albert of Buxhövdn as bishop, especially in the company of the 'pilgrims' (peregrini), as the chronicler Henry terms the crusaders from Germany. Thus Henry reports that in the summer of 1208 several clerics arrived, of whom some entered the newly founded Cistercian monastery of St Nicholas at Dünamünde (mod. Daugavgrīva) and some joined the Order of the Sword Brethren, while others chose the work of preaching⁸.

Yet none of these roles were hard and fast. Most of those who joined the monastery or the cathedral chapter of Riga were presumably dedicated mainly to the spiritual life, church administration, or ministering to the Christian immigrants from Germany, yet members of both institutions can be found carrying out preaching tours among the pagans or acting as parish priests among neophyte congregations. As we shall see, even priest-brothers of the Sword Brethren were involved in the work of conversion. Many of the clerics who accompanied crusades returned to Germany at the end of campaigning, but some stayed for extended periods. One prominent example was Philip, bishop of Ratzeburg (no. 23), who arrived in 1210 and remained in the service of the Livonian church until his death over five years later. During this time he functioned as a key member of the church of Riga, acting effectively as a suffragan and administrator during absences

⁶ The literature on prosopographical theory and practice is extensive. For an outline of basic prosopographical principles and approaches, see A.V. MURRAY, *Prosopography*, in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades* cit., pp. 109-129.

⁷ To avoid multiplication of references, citations to individuals are given in the main text by numbers relating to the catalogue of missionaries set out in the Appendix, where full references are provided.

⁸ HCL p. 61: *Eodem tempore misit Deus ad consolationem ecclesie sue viros religiosos quam plures in Dunam: Florencium abbatem Cysterciensis ordinis, Robertum Coloniensis ecclesie canonicum, Conradum Bremensium cum aliis quibusdam. Quorum quidam in Dunemunde, quidam cum fratribus milicie sancte conversationis habitum elegerunt, quidam ad predicationis opus transierunt.*

of Bishop Albert, but he is also recorded as having preached to the Livish population as well as the German immigrants and crusaders.

It is thus clear that the question whether a given individual was a missionary depends on their known activities, rather than on their status within the church organization or hierarchy. For this reason the catalogue given in the Appendix below lists all clerics of the diocese of Livonia who are recorded as having ministered to pagans or neophytes, even if such activity was only temporary or if their principal responsibilities involved other tasks⁹. The complete catalogue of missionaries numbers thirty-two individuals, of whom seven were bishops and the remaining twenty-five either monks or members of the secular clergy.

Over half of those recorded as missionaries are described by Henry simply by the term *sacerdos*. Since he normally mentions the order to which regular clergy belonged, it is likely that most of these seventeen priests were members of the secular clergy, although we cannot exclude the possibility that some may have joined the cathedral chapter at some point. The occurrence of a single Benedictine can be explained through the earlier career of Hermann of Buxhövden (no. 15) who came from the abbey of St Paul in Bremen. It is more significant that over a third of the missionaries below the rank of bishop were Canons Regular or Cistercian monks (who had presumably been ordained as priests). The cathedral chapter is described by Henry at the time of Albert's accession as a *conventus regularium*. It seems likely that it had followed the Augustinian Rule from the time of Bishop Meinhard, an Augustinian Canon from Segeberg, and continued as such under Provost Engelbert of Buxhövden, who came from the Augustinian house of Neumünster in Holstein. However, after the death of Engelbert in 1209, Bishop Albert placed the chapter under the stricter Praemonstratensian Rule¹⁰. Cistercian monks were normally subject to the restrictions of *stabilitas loci*, and were not allowed to leave their monasteries without permission of their superiors. However, Pope Celestine III granted Meinhard the right to enlist companions to assist him with the execution of his office without seeking permission from the heads of their houses¹¹. It is possible that other Cistercians arrived with Theoderic of Treiden and Bishop Berthold, but the foundation of the monastery of Dünamünde in 1205 as a daughter-house of Marienfeld in Westphalia provided a new local training ground for Cistercian priests, such as Segehard (no. 27).

Perhaps most surprising is the fact that four missionaries were priest-brethren of the Order of the Sword Brethren (nos. 5, 12, 22, 31). The order's function was to provide a permanent defence force for the mission, as well as the offensive capability to force the indigenous peoples into accepting the Christian faith and the government of the church of Riga. The main categories of its members were knight-brethren (mostly of ministerial origin) and serving brethren. The number of priests must have been small, their main duty being the spiritual care of the other members. In 1210, after a dispute with the bishop, the order was awarded a third of the Christian-controlled territory in Livonia, and by the end of the period under discussion it possessed a convent in Riga and castles at Segewold (mod. Sigula), Wenden (mod. Cēsis), Ascheraden (mod. Aikraukle), Fellin (mod.

⁹ William of Modena, papal legate to Livonia in 1225-1226, has been excluded on the grounds that he was a temporary visitor who was not a member of the Livonian church, although he is recorded as having preached to neophytes. For his activity see J.A. BRUNDAGE, *The Thirteenth-Century Livonian Crusade: Henricus de Lettis and the First Legatine Mission of William of Modena*, «Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas» n.s., 20 (1972), pp. 1-9. Also excluded are the few Danish priests recorded by Henry, who cannot be regarded as giving a representative picture of the Danish mission in northern Estonia.

¹⁰ HCL pp. 17, 68; B. JÄHNIG, *Die Anfänge der Sakraltopographie in Riga*, in *Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland* cit., pp. 123-158 (here 142-145). For this reason the different affiliations of canons are not distinguished above in the table or in the Appendix.

¹¹ LUB 1, no. 11; HCL pp. 28-29; M. HELLMANN, *Die Anfänge der christlichen Mission in den baltischen Ländern*, in *Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland* cit., pp. 7-38 (here 31).

Viljandi) and Reval¹². As each house had dependent estates, priests of the Order such as Berthold at Beverin (no. 5) and Theoderic at Fellin (no. 31) will have made closer acquaintance with the native peoples who serviced these, and may have volunteered or been deputed to undertake missionary work in these areas or others over which the order hoped to acquire dominion. Certainly the priest Otto (no. 22) seems to have had a particular aptitude for missionary work, since he was prepared to work with missionaries from outwith the order, and is recorded as having converted the Estonian leader Lembit along with other pagans who had hitherto been hardline enemies of the Christians.

The work of missionaries was dangerous. Two of the bishops, Berthold (no. 6) and Theoderic of Treiden (no. 32), died in pitched battles with pagans. Six of the missionaries of non-episcopal status were killed while ministering to pagans or neophytes (nos. 9, 10, 14, 18, 25, 27), while another (no. 16) was abducted and held captive in Lithuania. The first ten years of the mission were especially dangerous since few of the Livs of the Düna region prepared to convert; the pagan majority were ill-disposed to Bishop Meinhard and the handful of missionaries with him, who had few means to defend themselves. In 1186 Theoderic of Treiden was seized by pagans who intended to sacrifice him, and was only saved when a pagan divination ritual indicated that he should be spared. He later had an equally narrow escape while working among the Estonians, after managing to portray the occurrence of a solar eclipse as a manifestation of the power of the Christian God¹³.

The arrival of crusaders from 1197 onwards and the foundation of the Sword Brethren in 1202-1203 provided two new forms of armed support, which were augmented by the bishop's secular vassals, and increasingly, converted communities, which were required to provide military service as a condition of the acceptance of Christianity. Yet equally, the increasing deployment of military force by the Christian mission provoked hostile reactions from the pagan communities which feared the loss of their independence. During the episcopate of Albert of Buxhövdén the mission became increasingly aggressive. Christian forces regularly raided the country districts inhabited by pagans, seizing livestock and taking captives to serve as hostages or slaves; if necessary, they would besiege the hillforts of pagan chieftains, where the populace had often taken refuge. This was a war of attrition designed to wear down resistance to the point where the pagan leaders agreed to accept baptism along with the government of the church of Riga. It can thus be seen that the acceptance of the Christian faith was often a political decision, in which baptism was imposed on a tribal group by its leaders in a top-down fashion. It was often only after such formal acts of submission were concluded that any form of religious conversion took place. Missionaries carried out baptisms, and in some cases remained behind to instruct the neophytes in the Christian faith. Historians have rightly questioned how far such conversions (if they can be so called) represented true changes of faith; certainly Henry relates several cases in which revolts against Christian rule were linked with a resumption of heathen customs and practices.¹⁴

After or parallel to these military campaigns, missionaries were often sent out alone or in pairs to preach in country districts, but they could not be certain of what sort of reception they might receive. The priest Salomon (no. 25) made some converts in Saccalia province, but was hunted down by the Estonian leader Lembit and killed along with his companions. As a network of parishes was established beyond Riga, priests were placed permanently in smaller communities to

¹² LUB 1, nos. 16-18; E. MUGUREVICS, *Die militärische Tätigkeit des Schwertbrüderordens (1201-1236)*, in *Das Kriegswesen der Ritterorden im Mittelalter*, ed. by Z.H. Nowak, Toruń 1991, pp. 125-132; A.V. MURRAY, *The Sword Brothers at War: Observations on the Military Activity of the Knighthood of Christ in the Conquest of Livonia and Estonia (1203-1227)*, «*Ordines Militares: Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders*» 18 (2013), pp. 27-38.

¹³ HCL pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ KALA, *Rural Society and Religious Innovation* cit.

minister to the converts. Yet in such circumstances they were vulnerable to pagan raiders and even to their own parishioners, who were sometimes susceptible to acts of apostasy. Thus John of Vironia (no. 18) converted many Livs in the parish of Holme (mod. Mārīņsala), but in 1206 he was violently killed by his parishioners along with two of his fellow priests, Gerhard (no. 10) and Hermann (no. 14). The priests John Stric (no. 17) and Theoderic (no. 29) were celebrating mass on Christmas Day in 1207 when their church at Kipsal (mod. Krimulda) was approached by a raiding party of pagan Lithuanians; they only survived by constructing a hiding place made from the church furnishings and altar coverings. Not all missionaries were passive victims of violence, however. When his parishioners in the province of Metsepole were attacked by pagans from Ösel in 1218, the priest Gottfried put on armour and took up weapons to «defend his flock from the wolves»¹⁵.

Hazardous situations also occurred when missionaries were travelling between the main missionary base in Riga and their own areas of activity. The Cistercian Segehard (no. 27) was killed on his way to join Bernard, the newly appointed bishop of Semailia. Another Cistercian, Frederick of Zelle (no. 9), had a secure base in the castle of Friedland near Treiden, but when travelling to Riga by ship he was surprised and killed by pirates from Ösel. While pagans often attacked any German Christians (and in many cases, converts), they seem to have especially targeted priests, who were must have been easily identifiable by their clothing. John of Vironia was beheaded and cut to pieces, while Frederick and his companions were subjected to cruel and sustained torture before being hacked to death.

The deaths of John, Frederick and others served an important function in the ideology of the Livonian church. All of the missionaries named as having suffered violent death are recorded by Henry of Livonia as martyrs. Thus he states of Segehard and others who were killed by the Semailians in 1219 that «their souls will rejoice without doubt with Christ in the society of martyrs, and their business was holy, for when called, they came to baptize the pagans and plant the vineyard of the Lord, which they planted with their blood»¹⁶. It was not always practical to recover bodies of missionaries who were slain in such circumstances, but when this was possible they were given prominent places of burial. Bishop Berthold was buried at the cathedral of Üxküll, which was also the burial site of Bishop Meinhard and of Kyrian and Layan, the first native converts to suffer martyrdom¹⁷. John of Vironia (no. 18) was buried in the new cathedral of St Mary in Riga to where the bodies of Meinhard and Berthold were also later translated. These places became important cult sites and witnesses to the heroic virtue of the church of Livonia.

Apart from physical danger, missionaries faced other major difficulties in their work. One of the more detailed descriptions of missionary activity given by Henry of Livonia relates to the year 1220, when he and his newly ordained colleague Theoderic (no. 30) undertook an extended preaching tour through the Estonian provinces of Saccalia, Jerwia and Vironia; the level of detail given on this occasion is not only because of Henry's personal involvement, but also because he was keen to demonstrate how the German missionaries from Riga took greater care in their work than the Danes had done. He describes how in each village, Henry and Theoderic called the people together and taught them «the doctrine of the Gospel» (*doctrinam ewangelicam eis tradiderunt*).

¹⁵ HCL p. 146: Qui succinxit se armis bellicis suis et induit se lorica sua tamquam gygas, oves suas luporum faucibus eripere cupens.

¹⁶ HCL p. 158: ... quorum anime in martyrium societate sine dubio cum Christo gaudebunt, quorum negocium sanctum erat, eo quod vocati venerunt ad baptizandum paganos vineamque Domini plantandam, qam sanguine so plantaverunt [my translation, A.V.M.]. The vinea Domini is one of Henry's favourite allegorical descriptions of the church of Livonia.

¹⁷ HCL pp. 35-36, 37.

They then carried out baptisms and cut down heathen idols, an act which evidently convinced the newly baptized Estonians of the power of the Christian God¹⁸. Yet it was one thing to cast down or destroy idols and perform baptisms, but it was another to fully impart the significance of Christianity to people who had hitherto venerated a plurality of deities, as well as sacred sites and objects. Since Henry claims that he and his companion baptized several hundred Estonians each day, little time can have remained to explain the complexities of the Christian faith. The evident practice was to carry out baptisms as quickly and extensively as possible, and later to install resident priests who would instruct the neophytes in a more detailed fashion. Thus after the conclusion of the preaching tour, Theoderic returned to minister to the people of Jerwia and Vironia, although he was soon expelled by the Danish authorities. The priest Salomon (no. 26) had a similar experience in Rotalia.

The major obstacle to a full communication of the essentials of the Christian faith was the language barrier between missionaries and their target populations. The region was inhabited by a large number of distinct ethnicities belonging mostly to the unrelated Baltic and Finnic language groups. The Livs spoke a tongue belonging to the Finnic language group. They inhabited the lower reaches of the Dūna and Gauja rivers, as well as the province of Metsepole to the north, and much of the province of Idumea. The Estonian tribes of the mainland and the islands of Ösel, Dagö (mod. Hiiumaa) and Moon (mod. Muhu) also spoke Finnic dialects, whose southern varieties may have been closer to Livish. The Sengallians, Lettgallians, Selonians and Curonians, who were regarded as separate peoples at the times of the conquest, spoke various forms of Lettish, belonging to the Baltic language group, which was unrelated to the non-Indo-European Finnic languages¹⁹. The Wends of Livonia, who inhabited the area around Wenden in Idumea, formed a distinct ethnic group; scholars have disagreed as to whether their ethnicity and language were Finnic or Slavic. They were important in the history of the mission since after accepting baptism in 1206-1207 they remained some of the most steadfast allies of the church of Riga and the Sword Brethren²⁰.

None of these languages was written down until centuries after the conquest, and none would have had any equivalents for many key concepts peculiar to Christianity. It would have been difficult enough for Western immigrants to learn them adequately, let alone find appropriate means to fully explain the tenets of Christian belief. This circumstance explains why, although the vast majority of the recorded missionaries were German immigrants, some individuals of non-German origin were also involved in missionary work. When one of the two priests named Salomon (no. 25) was sent to preach to the Estonians of Saccalia, he was accompanied by two interpreters. One of these, Philip, was of Lithuanian origin but had been brought up at the court of the bishop of Livonia, where he evidently acquired a competence as an interpreter. The specific mention of Philip and his comrade Theoderic by name by Henry may have been because they were killed in the

¹⁸ HCL pp. 1745-176.

¹⁹ P. JOHANSEN, *Kurlands Bewohner zu Anfang der historischen Zeit*, in *Baltische Lande 1: Ostbaltische Frühzeit*, ed. by A. Brackmann, C. Engel, Leipzig 1939, pp. 263-306; A. ŠNĒ, *The Emergence of Livonia: The Transformations of Social and Political Structures in the Territory of Latvia during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. by A.V. Murray, Farnham 2009, pp. 53-72; U. SUTROP, K. PAJASALU, *Medieval County Metsepole and the Historical and Linguistic Border between Livonians and Estonians*, *«Linguistica Uralica»*, 45 (2009), pp. 253-268; U. SUTROP, *Livonian Landscapes in the Historical Geography of Livonia and the Division of the Livonian Tribes*, *«Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri/Journal of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics»*, 5 (2014), pp. 27-36. Curonia may have also contained Livish- or other Finnic-speaking elements.

²⁰ H. LAAKMANN, *Estland und Livland in frühgeschichtlicher Zeit*, in *Baltische Lande*, 1, pp. 204-262 (here 207); W. LAUR, *Die sogenannten Wenden im Baltikum*, *«Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung»* 21 (1964), pp. 431-38; S.S. GADZYATSKII, *Водская и Ижорская земли Новгородского государства*, *«IstZap»*, 6 (1940), pp. 100-148; A.V. MURRAY, *Henry of Livonia and the Wends of the Eastern Baltic: Ethnography and Biography in the Thirteenth-Century Livonian Mission*, *«SM»*, 54 (2013), pp. 807-833.

course of their duties; it is thus possible that other interpreters of local origin had been employed during the earlier mission to the Livs. However, we also find priests of indigenous origin. John of Vironia (no. 18) was an Estonian who had been sent by Bishop Meinhard to receive an education in Germany at the monastery of Segeberg. He was evidently selected by Albert of Buxhövdén for his linguistic knowledge, ordained as a priest soon after he arrived in Livonia, and sent to preach to the Livs in the Düna region. Peter Kaikewalde (no. 24) was a Finn who was deployed in Estonia. Both of these men could reasonably be expected to acquire proficiency in other Finnic languages which were closely related to their own mother tongues. However, while priests of native origin possessed valuable linguistic skills, they possibly did not always have sufficient theological or pastoral knowledge to function on their own. On several preaching tours after 1200, missionaries often acted in pairs. At a basic level, this would have provided mutual comfort and support, but it is also noticeable that a German was often paired with a non-German. Thus Peter Kaikewalde worked with the chronicler Henry (no. 13) and with Otto, a priest of the Sword Brethren (no. 22). Otto also worked with John Stric (no. 17), who in turn worked with Theoderic (Dietrich), whose name identifies him as a German²¹. John of Vironia was associated with two other priests with German names, Gerhard (no. 10) and Hermann (no. 14), at the church of Holme. These pairings were evidently a way of maximizing the linguistic range and abilities of the missionaries.

Finally, it seems that while at first missionaries from Germany were sent into the field soon after they arrived, the church of Livonia later attempted to give them appropriate training for the ministry. It is recorded that when the Cistercian priest Frederick of Zelle (no. 9) was captured by pirates, he was accompanied by his *scholaris*, a young man (*puer*) who evidently had knowledge of the liturgy, which suggests that he was being trained as a missionary. Similar terminology is applied to the chronicler Henry himself. On the occasion of his ordination as priest in 1207-1208 he is referred to as the *scholaris* of Bishop Albert of Riga, while in connection with the year 1212 he is described as both priest and interpreter of the bishop (*sacerdos ipsius et interpretis*)²². There is considerable evidence that Henry had a knowledge of Estonian, Lettish, and possibly other languages²³. It would thus seem that after arriving in Livonia, he spent a period in study and training, which in his case involved the acquisition of a working knowledge of some of the regional languages, before he was ordained as priest and entrusted with missionary work. In similar fashion, Henry records that when he was preaching in northern Estonia in 1220, he was accompanied by the newly ordained Theoderic (no. 30) who presumably had been paired with a more experienced colleague to serve as a mentor.

This prosopographical investigation of thirty-two missionaries gives us a clearer picture of the ways in which they were recruited, trained and deployed. The appearance of missionaries and interpreters of non-German origin, as well as of Germans who can be shown to have acquired knowledge of the native tongues, are evidence of a pragmatic policy of developing means of communication with the neophytes in their own languages. Overall, in the unfolding story of Henry's chronicle we can observe an ongoing process of Christianization in which the Western mission tried to adapt to the changing conditions it found in the unfamiliar territories of Livonia and Estonia.

²¹ The name Stric resembles the proto-Slavic *strycb*, which means «uncle» in modern Slavic languages (e.g. Polish *stryj*). It probably represents a nickname born by someone of non-German origin.

²² HCL pp. 55, 107.

²³ A.V. MURRAY, *Henry the Interpreter: Language, Orality and Communication in the Thirteenth-Century Livonian Mission*, in *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* cit., pp. 107-134.

Appendix

Catholic Missionaries of the Church of Riga, 1185-1227

This appendix gives a catalogue of individuals who are recorded in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia as having preached the Christian faith to the pagans and neophytes in Livonia and Estonia between the beginnings of the Catholic mission around the year 1185 up to the conquest and Christianization of the island of Ösel in 1227. References are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to document the identity, status and missionary activity of each individual. Original Latin forms of the names may be easily established from the index to the cited edition of HCL. Affiliations to religious orders are given thus: CanReg = Canons Regular (Augustinians, Praemonstratensians and others); FMC = Order of the Sword Brethren (Fratres Militiae Christi); OCist = Cistercian Order; OSB = Benedictine Order.

1. Albert of Buxhövden (CanReg). Nephew of Hartwig II, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, and cathedral canon of Bremen. Appointed as third bishop of Livonia in 1199, but did not arrive in his diocese until 1200. He moved the seat of the Livonian bishopric to the new city of Riga in 1201. HCL passim. B. JÄHNIG, *Die Anfänge der Sakraltopographie in Riga*, in *Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland cit.*, pp. 123-158.

2. Alebrand (CanReg). Present in Livonia before 1202; recorded as a member of the cathedral chapter of Riga (Alobrandus sacerdos) in 1211. Active in the region of Treiden 1206, where he built a church at Kipsal; among the Letts of the Sedde region in 1207, and the Estonians of Ugaunia in 1209. Priest in the province of Idumea by 1214, and active in Saccalia in 1220. HCL pp. 17 n. 5, 44-47, 55, 72, 106, 110-111, 115, 150, 169; LUB, vol.1, no. 23.

3. Alexander. Priest, in 1206 active among the Livs of the province of Metsepole (on the north-east coast of the Gulf of Riga), where remained and built a church. HCL pp. 44-45.

4. Bernard of Lippe (OCist). Lord of Lippe in Westphalia, who came on the first crusade to Livonia in 1198. After becoming lame around 1200 he joined the Cistercian monastery of Marienfeld in Westphalia. Appointed by Bishop Albert as abbot of Dünamünde in 1211 and bishop of Semgallia in 1219. Died in 1224. HCL p. 92; LUB 1, nos. 18, 20; B.U. HUCKER, *Liv- und estländische Königspläne?*, in *Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland cit.*, pp. 65-106.

5. Berthold (FMC) Priest-brother of the Order of the Sword Brethren, installed as a parish priest among the Letts of Beverin by 1208. HCL p. 65.

6. Berthold of Loccum (OCist). Previously abbot of Loccum in Saxony. Appointed second bishop of Livonia in late 1196, with seat at Üxküll, he organised the first armed crusade to Livonia. He was killed at the head of a crusader army in battle with pagan Livs, after his horse bolted and carried him into the pagan lines (24 July 1198). His body was buried in the church at Üxküll, but later translated to the cathedral of St Mary in Riga. HCL pp. 8-11; Arnoldi Chronicon Slavorum, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH, *Scriptores rer. Germ.*, 14, Hannover 1868, pp. 214-216; B.U. HUCKER, *Der Zisterzienserabt Bertold, Bischof von Livland, und der erste Livlandkreuzzug*, in *Studien über die Anfänge der Mission in Livland cit.*, pp. 39-64.

7. Daniel. Priest. Active at Lennewarden (mod. Lielvārde) and Ascheraden and among the Wends and Idumeans in 1206-1207 and the Semgallians in 1208. HCL pp. 39, 44-45, 59, 194; LUB 1, nos. 20, 21.

8. Engelbert of Buxhövden (CanReg). Brother of Albert of Buxhövden, and monk of the Augustinian house of Neumünster in Holstein. He came to Livonia in 1202 and was appointed as provost of the cathedral chapter of Riga. Died 1209. HCL pp. 17, 43, 53, 68.

9. Frederick of Zelle (OCist). Cistercian from Alt-Zelle in the province of Magdeburg. Based in the castle of Friedland at Treiden (mod. Turaida) in 1215. He and his (unnamed) scholaris were travelling to Riga by ship when they were captured by pagan Estonians from the island of Ösel and tortured and killed along with their companions. HCL pp. 121-122.

10. Gerhard. Priest, killed by pagan Livs at Holme in 1206. HCL p. 37.

11. Gottfried. Priest, based in the province of Metsepole. Sent to baptize the Estonians of Sontagana in the maritime province of Rotalia (Wiek) in 1216. HCL pp. 133, 146.

12. Hartwig (FMC). Active in Ugaunia in 1220. Wounded and captured at Dorpat (mod. Tartu) by Estonians during the great uprising of 1223 but was spared death. HCL pp. 176, 190.

13. Henry. Priest and chronicler, originally from the area of Magdeburg, who came to Livonia around 1205. Active (probably as interpreter) with the priest Daniel (no. 7) among the Letts in 1207-1208. Ordained in late 1208 and installed as a parish priest in the region of Tholowa. He was a participant in many military campaigns thereafter, and active in preaching, especially in northern Estonia along with Peter Kaikewalde in 1220. HCL pp. 62, 107, 114, 169-170, 174, 176; P. JOHANSEN, *Die Chronik als Biographie: Heinrich von Lettlands Lebensgang und Weltanschauung*, «Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas», n.s., 1 (1953), pp. 1-24; MURRAY, Henry of Livonia and the Wends of the Eastern Baltic cit.

14. Hermann. Priest, killed by pagan Livs in 1206. HCL p. 37.

15. Hermann of Buxhövden (OSB). Brother of Bishop Albert and abbot of the abbey of St Paul in Bremen. Appointed as bishop of Estonia in succession to Theoderic of Treiden, with his episcopal seat in Leal (mod. Lihula), in 1219. HCL pp. 168-169, 200; LUB 1, nos. 61, 62, 63, 64.

16. John. Priest, recorded as having been taken prisoner and held captive in Lithuania c. 1205. HCL p. 28.

17. John Stric. Priest among the Livs at Kipsal (mod. Krimulda) along with Theoderic (no. 29), where he narrowly escaped capture by a Lithuanian raiding party on Christmas Day 1207. Later active in Saccalia in 1215 along with Otto (no. 22). HCL pp. 50-51, 120.

18. John of Vironia. An Estonian who was born in the province of Vironia but was captured from the pagans as a boy (natus de Vironia et a paganis in puericia captus). He was freed by Bishop Meinhard and educated at the monastery of Segeberg of Holstein. He came to Livonia with Bishop Albert, was ordained and installed in the parish of Holme, but was killed by pagan Livs along with

the priests Gerhard (no. 10) and Hermann (no. 14) in 1206. His remains were buried in the cathedral of St Mary in Riga. HCL p. 37.

19. Lambert. Bishop of Semailia 1224-1231. HCL 213; LUB 1, nos. 74, 75, 76, 79, 81.

20. Ludwig. Accompanied the priest Alebrand (no. 2) in preaching in Saccalia in 1220, although since only the latter is described as sacerdos, Ludwig may have been an interpreter. HCL p. 169.

21. Meinhard (CanReg). Member of a ministerial family of the archbishopric of Bremen, and originally an Augustinian Canon in the monastery of Segeberg. After visiting Livonia as a missionary from the early 1180s, he was appointed as first bishop of Livonia in 1186, with seat at Üxküll. Died in 1196. He was buried in the church at Üxküll but his remains were later translated to the cathedral of St Mary in Riga. HCL pp. 2-7; Arnoldi Chronicon Slavorum cit., pp. 212-214.

22. Otto (FMC). Priest-brother of the Order of the Sword Brethren. Active in Saccalia with John Stric (no. 17), where they baptized the Estonian leader Lembitu, and in Ugaunia with Peter Kaikewalde (no. 24) in 1215. HCL pp. 120, 127, 132.

23. Philip of Ratzeburg (CanReg). Bishop of Ratzeburg in Holstein. He came to Livonia as a pilgrim in 1210 but remained to serve the church of Riga, where he ministered to both Germans and Livs. He fell ill while travelling from Livonia to the IV Lateran Council and died at Verona in November 1215. HCL pp. 74-75, 112-113, 130; C. BRODKORB, s.v. Philipp von Ratzeburg, in Neue Deutsche Biographie 20, Berlin 2001, p. 38.

24. Peter Kaikewalde. Priest, originally from Finland (de Vinlandia). Active in Saccalia and Ugaunia in 1215 with the priest Otto (no. 22) and with the chronicler Henry (no. 13) in northern Estonia in 1220-1226. HCL pp. 127, 132, 169-170, 214.

25. Salomon. Priest, sent by Bishop Albert to preach to the Estonians of Saccalia in 1211. He made some conversions at Fellin but hearing of the approach of an army of pagans and Russians he attempted to return to Livonia. He was tracked down by the Estonian pagan leader Lembit and killed along with his interpreters Theoderic and Philip. HCL p. 99.

26. Salomon. Priest, sent to preach in the maritime province of Rotalia in 1220, but expelled by the incoming Danes. HCL p. 176.

27. Segehard (OCist). Cistercian from the abbey of Dünamünde. Sent to serve Bishop Bernard (no. 4) in Semailia, but was killed when his party was intercepted by pagan Semailians in 1219. HCL pp. 157-158.

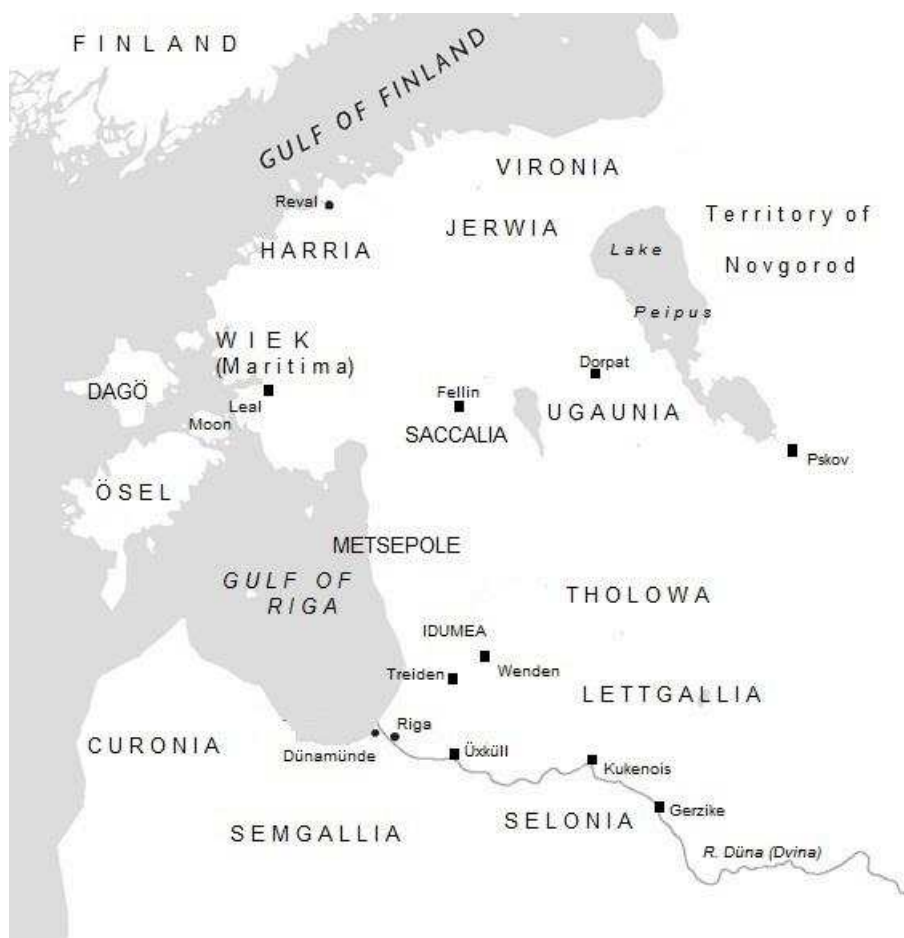
28. Siegfried. Monk who acted as priest in the parish of Holm. Died 1203. HCL p. 23.

29. Theoderic. Priest among the Livs at Kipsal along with John Stric (no. 17) in 1207. HCL pp. 50-51.

30. Theoderic. Priest, active in northern Estonia in 1220 along with Henry (no. 13), having been ordained shortly before. He ministered to neophytes in Jerwia and Vironia, but was despoiled and expelled by the Danish authorities. Later active at Fellin in Saccalia (1223). HCL pp. 174, 176, 189; LUB 1, no. 16.

31. Theoderic (FMC). Priest of the garrison of Sword Brethren in Fellin in 1223. Since native Saccalians also lived in the order's castle he probably also had missionary duties. HCL p. 189.

32. Theoderic of Treiden (OCist). The only fellow missionary of Bishop Meinhard who is known by name. In Livonia from 1186, and at first active among the Livs in the area of Treiden on the River Gauja. Appointed by Bishop Albert as abbot of the new Cistercian monastery of Dünamünde (1205) and later bishop of Estonia (1211). He changed allegiance to King Valdemar II of Denmark and went to join the Danish forces in northern Estonia in 1219, but was killed during a battle between Danes and pagan Estonians at Reval on 15 June of the same year. HCL pp. 4-7, 17, 154-155; LUB 1, nos. 18, 20, 23.



Areas of Missionary Activity in Livonia and Estonia, 1185-1227.