

INTRODUCTION

The Christianisation of the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea has been the subject of research for several hundred years. The Christianisation process encompasses the topics of Christian missions, the Crusades, the Europeanisation of the Baltic region, the relationship between Christianity and paganism, popular religiosity, trading with the pagans, political history, the conquests of the Teutonic Order, Christian and pagan law, everyday life, and much more. Each of these topics can, and often does, become the subject of case studies, not only by historians, but also by archaeologists, cultural researchers, historians of religion (and sometimes also mythology) and everyday life, legal and economic researchers, and political historians. They all bring their own views, approaches and episodes to our knowledge about the Christianisation of the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians, raising specific questions and providing explicit answers.¹ A combination of all these approaches enables us to get a comprehensive understanding of the Christianisation process, and allows the Christianisation of the eastern Baltic shore to be understood in the context of the overall process of the acceptance of Christianity in the Baltic Sea region and throughout Europe.²

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Due to their geographical proximity and certain political and cultural ties, the Christianisation of Livonia, Prussia and Lithuania has always been of interest to German, Polish, Russian and Scandinavian researchers, as well as to Lithuanians and Latvians. The article by Loïc Chollet published in this collection also shows that the process of the Christianisation of Balt and Finno-Ugrian societies is not only a topic for Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian researchers.

¹ There is extensive historiography on the Christianisation of Prussia, Lithuania (including Žemaitija) and Livonia in various languages, English, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Latvian and Estonian. It would take too much space to list the entire historiography; however, some of the most conceptual and/or recent works that deal extensively with the historiography should be mentioned. These include: BLOM-KVIST, Nils. *The Discovery of the Baltic. The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (AD 1075–1225)* (The Northern World. North Europe and the Baltic c. 400–1700 AD. Peoples, Economies and Cultures). Leiden, Boston, 2005. See also collections of research contributions on Christianisation: *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence*. Vols. I–II. Ed. by Maciej SALAMON, Marcin WOŁOSZYN, Alexander MUSIN, Perica ŠPEHAR. Kraków, Leipzig, Rzeszów, Warszawa, 2012; *Credo – Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter. Essays*. Vol. I. Ed. by Christoph STIEGEMANN, Martin KROKER, Wolfgang WALTER. Petersberg, 2013; *Chrystianizacja „Młodszej Europy”*. Red. Józef DOBOSZ, Jerzy STRZELCZYK, Marzena MATLA. Poznań, 2016. The process of the Christianisation and the Europeanisation of Lithuania is discussed extensively by BARONAS, Darius, ROWELL, S. C. *The Conversion of Lithuania. From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians*. Vilnius, 2015.

² Cf. PADBERG, Lutz E., von. *Christianisierung im Mittelalter*. Darmstadt, Stuttgart, 2006; *Chrystianizacja „Młodszej Europy”...* For a general account of the Christianisation process in Medieval Europe, see: FLETCHER, Richard. *The Conversion of Europe. From paganism to Christianity 371–1386*. London, 1997.

Despite the contributions of researchers from different countries to our understanding of the Christianisation of Balt and Finno-Ugrian societies, the adoption of Christianity in Prussia, Lithuania and Livonia has long been studied in the context of the Crusades.³ The main goal was to answer one of the most important questions: whether the Christian missions to the pagan West Slavs, the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians were an integral part of the Crusades.⁴ In spite of the great efforts of researchers, this question has not been answered unequivocally, but it has pointed to directions for future research. One of these is the process of Christianisation through the lens of the mentalities and everyday life that were influenced by the change of religion. This includes certain forms of popular religiosity (piety) that replaced old forms of pagan religiosity in Prussia, Lithuania and Livonia, and led to the formation of a new identity, which was by no means only the result of Christianisation, but also of the Crusades.⁵

In addition, more attention was paid to one of the most important aspects of Christianisation, the establishment of ecclesiastical institutions in Livonia, Prussia and

³ For example, the Christianisation of the Old Prussians was examined in connection with the conquests of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and the political claims of the Polish dukes to the Prussian lands. Cf. MASCHKE, Erich. *Der Deutsche Orden und die Preussen. Bekehrung und Unterwerfung in der preussisch-baltischen Mission des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin, 1928. The process of the Christianisation of Livonia was also examined in accounts of the military campaigns of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword: BENNINGHOVEN Friedrich. *Der Orden der Schwertbrüder. Fratres milicie Christi de Livonia* (Ostmitteleuropa in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Bd. 9). Köln, 1965; URBAN, William. *The Prussian Crusade*. Washington, 1980; URBAN, William. *The Livonian Crusade*. Washington, 1981. See also: BOOCKMANN, Hartmut. *Der Deutsche Orden: Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte*. München, 1999; *Die Rolle der Ritterorden in der Christianisierung und Kolonialisierung des Ostseegebiets* (Ordines militares, Colloquia Torunensia, 1). Hrsg. von Zenon H. NOWAK. Toruń, 1983.

⁴ The historiography on this subject is also extensive. However, the following works should be mentioned: KAHL, Hans-Dietrich. Zum Geist der deutschen Slawenmission des Hochmittelalters. In *Heidenmission und Kreuzzugsgedanke in der Deutschen Ostpolitik des Mittelalters*. Hrsg. von Helmut BEUMANN. Darmstadt, 1963, S. 156–176; KAHL, Hans-Dietrich. Compellere intrare. Die Wendenpolitik Bruns von Querfurt im Lichte hochmittelalterlichen Missions- und Völkerrechts. In *Heidenmission und Kreuzzugsgedanke...*, S. 177–274. On the possible (non-)use of violence in the first missions to the Livian land, see: DYGO, Marian. Mission und Kreuzzug in der Anfängen der Christianisierung Livlands. In *Kryžiaus karų epocha Baltijos regiono tautų istorinėje sąmonėje. Mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys*. Sud. Rita R. TRIMONIENĖ, Robertas JURGAITIS. Šiauliai, 2007, p. 66–84. See also: *Schwertmission. Gewalt und Christianisierung im Mittelalter*. Hrsg. von Hermann KAMP, Martin KROKER. Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich, 2013. This issue has been addressed in Lithuanian historiography by ŠČAVINSKAS, Marius. *Kryžius ir kalavijas. Krikščioniškųjų misijų sklaida Baltijos jūros regione X–XIII amžiais*. Vilnius, 2012. Cf. ŠČAVINSKAS, Marius. On the Crusades and Coercive Missions in the Baltic Region in the Mid-12th Century and Early 13th Century. The Cases of the Wends and Livonians. *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 2014, Bd. 63, Hf. 4, pp. 499–527.

⁵ EIHMANE, Eva. The Baltic Crusades: a Clash of two Identities. In *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic frontier*. Ed. by Alan V. MURRAY. Farham, 2009, pp. 37–51; JENSEN, Carsten Selch. How to Convert a Landscape: Henry of Livonia and the *Chronicon Livoniae*. In *The Clash of Cultures ...*, pp. 151–168; MURRAY, Alan V. Music and Cultural Conflict in the Christianization of Livonia, 1190–1290. In *The Clash of Cultures ...*, pp. 293–305. For more about the new identity formation of Christians in Prussia, see: DOBROSIELSKA, Alicja. *Opór oportunizm współpraca. Prusowie wobec zakonu krzyżackiego w dobie podboju* (Monumenta Literaria Prussiae. Seria C: monografie, nr. 7). Olsztyn, 2017.

Lithuania.⁶ Historians have long raised the question of how many churches had to be established in the lands that converted to Christianity in order for the process of Christianisation to be considered complete.⁷ Equally important is the question of when the process of Christianisation began on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, and what social changes accompanied it (the article written for the present volume by Rūdolfs Brūzis and Roberts Spirģis on the material from a Liv cemetery also touches on this question). Obviously, the number of churches at the time of the establishment of the first ecclesiastical institutions could not have been high, but over time it increased, and the influence of the Church expanded. It is also important to note that the missionaries, the secular authorities that supported them, and the converts involved in the missionary work, made every effort to consolidate Christianity and build a Christian society. The question of syncretism between religions and cultural diffusion is no less relevant when considering the Christianisation of Balt and Finno-Ugrian societies. It is this question, and not only the question of the number of churches, that allows us to consider the depth of Christianity in Prussian, Livonian and Lithuanian societies. The question of depth is important when it comes to dating the end of Christianisation, which was not the same in Prussia, Livonia and Lithuania. Thus, the Christian missions marked the beginning of efforts to build a Christian society, while the final stage of building a Christian society marked the end of the Christianisation process.

The Christianisation of the eastern edge of the Baltic region lasted for several centuries. Christian missions, which began at the turn of the tenth and 11th centuries in Prussia and (possibly) Lithuania, gained momentum in the second half of the 12th century, with the establishment of missionary, trading and political centres along the River Daugava, involving actors from both the west and the east (especially Polotsk). With the Crusades, attempts were made to reconcile the theory and practice of the Christian missions with the theory and practice of the Crusades, which undoubtedly

⁶ Cf. BISKUP, Marian. Parafie w państwie krzyżackim. In *Państwo zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach. Podziały administracyjne i kościelne od XIII do XVI w.* Red. Zenon H. NOWAK. Toruń, 2000, s. 81–94; RADZIMIŃSKI, Andrzej. *Kościół w państwie zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach 1243–1525. Organizacja – uposażenie – ustawodawstwo – duchowieństwo – wierni.* Malbork, 2006; *Die Kirche im mittelalterlichen Livland* (Ecclesia Clerusque Temporibus Medii Aevi, vol. 5). Hrsg. von Radosław BISKUP, Johannes GÖTZ, Andrzej RADZIMIŃSKI. Toruń, 2019. For information about the first parishes in Lithuania, see: JUČAS, Mečislovas. *Lietuvos parapijos XV–XVIII a.* Vilnius, 2007.

⁷ The minimum-density network of churches was emphasised by the Polish scholars Henryk Łowmiański and Jerzy Kłoczowski. See: ŁOWMIANŃSKI, Henryk. *Religia słowian i jej upadek (w. VI–XII)*. Warszawa, 1979, s. 314–315; KŁOCZOWSKI, Jerzy. *Europa słowiańska w XIV–XV wieku*. Warszawa, 1984, s. 147–184. Cf. BUMBLAUSKAS, Alfredas, BUMBLAUSKAS, Mangirdas. *Žemaitijos krikštas. Christianizacijos procesas XV–XVII amžiuje*. Vilnius, 2018, p. 53–55. However, other studies show that even in the event of a lack of an established church or an insufficient density of churches, Christianisation proceeded quite smoothly. See: VAIVADA, Vacys. Krikščionybės įsitvirtinimo Žemaitijoje XV a. pab. – XVI a. vid. klausimas: parapijų tinklo raidos ir asmenvardžių kaitos aspektas. In *Vertybių transformacijos: Baltijos regiono rytinė pakrantė XIII–XVIII amžiais. Kolektyvinė monografija*. Sud S.C. ROWELL. Klaipėda, 2015, p. 138–149.

led to the conflicts that characterised the entire 14th century. At the centre of these conflicts was the Teutonic Order, which had possessions in Prussia and Livonia, and laid claim to Lithuania. Thanks to political manoeuvring, Lithuania's rulers ultimately managed to neutralise the Teutonic Order, by accepting baptism from the Western Church in Lithuania in 1386–1387. Thus, between 1386–1387 and 1413–1419, the Lithuanians, the last European pagans, finally accepted Christianity from the Western Church. However, some Ruthenians, who at that time were subjects of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, had practised the Christianity of the Eastern Church since the time of the principality of Kievan Rus'. This was due to the fact that the rulers of Lithuania, through their conquests and political expansion, had conquered areas of the principalities of Kievan Rus' which had been divided into small political units, while remaining pagan themselves. Although some members of the ruling house of Gediminids accepted baptism according to the rite of the Eastern Church (and some, after fleeing to the Teutonic Order, according to the rite of the Western Church), the question of the baptism of the grand dukes became an important issue for the survival of Lithuania and the relationship between the universal European powers of the time and pagan Lithuania.⁸ By adopting Christianity from the Western Church, Jogaila (or Vladislaus II, Władysław II Jagiełło), the ruler of Lithuania, not only resolved the issue of the expansion of the Teutonic Order, but also decided the further political and cultural development of Lithuanian society as a whole: the Lithuanians became part of Western civilisation.⁹

In my opinion, one of the most important reasons for the study of the Christianisation of the Balts and Finno-Ugrians, and for rethinking earlier research, came from two international conferences held in Rome in 1986 and 1987, which led to the publication of two extensive volumes of research papers.¹⁰ In Poland¹¹ and Lithuania, which was then under Soviet rule,¹² works were also published in connection with the 600th anniversary of Lithuania's baptism. Under the Soviet occupation in Lithuania, however, it was not possible to deal freely with the issue of Lithuania's baptism. Therefore, after Lithuania regained its independence, there was a particular need not only to reassess the history of Lithuania's Christianisation and the history of the struggle against the Teutonic Order, but also to undertake a thorough study of the

⁸ Cf. GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. Lietuvos krikščionybės priėmimo politinė problema. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1987. Vilnius, 1988, p. 14–22.

⁹ GUDAVIČIUS, Edvardas. Kultūrinio Lietuvos elito atsiradimo sąlygos. *Kultūros barai*, 1993, nr. 4, p. 62–66.

¹⁰ *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 (Atti e Documenti, Vol. 1). Ed. Michele MACCARRONE. Città del Vaticano, 1989; *La Cristianizzazione della Lituania. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Storia Ecclesiastica, in occasione del VI centenario della Lituania cristiana (1387–1987)*. Roma, 24–26 giugno 1987 (Atti e Documenti, Vol. 2). Ed. Paulius RABIKAUŠKAS. Città del Vaticano, 1989.

¹¹ *Christianizacja Litwy*. Red. Jerzy KŁOCZOWSKI. Kraków, 1987.

¹² JURGINIS, Juozas. *Lietuvos krikštas. Feodalinės visuomenės socialinės ir kultūrinės raidos studija*. Vilnius, 1987.

history of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, which had been greatly subjected to ideology during the Soviet period.¹³

Historiography has already integrated the Christianisation of the Balts into the overall process of the Christianisation of the Baltic Sea region.¹⁴ A remarkable event in the development of historiography was a major international conference in Vilnius in September 2001, which dealt with the Christianisation of Lithuania in a Central European context. The results of this conference, including studies that have not lost their relevance, were published in a separate publication in Lithuanian and German.¹⁵ And in 2009, when Lithuania celebrated the thousandth anniversary of the first mention of its name in the Quedlinburg Annals, and Christian Europe commemorated the anniversary of the martyrdom of St Bruno of Querfurt, the first Christian missions in the Baltic region once again received the attention they deserved.¹⁶

Archaeologists have also recently been very actively engaged in studying the process of the Christianisation of Lithuania, either by reevaluating ancient artefacts that were previously attributed to the pagan Lithuanian era, or by researching and presenting to the public newly discovered Medieval cemeteries.¹⁷ The interpretation of burials found in Medieval cemeteries is still the subject of much debate: some people try to deny the obvious influence of Christianity on Medieval burials in Lithuania, while others, on the contrary, try to prove that by the end of the 14th century we can no longer speak of pagan artefacts in Medieval cemeteries. Nevertheless, all these disputes, which are also typical of Polish and Latvian historiography, only show how extremely interesting the process of Christianisation is, and how many thought-provoking ideas representatives from the various disciplines have about it.

Christian communities in the societies of the eastern Baltic shore have also been the focus of attention at Klaipėda University, where research looked at the Christian

¹³ Cf. JUČAS, Mečislovas. *Krikščionybės kelias į Lietuvą. Etapai ir problemos*. Vilnius, 2000; *Šventieji vyrai, šventosios moterys. Šventųjų gerbimas LDK XV–XVII a.* Sud. Mindaugas PAKNYS. Vilnius, 2005; *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje istorija*. Sud. Vytautas ALIŠAUSKAS. Vilnius, 2006 (translation into Polish: *Dzieje chrześcijaństwa na Litwie*. Red. Vytautas ALIŠAUSKAS. Warszawa, 2014).

¹⁴ *Christianization of the Baltic Region* (Castrī Dominae nostrae litterae Annales, Vol. I). Ed. by Jerzy GAŚSOWSKI. Pułtusk, 2004.

¹⁵ *Lietuvos krikščionėjimas Vidurio Europos konteste = Die Christianisierung Litauens im mitteleuropäischen Kontext*. Sud. Vytas DOLINSKAS. Vilnius, 2005.

¹⁶ *1009 metai: šv. Brunono Kverfurtiečio misija* (Fontes ecclesiastici historiae Lithuaniae, t. 5). Sud. Inga LEONAVIČIŪTĖ. Vilnius, 2006; TYSKIEWICZ, Jan. *Brunon z Querfurtu w Polsce i krajach sąsiednich w tysiąclecie śmierci 1009–2009*. Pułtusk, 2009; BIAŁUŃSKI, Grzegorz. *Misja prusko-litewska biskupa Brunona z Kwerfurtu* (Monumenta Literaria Prussiae. Seria C: monografie, nr. 1). Olsztyn, 2010; *Bruno z Kwerfurtu. Osoba – dzieło – epoka*. Red. Marian DYGÓ, Wojciech FAŁKOWSKI. Pułtusk, 2010.

¹⁷ SVETIKAS, Eugenijus. *Alytaus kapinynas: christianizacijos šaltiniai*. Vilnius, 2003; VĖLIUS, Gintautas. *Kernavės miesto bendruomenė XIII–XIV amžiuje*. Vilnius, 2005; SVETIKAS, Eugenijus. *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės christianizacija XIV a. pab. – XV a. Archeologiniai radiniai su krikščioniškais simboliais*. T. I–II. Vilnius, 2009; JONAITIS, Rytis; KAPLŪNAITĖ, Irma. *Senkapis Vilniuje, Bokšto gatvėje. XIII–XV a. laidosenos Lietuvoje bruožai*. Vilnius, 2020.

communities, their consolidation, a reconsideration of Lithuania's conversion in 1387, and the practical activities of the clergy in Christian communities in Prussia, Livonia and Lithuania during and after the Christianisation of Lithuania.¹⁸ The idea of this publication, also initiated by Klaipėda University, is to rethink the sources (Medieval texts) describing the process of the Christianisation of the societies of the eastern Baltic shore, based on views and approaches chosen by individual researchers. This rethinking is necessary in order to reassess the existing archaeological and written sources, and to raise new thematic questions that will determine the further discourse on Christianisation in the overall context of Christianisation in the Baltic region. The existing state of knowledge of written and archaeological sources, and the ability to use the information provided by these sources, make it possible to look at the process of Christianisation on the eastern Baltic shore from perspectives other than the usual established ones, such as the establishment of ecclesiastical institutions, the development of Christian missions, the degree of familiarity of Christian converts with the faith, and political and/or cultural reasons for converting to Christianity. They form an important, but by no means the central, part of current research on Christianisation. Rather, other aspects are gradually becoming relevant to the process of Christianisation, such as the cultural memory, mentalities and cultural diffusion. They allow us to expand our knowledge of the process of conversion to Christianity itself. The combination of different sources and the integration of approaches from different disciplines in the study of Balt and Finno-Ugrian Christianisation is as important as a coherent account of the history of events in the Christianisation of Balt and Finno-Ugrian societies, encompassing political, diplomatic, cultural and military aspects.

The volume consists of two sections. The first section 'Rethinking the Sources of Christianisation' focuses on a re-examination of the archaeological and written sources of Balt and Finno-Ugrian Christianisation. Rūdolfs Brūzis and Roberts Spirģis examine the Christianisation of Liv society along the River Daugava from the tenth to the first half of the 13th century, combining archaeological research with information from written historical sources. This combination of sources enables the authors to reassess the process of the Christianisation of the Livs, especially its beginning, and to show how the interpretation of archaeological artefacts can be the key to a new reading of seemingly well-known written sources. The question of how to view the cremation of corpses during Christianisation is a problem that has long been researched, not only in Latvia but also in Lithuania, Poland and Russia. It is generally believed that the cremation of corpses was a way of burying the dead that is associated exclusively with pagan ideology and mythology. However, some

¹⁸ Verbum movet, exemplum trahit. *The Emerging Christian Community in the Eastern Baltic = Krikščioniškios bendruomenės tapšmas Rytų Baltijos regione* (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Vol. 33). Ed. by Marius ŠČAVINSKAS. Klaipėda, 2016.

historical sources, such as the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, mention that the corpses of Christian converts who died during a campaign were cremated, and then, after being returned to their homeland, were buried in a church, as was the case with the Liv nobleman Caupo, which is described by the authors.¹⁹ Nevertheless, some archaeologists still describe the cremation of corpses as pagan, or at best a syncretic ritual that had nothing to do with Christianisation. Historical sources which contain references to a certain Christian symbolism expressing hope in the resurrection of the dead provide a clue as to why the burials of Livs from the time of Christianisation, even those near the first churches to be built, contain cremated corpses buried in wooden coffins. In other words, burials with cremated corpses during the period of Christianisation did not always refer only to burial rites attributed to paganism, and nor were they intended to. This broadens the overall picture of the process of Christianisation on the eastern Baltic shore.

The second article about the image of angels raising souls to heaven, which comes from Holy Scriptures, also expands our knowledge of the Christianisation of the Balts and Finno-Ugrians. It has already been mentioned that the question of the depth or the shallowness of Christianity is usually dealt with in terms of ecclesiastical institutions, the network of churches, and the intensity of the missions, while another component of the Christianisation process, namely popular religiosity and its associated imagery, is neglected. For the knowledge and appropriation of Christian truths was not only the work of members of the Church (missionaries and other clergy), but also of various newcomers to Livonia and Prussia, townspeople, merchants, peasants, and occasionally foreigners (cf. the invitation by Grand Duke Gediminas to West European Christians to settle in pagan Lithuania). They brought with them various images of death and burial rites that existed in Christian Europe, and passed them on to the converts in personal interactions. These images included the image of angels raising souls to heaven. It was related to the Christianisation of the concept of death and the world beyond, and to changes in burial rites that took place during the lifetime of the first generations of converts. Therefore, the question of whether in the pre-Christian world-view of the Balts and Finno-Ugrians there were analogous spirits capable of carrying souls to the afterlife, or whether such an image, which was known in Christian countries, was completely new in the minds of converts who embraced Christianity, is particularly important. In answering this question, we must again rely on archaeological sources, not just written ones, because only in their totality can we evaluate pagan burial rites and attempt to understand the pre-Christian concept of the Otherworld.

The first section in the volume concludes with an article by Rasa Mažeika, who reevaluates the coverage of Prussian paganism in *Cronica terre Prussie* by Peter of Dusburg. We should understand that Christianisation in the Middle Ages, as Michael

¹⁹ ŠČAVINSKAS, M. *Kryžius ir kalavijas...*, p. 155–158.

Brauer has pointed out, consists not only of the adoption of Christianity (missions, baptism, the establishment of Christian life, etc), but also of the concept of paganism of the converts, its rituals, and its world-view (what Brauer calls the dialectics of Christianisation).²⁰ Therefore, it is only logical to examine Dusburg's knowledge of Prussian paganism from the point of view of the dialectics of Christianisation in order to reconsider the description of Prussian paganism, a description that is known to researchers almost by heart. The author of this article presents a new English translation of the description of Prussian paganism. The most important question in examining the dialectics of Christianisation in Medieval sources, however, is whether the chroniclers and other Medieval authors actually gave a 'true' account of paganism, or whether they presented the paganism of the peoples they described in a clichéd way, based on the 'canonical' accounts of paganism prevalent in the Middle Ages, just so that the Medieval reader could understand what was meant. The latter question is also relevant to the other articles mentioned above. The way in which the source itself is read determines not only the level of knowledge but also the understanding of the Christianisation process. For this reason, the researcher should read the historical sources again and again, especially since sources on the Christian attitude towards Balt (and also Finno-Ugrian) paganism are not very numerous or exhaustive. Even Peter of Dusburg, who devoted the whole of paragraph five of Book III to Prussian paganism, provided a very concise, and admittedly very conventional, description of the paganism the Prussians were accused of, which was to be combated by the Christian clergy and the knights of the Teutonic Order, who were supposed to teach the converts the new Christian truths.

The second section 'Between Christianisation and Crusades' begins with an article by Loïc Chollet on the attitude of the Medieval French nobility towards the Christianisation of the Balts, which was perceived by the Teutonic Order as a 'mission of the sword'. It has long been known in historiography that the conquest of the Prussian and Lithuanian lands by the Teutonic Order was supported by knights from various national backgrounds. For French chroniclers, the conquest of Prussia, and Lithuania in particular, and the Christianisation of these lands, were of peripheral interest, and were lost in the general rhetoric of the crusades and their descriptions. However, in order to understand why the Teutonic Order and its collaborators attempted to Christianise the Balts through 'sword missions', and what inspired the French knights to rush to the aid of the Teutonic Order, we should consider not only the ideology of the crusades at the time, but also the individuals who were inspired by this ideology, in this case those who were of French origin or had connections with France. The question of the contrast between the military actions to evangelise the Prussians and

²⁰ BRAUER, Michael. *Die Entdeckung des „Heidentums“ in Preußen. Die Prußen in den Reformdiskursen des Spätmittelalters und der Reformation* (Europa im Mittelalter, Bd. 17). Berlin, 2011, S. 35–40.

Lithuanians and the peaceful missions, already mentioned briefly at the beginning of the introduction, remains an important element in understanding the process of Christianisation. It allows us to outline the dialectics of Christianisation and the theory and practice of Christian missions as they were formulated in the Middle Ages.

Details of the ideology of the crusades in the context of Christianisation are also explored in the second article in the second section by Yanina Ryier. Throughout the Middle Ages, and even in later times, special attention was paid to all kinds of miracles, which were considered by Christians to be signs from God. The aforementioned image of angels raising souls to heaven can also be seen as a miracle, a miraculous vision that emphasised the Christian understanding of an afterlife that depended on the life the individual lived, with the souls of the righteous going to heaven and the souls of sinners going to hell. In the ideology of the Crusades, the brothers of the Teutonic Order who fought against the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians represented the righteous, and God sent them, fighters for God's fiefdom in the lands of Prussia and Lithuania, a series of miracles to help and encourage them to fight, and not to be afraid to die in battle. Thanks to these miracles, the participants in the Crusades felt that they were part of God's plan on earth: Crusaders and Christian missionaries became protagonists of the dialectics of Christianisation, and left information for future generations about the desperate struggle between good (light) and evil (darkness).

The last article, by Vytautas Jankauskas, connects the theory and practice of the crusade with the reality of the establishment of Christian missions and ecclesiastical institutions in Lithuania. Historiography has already repeatedly dealt with the difficulty of establishing Church institutions in the newly Christianised lands of Medieval Europe, which in many cases, as the activities of the Carolingian Church in the conquered Saxon lands show, depended on the preferences of the secular authorities, the abilities and commitment of the Christian clergy, and the involvement of converts in the establishment of institutions.²¹ During the Christianisation of Lithuania under King Mindaugas in the mid-13th century, the documents that the king handed over to the first Bishop of Lithuania, Christian, and the land provided to him, were also aimed at establishing ecclesiastical institutions in the Kingdom of Lithuania. However, in the author's opinion, the documents in question may also be a key that unlocks the dilemma of the location of Mindaugas' own domain, 'Lithuania *propria*'.

We hope that this publication will give the reader a better understanding of the process of the Christianisation of the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians, stimulate discussion, and contribute to further research.

Marius Ščavinskas

²¹ PADBERG, L. E., von. *Christianisierung im Mittelalter...*, S. 70–82.