

Holy War – Holy Wrath!

Baltic Wars Between Regulated Warfare and Total
Annihilation Around 1200

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The Baltic crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were in principle aimed at converting infidels and establishing a new Christian plantation in the wilderness, but the contemporary narrative sources repeatedly tell of crusaders systematically chasing down pagans and annihilating them with the sword. Men, women, and children were killed without discrimination, and fertile and inhabited land laid waste. Field crops, houses and villages, wooden idols and their sacred buildings, and pagan prisoners of war were burned and cremated into ash and nothing.¹

Two apparently opposing understandings of warfare seem to have existed simultaneously among the religiously well-educated authors whose writings from the decades around 1200 open a fascinating – and often scary – window to the religious border societies in the north. On the one hand, it was argued theologically and legally that warfare should be regulated, limited, and aimed at creating peace.² The infidels shared with Christians certain basic human rights which protected them against arbitrary violence, and it was repeatedly emphasized that belief could only be given willingly, and thus that conversion could never be forced. On the other hand, the same authors argued for compulsory conversion and indiscriminate killing, if crusaders were inflamed by the zeal of God, and in order to avert the wrath of God from befalling the Christians.³

These apparently contradictory concepts of conversion could perhaps be explained as formulations from a period of transition, from a traditional

1 The literature on Baltic crusades and warfare has grown markedly within the latest generation. An important overview is Christiansen, *Northern Crusades*, published in 1980 and in a revised edition in 1997. Christian Krötzel has discussed the relation between regulated and total missionary warfare in more publications, e.g., *Pietarin ja Paavalin nimissä*. The collection of articles in *Heidenmission*, ed. by Beumann, is valuable, but must be supplemented by *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier*, ed. by Murray; *The Clash of Cultures*, ed. by Murray, and for Henry of Livonia by *Crusading and Chronicle Writing*, ed. by Tamm, Kaljundi, and Jensen. See also Urban, *The Baltic Crusade*; Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades*; and Bysted et al., *Jerusalem in the North*.

2 See Russell, *The Just War*.

3 Althoff, "Selig sind die Verfolgung ausüben"; *Schwertmission*, ed. by Kamp and Kroker.

peaceful mission of individuals to a more powerful and violent mission of organized armies. This has been argued for the Baltic area by a number of scholars who have traced this transformation to the last decade of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries. One of today's most widely-respected scholars on mission and the spread of Christianity in northern Europe, Professor Christian Krötzl, wrote in his book from 2004 about 'The return of the sword mission to the Baltic' and the change in the ideology of mission in the twelfth century. One of the chapters in his book is programmatically entitled 'Livonia: From Preaching to the Sword'.⁴ Christian Krötzl's work has contributed to and refined a discussion that has been ongoing throughout the twentieth century and likely began among historians much earlier – the use of force in spreading the faith of Christianity. This discussion received a more distinct formulation after the First and Second World Wars, when discussions about the relation between warfare and ideology took on vital importance. Should ideology – such as Nazism or Communism or religion in general – be imposed by force or solely by oral persuasion? Is Christianity fundamentally opposed to force and violence? Can we find, in the Middle Ages, the first tolerant and pacifistic European criticizing crusades and the use of force in conversion, as the American historian Palmar A. Throop believed in 1940?⁵

In studies of the Mediterranean crusades, this alleged contradiction between peaceful and armed conversion was challenged in 1984 with the publication of Benjamin Kedar's extremely influential book on *Crusade and Mission*.⁶ Since then, most scholars would agree that there was no inherent contradiction between crusade and mission, and that the 'mission of the word' was not a criticism, but rather a supplement to the 'mission of the sword'. In studies of the Baltic crusades, some scholars still find a transition during the twelfth century from peaceful to violent mission, while others claim that missionaries and ecclesiastical authorities always accepted the use of force, although it was not always applied for practical reasons such as lack of manpower.⁷

The aim of this chapter is to discuss what I believe are two different attitudes to warfare which found expression in some of the narrative sources

4 Krötzl, *Pietarin ja Paavalin nimissä*, p. 207: 'Miekkalähetysten paluu Itämerelle'; p. 219: 'Liivinmaa: Saarnasta miekkaan'.

5 Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*.

6 Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*. Independently of Kedar, Elizabeth Siberry reached a similar conclusion in her book published the following year; Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading*.

7 Fønnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades*, p. 74: 'He [Meinhard] instigated a change of strategy from one of peaceful mission to one which used force.'

from around 1200 describing the mission and crusades in the Baltic area. One attitude was that warfare should be regulated, limited, and only used to defend missionaries and enable them to preach the Word to the infidels. The other attitude was an acceptance of total war, in which conversion and preaching was of much less importance than the annihilation of the pagans. These two approaches were not mutually exclusive, but different aspects of the same discussion. The same author could express both of these understandings of warfare in the same text.

Authors of War

The sources explored here are primarily Henry's *Chronicle of Livonia* 1225-1227,⁸ the historian Saxo's *History of the Danes*, written probably in the first decade of the thirteenth century,⁹ and the *Chronicle of the Kings and Princes of Poland*, written by Bishop Vincent of Cracow sometime between 1207 and 1223.¹⁰ These texts are chosen because they are almost contemporaneous, and because they describe religious wars in Baltic areas that are geographically close to each other.

Henry of Livonia was creating a *grande* narrative of the foundation of the church of Riga and the Christianization of Livonia – of present day Latvia and southern Estonia.¹¹ The history of the bishops of Riga and of the German crusaders became holy history and imitated closely the battles of Israel against the idolaters of the Old Testament; God and the Holy Virgin Mary supported the righteous course of Riga against pagans and apostates, but also against competing Christian powers, mainly the Russians and the Danes. Henry's language is imbued with biblical phrases and expressions from the liturgy. Measured against the oratorical standards of the teaching of classical Latin in the twelfth century's renaissance, he was neither brilliant nor sophisticated, but as a biblical-inspired missionary with a message, his language is outstanding.¹²

8 *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. by Arbusow and Bauer (henceforth: HCL).

9 Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, 1-2, ed. by Friis-Jensen.

10 *Magistri Vincentii dicti Kadlubek Chronica Polonorum*, ed. by Plezia (henceforth: Vincent).

11 For Henry, see the comprehensive *Crusading and Chronicle Writing*, ed. by Tamm, Kaljundi, and Jensen, with further references to literature.

12 This is my own firm impression from reading the text. The opinions on Henry's linguistic and oratorical skills, however, divide his readers into two opposing groups. Arbusow, for example, who edited his text dismisses Henry as 'ein sehr unselbständiger Sprachgestalter',

Within this biblical framing, Henry described with detailed precision battle after battle of continuous warfare. His work is an invaluable source for military history, demonstrating great knowledge about – and also great enthusiasm for – war. In 1215, he followed Bishop Albert of Riga to Rome and may have participated in the Fourth Lateran Council, during which Pope Innocent III, on the instigation of Albert, recognized Livonia as the land of the Mother, as *Terra Mariana*.¹³

Vincent of Cracow created the great narrative of the Polish people and its dukes and kings, and the foundation of Poland. It began in a mythical past beyond time when the Poles conquered lands even beyond the sea, namely the Danish islands. They put the Danish King Canute in chains and forced the Danes to grow long, feminine hair and dress up like women, and to pay tribute. This is obviously a fabulous construction.¹⁴ More important in this context is that Vincent described the creating of a Polish kingdom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries during great battles with Hungarians, Bohemians, and the German emperor as well as the pagan Pomeranians and Prussians along the Baltic. Some of these expeditions were aimed at converting the pagans or getting apostates back into the Christian fold; most of them were bloody and entailed great manslaughter, regardless of the enemy.

Vincent wrote an excellent classical Latin and quoted a great number of Roman authors, but also Church fathers, canon and Roman law, and referred extensively to the Bible. His work is constructed as a dialogue between the venerable and wise bishops Matheus and Johannes, discussing concepts such as *patria*, justice, and the government of the *res publica* of Poland with its balance between kings and people, that is, the nobility. He differs very much from Henry of Livonia when it concerns the concepts of history. Vincent's tale is no unfolding of providential history, but the result of human agents and how they conform to classical virtues. Nevertheless, he does now and then explain events in history as the result of individual rulers choosing for or against what was right in the eyes of God. Polish rulers could lose battles because of their sins, but also for other reasons.

Vincent had studied in Bologna, and it is tempting to speculate whether he at this new university followed lectures together with the later Danish

while Anninski, who translated his Chronicle into Russian, called him a masterly orator. See the discussion and examples in Undusk, *Sacred History*, pp. 48-49.

13 See the chapter by Kivimäe in this volume.

14 'Ceterum victoriae illae Polonorum de Danis latae fabulosae videntur', wrote the editor of Vincent's text in 1994, p. 7, note to 2,3.

Archbishop Andreas Sunesen, but it is impossible to know for sure. Vincent attended the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and was clearly well informed about contemporary theology. It is uncertain whether he wrote his *Cronica* while still a bishop in Cracow, or after he resigned in 1218 and entered the Cistercian monastery of Brysinch (in present day Jędrzejów). He died in 1223. The first part of Vincent's work is based on an older Polish chronicle, by the so-called Gallus anonymous from c. 1115.¹⁵ It makes it possible to compare the two narratives with one hundred years between them. Both describe missionary wars, both present them as crusades, but with different emphasis and with very different logic for the necessity of mass killing.¹⁶

Saxo created the grandiose narrative of the Danes and the Danish empire intended to match other great foundation narratives of the *origo gentis* genre of the twelfth century. Denmark was not founded by outsiders or immigrants, for Danes have always lived in Denmark, Saxo claimed. Through wars for centuries against Germans, English, other Scandinavians, other Danish rulers, and everybody else, the Danish kings created a political entity that could match the German-Roman Empire, again according to Saxo. The last books of his huge narrative include detailed accounts of the regular Danish expeditions against the pagan Wends in what is now northern Germany. Expeditions were launched every year, and slowly expanded both the territories under Danish rule and Christianity. Saxo shows an interest in military matters on a practical level, which is comparable to Henry of Livonia, but which is much more downplayed in Vincent of Cracow. Saxo also openly approved of Danish kings' total annihilation of enemies: their destruction of the land and burning of pagan homes.

Saxo wrote a highly sophisticated Silver Age Latin filled with hundreds of quotations from a wide selection of Classical authors, but almost no medieval sources: a single one from Bede, a single one from Bernard of Clairvaux, one from liturgy, one single reference to the Bible. The ecclesiastical language of Saxo's contemporaries was replaced by a conscious archaic Latin in which 'church' is 'temple', not *ecclesia*, but *templum*, etc. Nevertheless, it is sometimes possible to look through this linguistic veil for a glimpse of the theological and legal discussions about war from Saxo's own time. Saxo probably began writing in the 1180s, continuing into the first decade or two of the thirteenth century. The introduction to his work is most probably written after 1208, formulated as a dedication to Archbishop Andreas Sunesen of Lund, who attended the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215

15 *Galli anonymi Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum polonorum*, ed. by Maleczynski.

16 See now v. Güttner Sporzynski, *Poland, Holy War*.

and, in spite of severe health problems, continued in his function until he retired in 1223; he died five years later.

In spite of all the differences in style and scope of these three works, they are worth comparing. They all include references to contemporary discussions about conversion and about justification of warfare, to greater or lesser extent. The following explores some selected themes on this matter in these texts, and relates them in the conclusion to recent discussions about the role of emotions in medieval religious warfare.

Coacta Servitia Non Placet Deo

Forced service is not pleasing to God. This maxim was reiterated and analysed throughout the Middle Ages, and the general inhibition against use of force in conversion was nuanced in various ways. When Gratian in the mid-twelfth century discussed it in *Causa 23*, he could refer to a number of biblical examples – Saint Paul had been forced to believe – as well as to psychology. Man will consider repulsive what he is not used to, so if the evil one is forced to abstain from evil, he will eventually begin to hate evil. On the other hand, God does not like forced service, so it is of no use to force anyone to believe.¹⁷

During the last part of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries, canonists and theologians discussed at length how to understand the prohibition against forced conversion. Some interpreted it as strictly literal and binding in all cases, while others modified it substantially. Already in the mid-1160s, Rufinus of Bologna distinguished between *absolute coercion* – which was strictly forbidden – and *conditional coercion*, which was acceptable. If a pagan protested loudly during baptism while restrained by strong Christians, it was absolute coercion and the baptism not valid. If he was beaten up and threatened with death, if he did not consent to convert, and he then in this situation agreed to be baptized, the baptism was valid. If he then afterwards took up pagan practises, he would now be an apostate and could lawfully be forced to profess Christianity and live a Christian life.¹⁸

17 Gratian, *Decretum* II, C. XXIII, q. 6, c. 4, § 1: 'Ex his omnibus colligitur, quod mali sunt cogendi ad bonum. § . 1. Sed obicitur, quod nemo est cogendus ad id, ad quod inutiliter cogitur. Ad bonum autem quisque cogitur inutiliter, cum Deus aspernetur coacta servitia.'

18 Cf. Brundage, 'Introduction', p. 14. Rufinus's distinction between absolute and conditional coercion was adopted by many. Among the most widely read authors was Raymondus de Penafort in his *Summa de poenitentia* from c. 1235 (here 1.4.2).

Around the same time as Gratian composed his collection of canon law, Bernard of Clairvaux preached the so-called Second Crusade, conceding to princes in the north that they could join the crusade movement by fighting against the Slavic pagans around the Baltic, instead of going to Jerusalem in the Middle East. They should arm themselves and fight against the pagans, ‘until these peoples are utterly destroyed or firmly converted to Christianity’.¹⁹ This theology of ‘baptism or death’ represents a radical position in the discussions about conversion and force. Historians have attempted to modify it by claiming that Bernard talked about destroying pagan political entities or pagan social life, not literally about killing pagans. This is much too benevolent an explanation. There is no reason to doubt that Bernard, in these specific circumstances, actually gave his permission for forced conversion.²⁰

The position of Saxo in this respect is difficult to establish with certainty. He described more instances of Christian victories followed by conversion of pagans. In 1168, King Valdemar I eventually conquered Arkona on the island of Rügen, the central sanctuary of the Wends and the strongest pagan fortification in northern Europe. When negotiations about surrender had begun, the King had among other conditions demanded the release of all Christian prisoners, the confiscation of the pagan temple treasure, the Rugians’ military support to the Danish kings in the future, and their acceptance of Christianity, or rather ‘all elements of the true religion according to the Danish rite’.²¹ A discussion followed among the leaders of the Danish army on whether to accept the surrender of the Rugians or to kill them all, and Archbishop Eskil of Lund argued that the greatest victory one could hope for was not only to force the people of another religion to pay tribute, but also to submit to the Christian Church. He added that it is better to subjugate an enemy than to kill him because mercy is better than severity.²²

19 ‘Ad delendas penitus aut certe convertendas nationes illas’. Bernard of Clairvaux, letter 457, ed. in *Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 31.

20 Discussed in Fönnestberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades*, pp. 32–33; Kamp, ‘Der Wendenkreuzzug’, pp. 128–30.

21 Saxo 14,39,25; II, p. 366: ‘Probato consilio rex oppidanos in fidem hac lege recepit, ut simulacro cum omni sacra pecunia tradito captiuos Christianos ergastulo liberatos absque redemptione dimitterent omniaque vere religionis momenta Danico ritu celebranda susciperent. Quinetiam ut agros ac latifundia deorum in sacerdotiorum usus conuerterent seque, quoties res posceret, Danice expeditionis comites exhiberent nec unquam accersiti regis militiam prosequi supersederent. Preterea annuatim ex singulis boum iugis quadragenos argenteos tributum nomine penderent totidemque obsides in earum conditionum firmamentum prestarent.’

22 Saxo 14,39,28; II, p. 368: ‘Qui autem optabiliorem uictoriam acquiri posse quam aliene religionis populum non solum tributis, uerum etiam Christianis sacris subiectum efficere.’ [...] ‘subiugare hostem quam necare tanto prestantius esse, quantum pietas a seueritate distare cognoscitur.’

Saxo's formulations were carefully chosen. The Rugians should accept the true religion 'according to the Danish rite', indicating that they had already confessed some kind of Christianity, but incorrectly. Elsewhere, Saxo related how the Rugians had been converted in the mid-1130s by King Erik Emune, but had relapsed from the faith when the Danish army left the island.²³ He also claimed that the area had been converted to Christianity by Charlemagne in the ninth century, but that the newly converted later had perverted the veneration for Saint Vitus into an idolatrous cult for Svantevit (Slavic for 'Saint Vitus') with four heads.²⁴ Saxo is clearly presenting a picture of the Wends on Rügen as apostates and not pagans, and without saying so directly, he therefore argues that it is fully justifiable to force them to return to the faith they had once accepted. That is, to the true form for Christianity that the Danes confess, *danico ritu*. Archbishop Eskil's wording is more ambiguous. He talks about a people of *aliena religio*, 'of another religion', not pagans or idolaters or infidels or similar. In Saxo's archaic Latin, adherence to another religion may perhaps designate a heretic rather than a pagan? To most medieval ecclesiastics around 1200, paganism would not be called a *religio*, but a superstition or something similar. In any case, Archbishop Eskil continues, it is better to subjugate the enemy than to kill him, because it is better to show mercy, clemency, leniency, *pietas*, than severity. It is better, but the alternative is not forbidden. Eskil does not directly adhere to the dictum of 'baptism or death', but his words seem in any case to imply that it can be justifiable (and laudable) to show severity and kill the enemy. It is, however, also an acknowledgment that it can be a religiously better act to spare him instead.

All in all, Saxo is not explicit about his opinion on use of force in conversion. He apparently related that it was common to use severe military force during the Danish crusades in the Baltic, but a close reading of his wording may also support the interpretation that he took care to describe the enemies as apostates rather than pagans, although he nowhere states directly that it should make any difference in how they were treated.

Henry of Livonia, in contrast, demonstrated clearly that he was aware of some of the consequences of distinguishing between apostates and pagans. Right from the beginning of his chronicle, he relates how the later Bishop Theoderic of Estonia in 1195-1196 went to Pope Celestine III in Rome, when the first Livonians were converted from paganism to Christianity. When the Pope heard the report from Theoderic about the incipient mission, he

23 Saxo 14,1,6-14,1,7; II, pp. 142-44.

24 Saxo 14,39,13; II, p. 360.

decreed that the new Christians should not be let down and abandoned, but that ‘they should be forced to observe the faith, that they had by their free will promised to accept’. In addition, the Pope promised plenary indulgence to all who took the cross and came to support this new and emerging church.²⁵ The situation is crystal clear: Pagans had converted to Christianity voluntarily and without being forced to do so, but afterwards they should be forced to remain within Christianity, and the crusaders could now fight against those who had remained pagans in order to protect the newly converted.

Even the pagans themselves expressed the same understanding of conversion and force, Henry claimed. When Bishop Bertold of Riga in 1198 prepared an army against a group of Livonians, they sent a messenger to him to inquire the reason. The Bishop answered that the Livonians who had been baptized often returned to paganism, as dogs to their vomit (Proverb 26:11; 2 Peter 2:22).²⁶ The Livonians who sent the messenger were still pagans, so they answered that the Bishop would thus have no cause for war against them, but could dismiss the army and return to his see. ‘Those who have accepted the faith, you can coerce to observe it, the others you must persuade to accept it by words and not by whipping.’²⁷

Henry of Livonia knew the basic, simple principle that no one should be forced to believe. Nevertheless, as Christian Krötzel has remarked, the reality as presented in his missionary narrative seems to contradict this directly.²⁸ In particular, the many descriptions of sieges sometimes entail the crusaders’ demand that the pagan defendants convert or be killed. In 1211, Bertold of the Order of the Sword Brethren and the commander Russinus laid siege to the castle of Viljandi (Fellin) in Estonia. They raided the surrounding

25 HCL I, 12, pp. 6-7: ‘Summus itaque pontifex audito numero baptizatorum non eos deserendos censuit, sed ad observationem fidei, quam sponte promiserant, cogendos decrevit. Remissionem quippe omnium peccatorum indulsit omnibus, qui ad resuscitandam illam primitivam ecclesiam accepta cruce transeant.’

26 The proverb about dogs returning to their vomit was used to characterize heretics since the second letter of Saint Peter and throughout the Middle Ages, and for different kinds of apostacy, not only from faith but also e.g. for breaking a monastic vow and leaving a religious order; Sullivan, *The Inner Lives*, p. 35.

27 HCL II, 5, pp. 9-10: ‘Tu tantum remisso exercitu cum tuis ad episcopium tuum cum pace revertaris, eos, qui fidem susceperunt, ad eam servandam compellas, alios ad suscipiendam eam verbis non verberibus allicias.’

28 Krötzel, *Pietarin ja Paavalin nimissä*, pp. 224-25: ‘Todellisuus oli kuitenkin usein toisenlainen, kuten Henrikin kuvauksista voi nähdä. Henrik ei tosin kerro suoraviivaisesti “kaste tai kuolema” tilanteista, joissa pakanoita olisi pakotettu kääntymään kristinuskoon miekka kaulalla, mutta varsinkin monet kronikan piiritystilanteet muistuttavat niitä läheisesti.’

areas and came back with a number of prisoners, whom they brought near to the castle, and gave the defendants the following ultimatum: 'If you renounce the cult of your false gods and believe together with us in the true God, we will return these captives to you alive, and you will be bound to us in brotherly love with the chain of peace.' The proposal is rejected, and both sides prepare for war. Russinus and his men therefore kill all the prisoners, throw them into the moat, and promise the pagans inside the castle that they will meet the same fate.²⁹ Other examples could be added to this, but would not change the impression that Henry was certainly aware of the distinction between pagans and apostates, that he knew Christians ought not to force pagans into Christianity, that he admitted it happened, and that he showed no great interest in discussing the problem.

Among our three authors, Vincent of Cracow most directly addresses the problem, in a sophisticated and detailed manner considering the genre within which he was writing. His work was not a theological treatise, but a work of history supplemented with a great number of philosophical considerations and common sense morals. Nevertheless, he posed the question directly: 'If it is offered enforced, does it then bind?'³⁰ The answer begins with the statement that wicked is the promise fulfilled with a wicked deed. We are not bound by any promise that is followed by wickedness or temptation to lose faith (*scandalum*). If fear is the cause, it has no binding effect (*ratum*). The example to prove this is the story of a bishop who was caught by robbers and promised, out of fear, not to persecute them when he was released. The pope absolved him from his promise, exactly because it had been extracted from him through fear.

There is one exception, however, where fear is not a justifiable reason for breaking an obligation: when it concerns faith, Vincent explained:

When anyone has received the faith of the Christian religion even if he has been forced to, he is obliged to keep it, although no one should be forced to something to which he is forced in vain (*inutiliter*), although the Lord rejects forced service, although it is not a favour what is imposed

29 HCL XIV, 11, p. 84: "Si", inquit, "renunciaveritis culture deorum vestrorum falsorum et nobiscum in Deum verum credere volueritis, vobis captivos istos vivos restituemus et vos in fraternitatis caritate nobiscum vinculo pacis colligabimus." [...] Russinus autem et Letti comprehensis captivis omnibus et trucidatis in fossatum proiciunt et eis, qui in castro erant, id ipsum comminantur.'

30 Vincent III, 12,1, p. 98: 'Id si coactus prestitisset, teneretur an non? Et sponsio suppliciiis extorta obligat an non?'

under protest, as it is not a sacrifice what is pressed out against the will. However, often a favour is shown towards the reluctant.³¹

In this short passage, Vincent succeeded in condensing six different passages from Gratian and from Roman law to provide a coherent legal and theological argument: Enforced promises are not binding, except when it concerns Christian faith. There are more arguments against it, e.g. that such promises are in vain, making it a realistic expectation that forced converts will often apostatize. However, even the reluctant will often receive a favour, Vincent concluded with a quotation from Saint Augustine. It must mean that baptism will help and be advantageous in any case, no matter whether or not it is voluntarily received.

These very general principles were applied to concrete historical reality.

It means therefore, that it was not without just cause that the severity of King Boleslaw flamed up against the sacrilegious idolaters, and that it was not without just cause that he added revenge upon revenge. Because hardly had this revenger against the plague of sacrilege rested for a moment, before they did not show reverence to the sacred faith, before they were no longer faithful to what they had promised.³²

The apostates did not fear to flight from faith, as the dogs do not resist from returning to their vomit. Therefore Boleslaw III collected his forces and struck with all his might against the Pomeranians. Not for a human cause, but for a divine, because Saint Vitus himself led the army in battle and wielded his spear against the enemy.

This episode in Vincent's narrative describes the battle for the city of Naklo in 1109, one of the instances where a saint appeared miraculous and fought together with the Polish king. The concrete events were none of Vincent's own inventions. He had taken them over from the older work of Gallus anonymous. The difference is that Vincent put much less emphasis on the military aspects and descriptions of siege techniques. Instead, he

31 Vincent III, 13,1, p. 99: 'Est autem, ubi nec iusto metus pretextu rescindi potest obligatio; puta christiane fidem religionis cum quisquam etiam coactus susceperit, tenere tenetur, quamvis nemo sit cogendus ad id, ad quod inutiliter cogitur, quamvis coacta seruitia Dominus aspernetur, quamvis non sit beneficium, quod ingeritur recusanti, nec sacrificium quod exprimitur inuito. Sepe tamen inuitis beneficia prestantur.'

32 Vincent III, 14,1, p. 99: 'Non iniuste igitur Boleslai seueritas in sacrilegos idolatras incanduit, non iniuste ultionem adiecit ultioni. Vix enim illa sacrilegii ultrix pestis quieuerat, cum nec sacre fidei reuerentiam nec pollicitis ullam tenere fidem.'

added the introduction with a theological justification of warfare against apostates, absent in Gallus anonymous. Compared to Henry of Livonia and Saxo, Vincent was much more explicit, spelling out the arguments they implicitly assumed or did not discuss at any length.

All three authors had knowledge of contemporary theories and discussions of justification of religious warfare and acknowledged that war should be regulated and fought according to rules. At the same time, they all described indiscriminate killing of enemies, apostates, infidels, and sometimes also Christians. They operated with a parallel set of justifications for a different kind of warfare, the unlimited kind. How, and why?

Ira Domini, Vindicta Domini

The wrath of God and the revenge of God are concepts that appear again and again in these sources. Historians have recently suggested that a new theology of war was formulated by the papal reform movement during the last half of the eleventh century, a theology that emphasized the obligation of Christians to fight physically against non-believers.³³ The argument was strengthened with passages from the Old Testament known by theologians from the beginning of Christianity, but which before the eleventh century did not have a prominent place in theology and had not been understood as literally binding for contemporary Christians. This theology became, however, fundamental for the crusading movement from 1100 onwards.³⁴

In modern Christian exegesis, it is called *herem*-theology from the Hebrew term, in English often translated as 'utterly destroy'.³⁵ It concerns the passages in the Old Testament in which the Lord demands Israel to annihilate another people. King Saul was told: 'Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass' (1 Sam. 15:3).³⁶ Such very explicit passages were supplemented by eleventh-century theologians with references to more general statements, including Jeremiah's warning: 'Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood' (Jer. 48:10). Bonizo de

33 Most coherently argued by Althoff, "*Selig sind die Verfolgung ausüben*".

34 Throop, *Crusading as an Act of Vengeance*. Similar analyses in Tamminen, *Ad cruce signatos et cruce signandos*.

35 Hoffman, 'The Deuteronomistic Concept'.

36 Biblical quotations in translation are taken from the King James Bible, authorized version.

Sutri attributed to Saint Augustine the line, ‘Blessed are those who persecute for the sake of justice, as much as those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice.’³⁷ This phrase was never actually used by Saint Augustine, but it neatly summarizes the understanding of the reform papacy. This theology of utter destruction was justified by reference to strong emotions: wrath, zeal, revenge.

The wrath of the Lord would fall upon those who did not obey the Lord and associated with idolaters. The main reference point for this understanding was the story of the men of Israel’s adultery with the daughters of Moab, with some joining the cult for the false god Baal-Peor (Num. 25). An Israelite took a Midjanit woman into his tent in the middle of the camp, provoking the rage of the priest Phinehas, who rushed into the tent and thrust his spear through the genitals of the copulating couple, killing them both. Then the plague stayed away from the children of Israel. The Lord spoke to Moses and said: ‘Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.’ (Num. 25: 11). The Maccabees later claimed to descend from Phinehas and to have inherited his covenant with the Lord, when they were zealous and circumcised by force, all un-circumcised, and did not let the sinner triumph (1 Macc. 2: 46-54). The Maccabees were the role models of crusaders and military orders, and they appear again and again in crusader narratives.³⁸

Zelus – zeal for the Lord could justify indiscriminate killing of infidels and turn the wrath of God from the crusaders to the infidels. The concept was used in very different ways by our three authors. Saxo simply found the word itself too modern for his taste, and has not in one single instant used ‘*zelus*’. He applied, however, a number of related words from good Classical Latin, such as *aemulatio*, *ardor*, and *cupiditas*. He wrote about the crusaders being ‘eager to revenge the Christian religion’³⁹ or how they ‘longed for the booty and the blood of the pagan enemy’.⁴⁰ The Danish King Valdemar I the Great was ‘led by his zeal to shed blood’ and began the siege of the pagan fortress of Arkona.⁴¹ Saxo did not refer to the Old Testament for justifying

37 ‘Dixit [Augustinus] beatos eos, qui persecutionem inferunt propter iustitiam, acsi qui persecutionem paciuntur propter iustitiam’, quoted from Althoff, “*Selig sind die Verfolgung ausüben*”, p. 11.

38 Fisher, ‘The Book of the Maccabees’; Poleg, ‘On the Books of Maccabees’; *Dying for the Faith*, ed. by Signori.

39 Saxo 14, 3,6; II, p. 162: ‘vindicandae religionis cupientissimi.’

40 Saxo 14, 39,26; II, pp. 366-68: ‘hostilisque praedae ac sanguinis cupidus.’

41 Saxo 14, 39,2; II, p. 354: ‘fundendi sanguinis aviditate perductus.’

the war against the pagans – he did not even use the word *zelus* – but in his description of the religious warfare, he actually used a vocabulary of strong emotions that wholly conforms to the contemporary crusade theology.

Henry of Livonia used the concept of *zelus* only once in the beginning of his history. In 1205, the crusaders realized that the new converts as dogs had returned to their vomit and forgotten the faith they had accepted. The crusaders now were filled with *zelus Dei*, the zeal of God (or the zeal for God) and pursued the fleeing new-pagans who sought refuge with other pagans. The crusaders had to give up their pursuit, returned and put fire to the pagans' village and burned it all down.⁴² Henry here directly connects *zelus* to religiously motivated warfare, but it is not a theme he pursues at any length or by referring directly to the Phinehas story. However, Henry describes the religious zeal with other words, much like Saxo. He employs variations of *cupio*, which could be used in a broad, general sense, but sometimes was a direct argument for waging war.

In 1210, the crusaders discussed whether to wait for reinforcement or move toward the pagan Estonians immediately. A large group including the Sword Brethren could not wait, because they were *cupientes*, 'eager', and opened the war without further hesitation. It was not a brilliant idea: the Christians suffered a crushing defeat, and many martyrs were produced on that day.⁴³

The word has similar connotations when Henry uses it to describe an incident in 1218: the Osilians' attack on the Christians in Livonia. The priest Godfried in Loddiger (Ledurga) saw them coming, jumped to his horse, and rode around his parish summoning the men to fight against the pagans. He sent messengers to ask help from the neighbouring parishes and from the bishop of Treyden. They came from everywhere and were ready the next morning. 'Only seven of the bishop's men were Germans, and the eighth was the priest Godfried. He tucked up his arms of wars and put on his breastplate as a giant, eager (*cupiens*) to snatch his sheep from the claws of the wolfs.'⁴⁴ The imagery of breastplate and giant is taken from the Book of Maccabees (1 Mac 3:3) and therefore connects to the Phinehas story. Godfried was driven

42 HCL IX, 8, p. 30: 'Peregrini itaque dum vident neophitos Lyvones in tantum exorbitare et tamquam canes ad vomitum redire, eo quod fidei olim susceptae obliviscantur, zelo Dei accensi insequuntur fugientes. Sed mox ut conspiciunt eos se aliis paganis de Leneworde coniunxisse relictisque villis silvarum latebras cum ipsis adiisse, urbem ipsorum adhibito igne succendunt.'

43 HCL XIV, 8, pp. 59-60.

44 HCL XXI, 7, p. 146: 'Et erant septem tantum ex servis episcopi Theuthonici, et octavus erat sacerdos Godefridus. Qui succinxit se armis bellicis suis et induit se lorica sua tamquam gygas, oves suas luporum faucibus eripere cupiens.'

by eagerness, by zeal similar to Phinehas's, and it justified the warfare and the killing of a substantial number of pagans. *Cupio* is, however, a much more inclusive concept than *zelus* and could also be applied by Henry simply to mean 'an interest in' or 'an attempt to'. As when the Danes to his great disapproval 'attempted to' (*cupientes*) send their priests to baptize in the land of the church of Riga, to harvest in a foreign field.⁴⁵

Henry continued the passage about Godfried, saying, 'They rushed from the back upon them, killing bravely among them.'⁴⁶ This could be interpreted to mean that Godfried himself personally took part in the killing of infidels, but that is highly unlikely. There is no other clear example of priests actually killing in the narratives of the Baltic crusades. Henry's wording covers the whole group of warriors, of which Godfried was a member, but does not necessarily mean that he wielded the sword himself. James A. Brundage similarly discusses whether Henry's participation in the wars implied that he actually served as a soldier. Brundage believes so, but the passage he refers to cannot substantiate this interpretation.⁴⁷

Vincent of Cracow was, again, much more detailed and thoughtful when dealing with the argumentation for killing. He relates from the early twelfth century how the city of Alba (Bialogard, Belgard) in western Pomerania was besieged by King Boleslaw III, who threatened that if the Pomeranians took up arms, their city would have to change its name from Alba to Cruenta, from 'White' to 'Blood Red'. The city surrendered, the inhabitants were spared, and Prince Gneuomir was baptized with Boleslaw as his godfather and installed as Boleslaw's local ruler in Pomerania. Because of the leniency of the King, the other Pomeranian cities along the coast surrendered.⁴⁸ Not much later, however, Gneuomir rebelled. His only faith was being unfaithful, Vincent said, a general remark about a certain type of human, but also realization that Gneuomir's conversion had not been in earnest.⁴⁹ He remembered his paternal traditions, but the benefices bestowed upon him by Boleslaw he had forgotten.

He certainly came to remember, but late, and only when forced, Vincent continues. Boleslaw conquers one coastal city after another, the last being Gneuomir's stronghold. The rebel was beheaded, and 'everybody else was

45 HCL XXIV, 2, p. 170.

46 HCL XXIV, 2, p. 170: 'Et irruerunt post tergum super eos, occidentes ex eis fortissime.'

47 Brundage, 'Introduction', pp. 17-18.

48 Vincent III, 2,2-6, pp. 88-89.

49 Vincent III, 5,1, p. 91: 'talium fides sit ipsa perfidia'.

absorbed by the mouth of the sword': total annihilation of all inhabitants in the city, probably of the whole local population.

The next paragraph in the text opens with a direct formulation of the problem: 'Ardour is laudable, but harshness is not, except if it is used in zeal for justice, not because of hate or arrogance.' The text continues, stating it is not a sin to kill another human if it is your office to do so, and that a soldier is not guilty of manslaughter if he is obeying orders when killing a human. It was laudable of Phinehas, Vincent stressed, to kill the Israelite and the Midjanite woman, of Mathias Maccabeus to kill the idolaters, and of Moses to kill 23,000 Israelites who worshipped the calf of gold, to 'consecrate his hand in the blood of his neighbours'.⁵⁰ Vincent goes on to say that sometimes it is a sin not to kill, if commanded by the Lord.⁵¹ All in all, Vincent summarizes the most important arguments for killing infidels as they were formulated in the late eleventh century's reform papacy and refined during the twelfth century.

Vincent uses *zelus* again and again as a just reason for killing infidels and apostates, but in this matter he distinguished between the role of the clergy and of the secular authorities. Two bishops in Plock in Masuria around 1100 were armed with zeal for the house of God. It was inscribed with a golden pen in their hearts, and they fought to defend the arch of the Lord against the local Masurians and against Prussians and Pomeranians who came from everywhere, again and again. Organizing the religious wars in the 1140s, Bishop Alexander of Plock was at the same time a lamb and a lion, a priest and a knight, armed and pious, and he never neglected his work of devotion because of the work of guarding the church. He always remembered the words of Saint Ambrose, that the weapons of the bishop are tears and prayers.⁵²

50 Vincent III, 7,1-2: 'Laudo animositatem, truculentiam non laudo, nisi forte zelo iustitie factum sit, non odii animo uel typo superbie. Non est peccatum ex officio hominem occidere nec est reus homicidii miles, qui potestati obediens hominem occidit. Laudatur Finees qui cum Madianitide confodit Hebreum et Mathathias idolatram et Moyses cum Leuitis per medium castrorum transiens manus consecrabat in sanguine propinquorum, quando propter uitulum cesa sunt XX tria milia.'

51 Vincent refers here to King Saul, who did not kill King Agag of the Amalekites, despite the Lord's command to do so. This passage from 1 Reg. 15, 11-23 was important in the eleventh century reform movement, also because it stressed unconditional obedience toward spiritual authority. Cf. Althoff, "*Selig sind die Verfolgung ausüben*", pp. 46-53 and *passim*.

52 Vincent III, 8,3, p. 93: 'arma episcopi lacrimae sunt et orationes.'

Bishop Alexander was great in battles, but greater in divine matters, Vincent concludes.⁵³ Alexander founded a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin, and he had thereby superseded King David of the Israelites. The Lord had forbidden King David to build a temple for the Ark of the Covenant, because David was a *vir bellator et sanguinem fuderis*, a warrior stained by blood (1 Par. 28:3). He therefore had to leave it to his son Salomon to erect the temple in Jerusalem. With his allusions to this episode in the Old Testament, Vincent clearly intends to stress that Bishop Alexander did not with his own hand spill any human blood. Thus he could establish the church for the Virgin and enrich it inside with spiritual devotions and studies, while protecting it from outside with material weapons. “Truly you can say: “Thou art beautiful and comely, daughter of Jerusalem, terrible as an army ready for war” (Cant. 6:3).⁵⁴ Masuria, with Livonia, seems to have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary, placed under Her protection in Her role as the terrifying organizer of wars – at least according to Vincent, writing more than half a century after the events. He may have been inspired by accounts of the Lateran IV meeting, of how Henry of Livonia and Bishop Albert of Riga successfully claimed that Livonia was the land of the Mother, as much as Palestine was the land of the Son.

Vindicta Sacrorum

The last concepts to be explored here concern *vindicta* and *ultio*, ‘vengeance’. The Lord’s vengeance of the Old Testament was closely connected to mass killing, as was *zelus*. ‘For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion’ (Isaiah 34:8). The saints of the Lord shall praise God with their mouth, while they with a double-edged sword kill the pagans (Ps. 148:7).⁵⁵ The idea of vengeance became incorporated

53 Gladysz suggests that Bishop Alexander, coming from Liège, brought the vocabulary and the ideology of crusading from Lotharingia and probably maintained contact with this centre for Western European crusades. It is possible, but in reality we know almost nothing about Alexander except from Vincent’s narrative, written much later and with the hindsight of knowing about the fate of Jerusalem in the late twelfth century, and about the Danish and German crusades in the Baltic. Gladysz, *Forgotten Crusaders*, pp. 21, 35–36.

54 Vincent III, 8,5, p. 94: ‘uere dici possit: pulchra es et decora, filia Ierusalem, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.’ Vincent has slightly changed the standard bible text in his rendering of this passage from the Song of Songs, so I have made my own translation and not followed the King James Version here.

55 Psalm 148: 5–7: ‘5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.’

in crusading ideology, according to Susanna Throop, not from the first generation of crusade narratives dating from the early twelfth century, but significantly so from the last third of the century.⁵⁶ It is a motive that figures predominantly in the texts under discussion here.

Saxo noted with appreciation how crusading could re-direct violence from internal wars to external ones, to be used for a good purpose. In the mid-twelfth century, a civil war was fought in Denmark between different claimants to the throne. Two kings eventually concluded a truce and went on a common expedition against the Wends in connection with the Second Crusade in the Baltic, in 1147. Saxo commented that they turned their swords away from fighting each other and towards 'revenging the sacred', *ad sacrorum vindictam*.⁵⁷ The Danish contingent met with a Saxon army that was 'eager to revenge religion'.⁵⁸ They succeeded in conquering Dobin and forcing the pagans to be baptized, but when they went back home, the newly converted immediately lapsed from faith.

In 1168 with the conquest of Arkona, the common crusaders complained and almost rebelled against the king's peace treaty with the pagans, because they would then be deprived of 'a most beautiful revenge', *speciosissima vindicta*. They would gain nothing for all their work except wounds and pain, and they could not take revenge for the injuries against them 'according to their free will', or by arbitrary killing of infidels.⁵⁹ Saxo described a very secular, mundane longing for revenge after hard battles in this episode, but the wording and context balance the religious longing for revenge: revenge and religion become two sides of the same coin. Shortly afterwards, Saxo relates how the mission and the new Christians were supported by miracles, the sick were cured, the bodily debilitated recovered totally, while those showing contempt towards the faith were crippled as punishment. God Himself had taken revenge over the pagans, Saxo concludes.⁶⁰

56 Throop, *Crusading as an Act of Vengeance*, pp. 74-76.

57 Saxo 14,3,5; II, p. 162: 'rei melius gerendae gratia pacem pro tempore statuunt revocatumque a suis visceribus ferrum ad sacrorum vindictam convertunt.'

58 Saxo 14,3,6; II, p. 162: 'Saxones, et ipsi vindicandae religionis cupientissimi, militiae socii Danis futuri.'

59 Saxo 14,39,26; II, pp. 366-68: '[...] propinquae victoriae praemiis spoliatus nihil ex tanta fatigatione praeter ictus et vulnera retulisset, quodque sibi de paene victo hoste tot iniuriarum ultionem proprio arbitrio exigere non licuerit, praefatus illorum saluti iam consuli, de quibus tot spoliolum, tot domesticarum cladium minimo negotio speciosissima vindicta accipi potuisset.'

60 Saxo 14, 39,47; II, p. 378: 'Nec praedicationis eorum ministerio miracula defuere: siquidem compluribus debilitate corporis resolutis per eorum salutare preces bonae valetudinis habitus recuperatus est [...] A quibusdam etiam detractae religionis supplicia varia membrorum strage

The motive of revenge is much more common in Henry of Livonia's chronicle, appearing in many different combinations. He states directly at an early point in the narrative that the crusaders were signed with the cross in remission for their sins and 'to take revenge over the infidels and subjugate them to the faith'.⁶¹ This was allegedly the formulation of Archbishop Andreas Sunesen of Lund before the Danish crusade to Oesel (Saaremaa) in 1206. Revenge is here very close to becoming a license to forced conversion.

As was the case with Saxo, the revenge of humans is ultimately God's own revenge. Henry tells how the pagan Estonians killed and cremated some of the newly converted Lets – *trucidaverant et igne cremaverant*.⁶² It is unclear from the wording whether they were burned alive, as both pagans and Christians did to their enemies on more occasions according to Henry, or whether they were killed and given a proper pagan burial by cremation to help them into a pagan afterlife. In any case, the other Lets collected their forces and 'if God gave them', they could take revenge over their enemies. Now follows a longer description of their expedition in which they kill Estonians and kill and kill, from morning to evening, until their arms and hands were totally exhausted from using the sword. All villages were coloured red by the blood of the pagans, and before returning the Christians collected as booty the animals and also the young women, 'who were the only ones whom the army used to spare in these areas'. When they met the crusaders and the Order of the Sword Brethren, these 'gave thanks to God, because He through the newly converted had taken revenge over the pagans'.⁶³ Not the Christians, old or new, but the Lord himself. The human revenge was also God's revenge, and could justify even the most extensive extermination of pagans. A successful revenge was the cause of gratitude and of joy among the crusaders.⁶⁴

The idea of human and divine revenge was not foreign to Vincent at all, but he was much more cautious than Henry of Livonia and seems to restrict

graviter exigebantur, ut manifeste Deum et cultus sui praemium et contemptus vindictam afferre putares.'

61 HCL X, 13, p. 43: 'archiepiscopus Lundensis Andreas, qui in remissionem peccatorum infinitam multitudinem signo crucis signaverat ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus et ad subiugandas gentes fidei Christiane.'

62 HCL XXII, 6, p. 64.

63 HCL XII, 6, p. 65: 'omnes unanimiter cum gaudio Deum benedicebant, eo quod [per] noviter conversos Dominus tantam fecerit vindictam eciam ceteris in nationibus.'

64 Sometimes celebrated with dance and music; HCL XXVIII, 6, p. 205: 'Interfectis autem viris omnibus facta est exultatio magna et ludus christianorum in tympanis et fistulis et instrumentis musicis, eo quod vindictam vindicaverant de malefactoribus et omnes perfidos de Lyvoniam et Estonia ibidem collectos interfecerant.'

it carefully to be used against apostates. It has already been mentioned how Boleslaw III flamed up against the Pomeranians and decided to add vengeance upon vengeance upon them – *ultionem adiecit ultioni*.⁶⁵ They are called sacrilegious idolaters, but we hear immediately after that they had not kept the faith they had received; they were apostates. In the ensuing battle, the losses were immense, and the Poles found it difficult to resist killing. The number of the fallen Pomeranians is like the sand of the sea, the stars of heaven. Nobody can count them, not even the arithmeticians or the specialists in the use of the abacus, and to this day, piles of bones of the unburied testify to the number of fallen, Vincent wrote a couple of generations later. Since then, the cities of the Pomeranians have belonged to the kingdom of Poland. All this is justified because it is revenge, but against apostates.

Revenge was an obligation for the King of Poland as it was for King Saul. Both disobeyed the command of the Lord, and both were punished. To populate the provinces of the Prussians after all the warfare, Boleslaw IV decreed that all who had chosen to become Christians would be granted full liberty for their person and their belongings. But those who would not abandon the sacrilegious rites of paganism should be punished with capital punishment. But ‘their religion was as smoke and lasted ye shorter, ye more it had been enforced upon them’.⁶⁶ They apostatized and returned to idolatry. Boleslaw now found it sufficient that he as the prince got his share, not caring about the share denied to God. He did not exact revenge for the apostasy, as long as he himself received payment in tribute. That was an unwise decision. ‘The motionless who is not moved by the soft zeal of God, will be woken up from his snoring by the hard stroke of tribulations.’⁶⁷ The Prussians rebelled and defeated the Poles severely in 1166. Since then, Boleslaw IV and his sons no longer enjoyed success in war, Vincent concluded.

A Theology of Strong Emotions

There seem to be two different ways of arguing for fighting against the infidels and the apostates, which are intertwined in these narratives about

65 Vincent III, 14,1, p. 99.

66 Vincent III, 30,15, p. 126: ‘Set ad modicum parens uapor illorum fuit religio, tanto uidelicet breuior quanto coactor.’

67 Vincent III, 30,17, p. 127: ‘Vnde factum est, ut quem zelus Dei molliter torpentem non mouit, durior saltem tribulationis ictus stertentem excitaret.’

the Baltic wars from around 1200. One is formalistic and juridical, based very much on the formal status of the enemies and their standing as real pagans or apostates. The other is based on strong emotions such as zeal for God, lust for vengeance, and an aim to avert divine wrath.

Emotions are the inner feelings of the individual and have normally been considered the opposite of rational reasoning, both in medieval and modern theories about psychology.⁶⁸ They are, however, not totally arbitrary, but expressed within socially accepted limits. Barbara H. Rosenwein has suggested that we should rather operate with ‘emotional communities’, whose members agree what emotions they can or are expected to show in certain situations.⁶⁹ Thereby, emotions become not solely an expression of individual feelings, but also phenomena with a history that can be studied diachronically.

How did the emotional communities change during the first century of crusading to the Middle East and in the Baltic? That question can only be answered by a much larger investigation and comparison over time than the short presentation offered in this chapter. Susanna Throop claims that the theme of revenge became important for crusaders only in the late twelfth century, but this seems to contradict the conclusions of Gerd Althoff and his analysis of the *herem*-theology of the reform papacy, which he argues was formulated a hundred years earlier. Throop’s interpretations can be supported by other studies; Karen Sullivan has recently suggested that the Church in Western Europe saw a gradual change from the mid-twelfth century to the mid-fourteenth from charity to zeal, from a lenient attitude to deviants in the faith to a much harsher one that included among other features the establishing of the inquisition.⁷⁰ This would fit well with the idea of a change from mission of the word to mission of the sword in the Baltic, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Other studies, however, point to a significant change in the late eleventh century with a new devotion to Christ, which has even been called ‘the greatest revolution in feelings that Europa has ever witnessed’.⁷¹ This devotion made it natural for the crusaders, within their emotional communities, to share their feelings with Christ, to feel pain when he was tortured by the injuries of the pagans and apostates, to be beset with rage and wrath, and to be filled with the zeal to take revenge, with Him and for Him. This

68 Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*; Rosenwein, ‘Thinking Historically’.

69 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.

70 Sullivan, *The Inner Lives*.

71 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, p. 2.

supports the interpretation of Gerd Althoff and would mean that there was no significant change in the approach to infidels in the Baltic during the twelfth century.

Saxo, Henry, and Vincent all wrote their large narratives shortly after 1200. They expressed themselves in different, well-defined genres in a formal language that was highly dependent upon their literary models, be it classical, medieval, biblical, or the reformulation of earlier narratives describing the same events. They wrote about religious feelings, about conversion of infidels, and about bloody wars driven by logical concerns, but also by strong emotions. It is easy to dismiss their reports of motives as literary constructions, far removed from everyday realities of the warriors. But if we accept that individuals act within emotional communities, we must also accept that they describe feelings commonly expressed by their contemporaries. In return, their way of describing emotions helped define the proper way of feeling and acting for a true crusader in the Baltic.

Saxo, Henry, and Vincent were struggling with the same problem of justifying warfare, but they did so in very different ways and with very different emphasis. This reflects dilemmas which must have also concerned the fighting crusaders.

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