

Divine Vengeance and Human Justice in The Wendish Crusade of 1147

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“Crusading as an act of vengeance” is a new paradigm proposed by Susanna A. Throop. In this study I will focus on the question of whether the Wendish Crusade supports an “act of vengeance” paradigm. The study shows us a new understanding of how crusading was conceived as an act of vengeance in the context of the twelfth century. Through textual analysis of medieval sources it has been possible to clarify the course of the concept of divine vengeance, which often used human agents in its execution, as well as the idea of crusading as an act of vengeance. In primary sources which emphasize the necessity of a Holy War against the Wends, the concept of vengeance was intimately connected with the ideas of human justice and divine punishment. Most of these sources are clerical writings which contain biblical allusions in order to justify their aims. This paper shows how the concept of divine vengeance was perceived as an expression of both secular and religious authority, embedded in a series of commonly understood emotional responses in medieval society, and also as a value system compatible with Christianity.

Introduction

Most of the sources for the First and Second Crusade contain references to divine vengeance. After the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, the idea of crusading as vengeance spread among the clergy and laity. In a direct sense, what the Muslims experienced during the First Crusade was the just punishment of God, also known as “divine vengeance” (*ultio Dei, ulturi, vindicata*).¹ Therefore, the inhumanity of the Muslims encouraged vengeance and war, rather than conversion. This is why in the powerful rhetoric of the First Crusade, the seizure of Jerusalem by the Muslims had been avenged. The liberation of Jerusalem as being part of a divine retribution is ex-

¹ For more details regarding the idea of crusading as vengeance in the Holy Land and a textual analysis of specific vocabulary of vengeance and justice, see Throop 2011: 11–71.

pressed in a letter written by Pope Paschal II (1099–1118) to the Pisan consuls in 1100, where he praised the piety and devotion of the Pisan people and their achievements in the Holy Land: “the Christian people ... most strenuously avenged [Jerusalem] for the tyranny and yoke of the barbarians and, with God helping, restored those regions, sanctified by the blood and presence of Jesus Christ, to their former refinement and majesty with adornment and veneration”.²

The research question of this study is vengeance as a central element in the Wendish Crusade. The vocabulary of vengeance is common to a wide area, comprising almost the whole of Western Christendom; it could be a system as a whole (e.g. Icelandic sagas or the Merovingian Francia, see Barbero 2006; Depreux 2006), or some elements of a complex systems (from England to Spain and Italy; see Hudson 2006; Alfonso 2006; Brancoli 2006).

Susanna A. Throop emphasizes the emotional language as part of the rhetorical connections of crusade and divine justice. Therefore, elements such as vengeance, justice, love or zeal are often interconnected with the rhetoric. The relationships between them were emphasized by writers such as Anselm of Lucca, Bernard of Clairvaux, Jacques de Vitry, Thomas of Chobham and others. Throop has shown that zeal (*zelus*) was linked with love and thus Christian love was used sometimes to encourage the vengeance on behalf of God and other Christians (Throop 2010: 183–188).

Whether they heeded God or not, Christians could expect to feel his judgement upon them, either as a function of love or anger (Helvétius 2006). Therefore, his anger would lead to vengeance, seen by Throop as a function of “human justice” in the historiography of the First Crusade, which was the main expression of God’s judgmental retribution. This “human justice” was a ‘true justice’ and worked as a ‘sanctified law’, since the ‘divine vengeance and divine justice reinforced the connection between human vengeance and justice, which, in turn, was often represented as being divinely inspired or supervised’. The human perception of God’s judgment was a perception of a holy and just action punishing the enemies of the wrongdoers (Throop 2011: 54–55).

At the beginning of the twelfth century, the idea of crusading as vengeance continued to grow in popularity, and the zeal inspired more crusaders to acts of both vengeance and self-sacrifice. In this sense, Jonathan Riley-Smith has shown that the

² *Christianus populus in nomine Domini exercituum congregatus, atque Syriam vel potius Terram promissionis ingressus, sanctam anno iam praeterito civitatem, terrestrem nempe Ierusalem, urbem equidem perfecti decoris et gaudium universae terrae, in qua praestantissima redemptoris nostri monumenta refulgent, a barbarorum tyrannide et iugo strenuissime vindicavit atque plagas illas, lesu Christi sanguine et praestantia sanctificatas, pristino cultu, maiestati decori atque venerationi. Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes* 1973: 180 *apud* Throop 2011: 44.

concept of zeal as Christian love in which the believers followed God's will was likened to crusading (Riley-Smith 1980). At any rate, the concept of zeal as an emotion involving hatred or anger was less analyzed in relation to crusading ideology and terminology of vengeance.³ The fact that the reasons for a divine vengeance were related in this way is significant and will be discussed below. In our case, the main question is: were Wends to be killed or converted? Damned or saved? Were they pagans or a derivative of Christian heresy such as apostates?

Vengeance in the Magdeburg Letter

In the Holy Roman Empire, the idea of crusading as divine vengeance had been expressed in the "Magdeburg letter" which was written between 1107–1110, most probably in late 1107 or 1108. Although many scholars have written about the Magdeburg letter, none of them have actually interpreted the letter as containing the idea of vengeance.⁴ The anonymous author is believed to have been a Flemish clerk from the circle of the archbishop of Magdeburg (Constable 2008: 200). The letter had the form of an appeal for help against the Wends⁵ and it seems to have been addressed to prelates and princes from the West, such as Robert of Flanders who had participated in the First Crusade with great success. The author of the letter described the Wendish attacks on the Christian territory across the Elbe (Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 29–30) made by "the most cruel gentiles", who destroyed churches and sacri-

³ See Appendix for a vocabulary of vengeance and divine justice.

⁴ For further details about the Magdeburg charter and all references, see Constable 1999.

⁵ From the sixth century onwards the exonym *Wenden* had been used by the Germanic peoples to refer to speakers of Western Slavic languages, from Holstein in the north to Carinthia in the south. Most of the Latin sources connected with the crusades do not use the exonym *Wends*, but terms *Slavi* or *Sclavi*. Bysted *et al* 2012: 24, 27. However, in his *Chronicon*, Henry of Livonia uses the exonym *Wendi* five times. The Wends of Henry have been considered a small tribe of uncertain ethnic origins, either Slavic, Baltic or Finno-Ugric. Thus, Henry uses the name which probably is taken from the local pronunciation, without connecting it to the ancient *Veneti* and also not to the Slavs. Wolfgang 1961. Some historians argued that the Wends of Livonia were most probably of Slavic ethnicity. By the end of the thirteenth century, they were largely assimilated with the Lettgallians and disappeared. *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, 66, 93, 100, 170, 201, 232; Murray 2013; Blomkvist 2005: 320–321. It seems that the hypotheses connecting the Wends with the Western Slavs is not confirmed by the archaeological record. Thus, the idea that the Wends were a separate Finnic ethnic group from Kurzeme has been advanced. Apala & Apals 2014. For a more extensive discussion of this terminology in Byzantine and the Western world in the Early Middle Ages, see Curta 2001: 36–73.

ficed Christians in the name of their pagan gods.⁶ Therefore, these actions need divine vengeance, because the “inhuman” pagans are “men without mercy” and their souls cannot be saved through conversion but only through subjugation.⁷ Also, the land across the Elbe is described as “our Jerusalem” (*Hierusalem nostra*). Therefore, the Wendish territory needs to be liberated by the Christians as the Holy Land was liberated by “Gauls” in a “holy war” against the “enemies of Christ” (Wends).⁸ Like the First Crusade, the appeal promised to Christians of Saxony, France, Lorraine and Flanders spiritual rewards which can be “an occasion for you to save your souls” (Wattenbach 1882: 626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 77), but what are these spiritual rewards and how can they be achieved?

What is interesting is that in our case, the author of the letter offered no indulgence or remission of sins, which were papal privileges. In Spain in 1101, the crusaders received from Paschal II the same indulgences as the crusaders in the Holy Land if they would fight against Muslims. In 1108, Paschal II refused to authorize any preaching for this planned campaign which never took place and for which the Danish king Niels (1104–1134) was ready to participate (Jensen 2013b: 100). In that time, the Danish king sought to enlarge the power and influence of the monarchy through the aid of the church. This policy led to an issue regarding clerical celibacy which had strong feelings among the Danish laity. It was obvious that Paschal II would be against this policy since he exhorted Niels to help to impose clerical celibacy through cooperation between the clergy and the Danish laity.⁹ This explains the struggle between the papacy and Niels, and the refusal of Paschal II to authorize the proposed campaign of 1108 in which the Danish king sought to extend his realm. Another reason which led Paschal II not to authorize any preaching for this campaign is that the

⁶ The original title for this letter is *Epistola pro auxilio adversus paganos (Slavos)*. In this paper I use the original text in Latin by Wattenbach 1882: 623–624 and the English translation by Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 75.

⁷ *Qui Gallos ab extremo occidente progressos in brachio virtutis sue contra inimicos suos in remotissimo triumphavit Oriente, ipse tribuat vobis voluntatem et potentiam hos affines et inhumanissimos gentiles subjugare et in omnibus bene prosperar.* Wattenbach 1882: 626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 75. In fact, the author of the letter proposes an expedition against the Wends similar to the expedition of 1096–1099 to the Holy Land, in which the “crusaders” could be certain of spiritual and material gains (acquisition of land and spiritual salvation). See Guth 1992: 15.

⁸ *Sanctificate bellum, suscite robustes. Surgite principes, contra inimicos Christi arripite clypeos... Erumpite et venite omnes aratores Christi et ecclesie, et sicut Galli ad liberationem Hierusalem vos preparate.* Wattenbach 1882: 625–626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 77.

⁹ For more details regarding the struggle between the Danish Church and the papacy see Pedersen 2010.

speech from the letter corresponded so closely to the political plans of King Henry V. A meeting between Henry V and a great number of prelates and nobles of Germany took place at the time set for their departure. The reign of Henry V coincided with the final phase of the great Investiture Controversy between the papacy and the secular powers. A supporter of Henry V was Adalgot who was appointed in 1107 as Archbishop of Magdeburg by the German King. Some historians believe that the Flemish clerk wrote the letter at the order of Adalgot (Constable 2008: 48).

The only spiritual reward offered by the author of the letter is the salvation of the soul, which is connected with the acquisition of land (Wattenbach 1882: 626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 77). In the rhetoric of the letter, presumably crusaders could have gained spiritual rewards even if they did not obtain lands beyond the Elbe. So, the spiritual rewards are eternal, and material ones are temporal. Friedrich Lotter emphasized that this promise of double reward was adopted from Robert the Monk and originates from the Bible; according to Matthew 19.29, Christ himself said: “And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children or lands for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting”; and according to Exodus 3.8: “Palestine is a land flowing with milk and honey” (Lotter 1992: 276). This is why in the crusading ideology, the prospect of obtaining lands was an additional inducement. Some historians stated that the definition of indulgence originated from the theological distinctions between eternal and temporal punishment and between forgiveness of sin and the remission of punishment for sin. These distinctions were made in the twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries (Bysted *et al.* 2012: 8). Ane Bysted falls firmly on the side of historians (including Jonathan Riley-Smith) who see the papal grant of an indulgence as essential to crusading and as an important indicator of the ideology and theology of crusading both in those offering the indulgences. The debate over the precise nature of the spiritual rewards offered by Urban II at Clermont in 1095 continues to shape the historiography and the very definition of the crusades (Bysted 2015; Bysted 2014: 45–74)

In this case, the author of the letter uses the rhetoric from Clermont by saying that “these gentiles [pagans] are most wicked, but their land is the best, rich in meat, honey, corn and birds; and if it were well cultivated none could be compared to it for the wealth of its produce. So say those who know it. And so, most renowned Saxon, French, Lorrainers and Flemings and conquerors of the world, this is an occasion for you to save your souls and, if you wish it, acquire the best land in which to live” (Wattenbach 1882: 625–626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 76–77).

As we have seen, the author of the letter was familiar with the development of the idea of crusading at the Council of Clermont in 1095, when Pope Urban II (1088–1099) promises the crusaders both spiritual and material rewards for their divine work. The crusaders responded enthusiastically and undertook a successful campaign which established several crusader states in the Holy Land. Thus, in the twelfth century, for Christian settlements in former pagan lands had proven to be the only way to advance Christianization. Therefore, the only authority to do this came from the church.¹⁰

We know that most of the clerical writings contains biblical allusions in order to justify their legal and moral authority, hierarchy and also material aims. So, another question is how consciously did the author of the letter quote the Bible? In our case, a biblical passage from the New Testament may be the key which can help us to understand the rhetorical devices of the author who wants to justify the occupation of a region through the idea of violence as vengeance ordered by divine authority: “For he is God’s minister to thee, for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God’s minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil” (Romans 13.4). For the author of the letter, the lessons of obedience to superiors and mutual charity of St. Paul can be good examples of human justice, legal and moral authority for noble laity from Saxony, France, Lorraine and Flanders who can get more land across the Elbe. These biblical themes of divine wrath and human justice were popular among contemporary authors such as Anselm of Canterbury. In his epoch-making book, *Cur Deus Homo* (1090s), he outlined a new theory of Divine Retribution. Thus, the disobedience against those of high rank demanded a divine punishment or, in its place, satisfaction relative to the nature of the insult and the rank of the one offended lest the social order be unbalanced. Anselm developed his theory within the church’s system of penance, and thought of satisfaction as the payment of debt as a moral duty. In *Cur Deus Homo*, in a dialogue with one of his students, Anselm state that the vengeance is God’s work, who can also let His anger be executed by human justice.¹¹

¹⁰ All of the accounts were written down quite a bit later than the Council and this is why they follow different literary traditions and differ widely from one another. In the accounts of Fulcher and Robert, Urban II offers his audience remission of their sins. Guibert has him offering his listeners the chance to become martyrs, while in Baudry’s account, the reward offered is not only spiritual but also material. For more details, see Niall & Deborah 2003: 139–148.

¹¹ *Cur Deus Homo*, ch. I, 12. For more details, see Southern 1992: 211–220.

Vengeance among the men who went on the expedition against the Wends

Regarding the so called Wendish Crusade from 1147, modern scholarship has seen this campaign in the broad framework of the Second Crusade.¹² For this, the main character was the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, the famous propagandist who tried to define the campaign as part of a great battle against all of the enemies of Christendom. The Second Crusade was called by Pope Eugenius III (1145–1153) in response to the fall of the County of Edessa in 1144. Bernard recruited first the French king, Louis VII, and after that the German king, Conrad III, to take an army and reconquer Edessa from the Muslims. The Saxons preferred to attack their pagan neighbours rather than setting out to save the Holy Land as Bernard intended.¹³ Therefore, the Saxons received papal authorization (the bull *Divina dispensatione* II – 11 April 1147) to organize a military campaign against the Wends (Murray 2015: 77–78).

In determining why the Saxons refused to fight in the Holy Land, it is first necessary to place these events in a broader context. Therefore, we need to look at the men who led the campaign and their reluctance to go the Holy Land. From the viewpoint of the Saxon chronicler and priest, Helmold of Bosau, who sharply criticized the

¹² For the military campaigns of 1146–1149 as one expedition, see Constable 1953. For discussion of revising the thesis of Constable, see Pryor 2006: 77, 88. For more recent arguments see Ordman 2014; Bombi 2013; Gładysz 2012: 67–95; Herrmann 2011: 44–80, 221–227; Phillips 2007: 228–243; Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 23–43; Tyerman 2006: 305–308; Taylor 2000; Guth 1992: 20; Edbury 1992: 163–165; Lotter 1992: 287; older works include Christiansen 1980: 53–56; Lotter 1980; Kahl 1980. For a detailed bibliography of works on the Wendish Crusade, see Murray 2001: 215–216. Stanislaw Banach (2015) emphasized that the Wendish Crusade had little in common with the crusades in the Holy Land because it had a distinct character which added an entirely new dimension to crusading. Thus, the campaign of 1147 did not aim to grab any lands of spiritual significance to Christianity, but sought to expand the Christendom by converting the pagans. Some other scholars also endorsed the idea that the Wendish Crusades were missionary crusades and part of a new trend in the crusading movement. Bysted *et al* 2012: 76–81. Jay T. Lees seek to avoid the term Wendish Crusade in an “effort to highlight the difficulty that Bernard of Clairvaux and the men who went on the campaign faced in defining its purpose”. Lees 2015: 276. Tomáš Mastnak suggested that the Christian attitude toward the Muslims came to differ from the attitudes toward the other unknown people, because the image of the Wends was “hazy”, and not “sharply defined and fixed” like for the Muslims (Mastnak 2002: 115–116).

¹³ Otto of Freising tells us that Saxons refused to take the Cross for the Holy Land because they had as neighboring tribes that were given over to the “filthiness of idolatry”. *Saxones vero, quia quasdam gentes spurcitiis idolorum deditas vicinas habent, ad orientem proficisci abnuentes cruces itidem easdem gentes bello attemptaturi assumpserunt. Ottonis et Rahewini Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*, ch. I, 42.

campaign against the Wends, the greedy Saxons were interested more on conquering Wendish land rather than winning souls. In his *Chronica Slavorum*, Helmold tells us that the campaign against the Wends was dominated by the material desire of Henry the Lion, the Saxon duke, who was not interested in conversion, “but only in money”.¹⁴ This opinion is also shared by the chronicler Vincent of Prague who confirms Saxon intentions to grab more lands rather than any conversion.¹⁵ In *Annales Palidenses*, composed between 1182 and 1197 at the Premonstratensian monastery of Pöhlde, there are reports on the quarrel between the Saxon nobles who had already begun to distribute the Wendish land which had not yet been conquered.¹⁶

During the Wendish campaign, one Saxon contingent of the 1147 crusaders, led by the archbishop of Magdeburg found themselves besieging recently Christianized Szczecin, where the Pomeranians have not passed to apostasy. The reaction of the Szczecin’s bishop Adalbert was to know why this Christian army advanced against a Christian city, and not an army of preachers. It seems that in the spring of 1125, a pagan reaction started in Wollin and Szczecin and therefore, a second mission made by Otto of Bamberg was necessary. The Saxon desire to get more land was carefully mixed with the intention of the archbishop of Magdeburg to bring Szczecin diocese under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Magdeburg. In that moment, these intentions could be materialized only with the help of Bernard of Clairvaux and his attempt to define the campaign as a holy war against the enemies of Christendom (Lees 2015: 274–275).

Therefore, we must understand that for noble laity, the acquisition of land plays an essential role in motivating men to join the Crusade. In the Holy Land the matter of land estates played a significant role, one that may have been equal to the salvation of the soul promised by the pope. This analysis suggests that for the Saxons, a unity of purposes created by material and spiritual rewards does not match the reality of the situation. In this way we can explain Bernard’s changing attitudes towards the Wends, which created a situation that forced Saxons to join the campaign. The Saxon nobles refused to join the eastern crusade because they did not want to submit to the leadership of a Hohenstaufen king. Those who had not yet taken the cross for the

¹⁴ *In variis autem expeditionibus, quas adhuc adolescens in Slaviam profectus exercuit, nulla de Christianitate fuit mentio, sed tantum de pecunia.* Helmold I, 68.

¹⁵ *Sed quia Saxones potius pro auferenda eis terra, quam pro fide christiana confirmanda tantam moverant militiam.* *Vincenti Pragensis Annales*, 17, 663.

¹⁶ *Tumultante siquidem militia et possessionum externarum, quas necdum obtinuerant, terminum statuente, plebeio autem in id non conveniente, res undique turbantes, ordine neglecto, tandem aditis castrisque relictis discesserunt omnes, molimine quod proposuerant infecto.* *Annales Palidenses*, s.a. 1859, 82.

eastern crusade were allowed by the papacy to take it on equal terms against the Wends (Lotter 1992: 287).

Another essential contextualization is to see what the relationship of the Wends was with their Saxon neighbors across the Elbe. In this sense, we must pay attention to the papal interests towards the Wends. It seems that the main instrument of the papacy in the Wendish campaign, Bernard of Clairvaux, was quite familiar with the struggle between the two sides. His active involvement is highlighted by Friedrich Lotter, who believes that Bernard meant only the death of the Abodrite state, not the massacre of the Abodrites and the rest of the Wends. Therefore, they had only the alternatives of being submerged politically and culturally or becoming a Christian state within the Church and the Empire. This was the choice offered by Bernard. In choosing *fides catholica*, the Abodrite leaders made an end to the ancient hostility between Saxons and Wends possible.¹⁷ The first major records of the relationship between Saxons and Wends are from the reign of Charlemagne. In the Frankish campaign against the pagan Saxons, Wends plays an important role as allies of Franks and as a reward, they receive from Charlemagne a large part of the Holstein region, which was inhabited by Saxons at that time (Oman 1898: 349; Herrmann 1970: 7). From this time, the Saxons searched for revenge against the Wends.¹⁸ Adam of Bremen mentions that the Abodrites, together with the Frisians were often used by Franks “to secure their borderlands either by treaties or by war against the Saxons” who were “restless and troublesome to their neighbours”.¹⁹ Starting with the first king of the Saxon line, Henry I, the Saxons will try to expand their realm all the way to the Oder by creating an eastern march and bringing under Saxon control the whole territory up to the border of Poland.²⁰ At the end of tenth century, Wends had pushed the Saxons back across the Elbe and stopped paying tribute to them. For the next

¹⁷ For the history of the German eastward migration, missionary activity and the Wendish-German relations see Lotter 1977; Kahl 2011. For authors of missionary hagiography such as Adam of Bremen and Helmold of Bosau, “hostility from pagans was what missionaries usually expected”. For more details, see the study of Jezierski 2015.

¹⁸ William Urban suggested that the Saxon campaign of 1147 can be seen as “the continuation of local warfare” (Urban 1978: 225).

¹⁹ *A meridie quidem Francos habentes et partem Thuringorum, quos praecedens hostilis turbo non tetigit, alveoque fluminis Unstrote dirimuntur; a septentrione vero Nordmannos, gentes ferocissimas; ab ortu solis Obodritos; et ab occasu Frisos, a quibus sine intermissione vel federe vel concertacione necessaria finium suorum spacia tuebantur. Erant enim inquieti nimis et finitimorum sedibus infesti, domi vero pacati et civium utilitatibus placida benignitate consulentes.* Adam of Bremen I, 5; Oman 1898: 357–360.

²⁰ For more information about the Ottonian policy across the Elbe, see Lübke 2001; Hardt 2013; Leleu 2010.

century and a half, the Ottonians and the Salians tried to retake the control across the Elbe and re-Christianize the Wends. Therefore, from the point of view of both the Saxons and the clerics, the Wends were apostates because they rejected the Saxon's *imperium Christianum*. Thus, at the end of tenth century and the beginning of the eleventh century, the term *pagani* was applied also to designate apostates. For the missionary bishops like Bruno of Querfurt (probably a relative of the emperor Otto III), and Thietmar of Merseburg, the Wends were "apostate pagans" within the Church. Henrik Janson suggests that "the question of fidelity to the right power structure seems accordingly to have been of great importance in deciding the status of religion in the North". Therefore, the Wendish uprising starting in 983 led by Mstivoj, who was a Christian, may have had less to do with the "pagan resistance" and more with the refusal to pay the tribute. A rebellion against the Saxon nobility was a rejection of Christianity.²¹ Helmold of Bosau also mentioned that the Wends had relinquished the Christian faith. In his chronicle, he stated that the Wendish revolt of 1018 took place because the Wends were subdued by the "zealous" nobles like margrave Dietrich of Wettin and the Saxon duke Bernard II "with such cruelty" that they finally rebelled "in defense of their freedom".²²

Vengeance against the Apostates

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, various writers expressed the view that apostates or heretics deserved divine punishment. The Cathars and the Waldensians in southern France and northern Italy were considered heretics by the Catholic Church. Pope Innocent III attempted to end Catharism by sending missionaries and by persuading the local nobles to act against them. The failure of these missions made the papacy launch the Albigensian Crusade which was fairly successful in ending heresy.²³ Therefore, in order to defend Christianity, the papacy accepted the use of force against

²¹ For the Wendish apostasy, see Janson 2010; Janson 2009; Bysted et al. 2012: 26, 51; Kahl 1955.

²² *Sane eo tempore Slavorum dominio potiti sunt Theodericus marchio et dux Bernardus, illo quidem orientalem, isto occidentalem possidente provinciam, quorum ignavia coegit Slavos fieri desertores. Rudes enim adhuc in fide gentilium populos, quos optimi quondam principes cum magna lenitate foverant, temperantes rigorem his, quorum propensius insistebant saluti, isti tanta crudelitate insectati sunt, ut excusso tandem servitutis iugo libertatem suam armis defendere cogerentur.* Helmold I, 16. Helmold stated that the crusaders' motivation to join the mission was religious zeal. For Helmold, the greedy princes were opposed to the noble princes like margrave Dietrich of Wettin and the Saxon duke Bernard II, who were the defenders of the Church.

²³ For the Cathars and the Crusade against them, see Dragnea 2014; Zamfir 2013.

the Baltic apostates such as the Wends,²⁴ the Livonians and the Prussians. From the Danish point of view, the Wendish apostasy is confirmed by a papal bull to Absalon, bishop of Roskilde. The document was issued in November 1169 by Pope Alexander III and contains arguments against the Wends in accordance with Canon Law. There is explicit papal authorization for a crusade against the Wends because the Danes are fighting a just – defensive – war against the cruel enemies of Christ. Therefore, their apostasy deserve a divine punishment (Holmqvist-Larsen 2004: 87–88).

Marek Tamm believes that “if the legal argument that the conversion of pagans was grounds for a crusade was first employed in the middle of the twelfth century, with reference to the southern coast of the Baltic, it acquired a more specific significance and meaning during the conquest of the eastern coast of the Baltic, at the beginning of the thirteenth century”. Thus, in his bull issued in 1197, Pope Celestine III seemed explicitly to emphasize that the Livonian crusade waged by Christians was necessary for compelling apostates back to Christendom.²⁵ Vincentius of Cracow saw the Polish expeditions of Bolesław III “Wrymouth” in 1109 against the Pomeranians, Bolesław IV “the Curly” to Prussia in 1147 and 1166, and Casimir I “the Just” in 1191–1192 against the Sudovians as crusading campaigns. The author also describes the Prussians as “Saladinistas”, and clearly favors the use of force against them as apostates to compel them to accept Christianity (*Ex magistris Vincentii Chronica Polonorum*, IV, 19).

Otto III’s campaigns across the Elbe were an attempt to protect the fragile remains of Christianity among the Wends (Petersohn 2003). To be again part of the *imperium Christianum*, it was not sufficient to submit to the Saxon dukes and pay tribute. It was also necessary to submit to the Saxon Church in which they were integrated in the time of Otto I and to which they still belonged. In the middle of the tenth century, Otto I subdued all Wendish tribes in the area between the Elbe-Saale in the west, the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) in the south, and the Oder-Bober line in the east. In his *Gesta*, Adam of Bremen tried to promote the interests of the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen and emphasizes the conversion of the Wends.²⁶ For Adam it is Christianity that triumphs across the Elbe rather than the greed and ambition of Saxon lords who seek more land. This is because he believes that the Saxons should not force pagans to accept Christianity. As an alternative, Adam suggests that

²⁴ For the conversion of Szczecin by Otto of Bamberg, see Lees 2015: 274–275; Lotter 1992: 279.

²⁵ Regarding the legal arguments of the Livonian Crusade, see Tamm 2013.

²⁶ An alternative history of the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, which claims ecclesiastical authority over the whole northern world (Swedes, Danes and Wends), is the work of Eric Knibbs (2011), which is based on the less-studied foundation documents of the archdiocese.

the Wends could be Christianized if their nobles were Christian (History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen, III, 50). Adam mentions a Wendish ruler who was Christian (Prince Gottschalk) and who tried to convert his people, but he was slain by the pagans who fell into apostasy. Anyway, this idea turned out to be impossible since the Christian Abodrite King Henry did not dare to Christianize his Wendish subjects for fear of endangering his rule. Even in Havelberg and Brandenburg there were Wendish nobles who were Christians, but ruled over a pagan population. The Wendish count of Havelberg, Meinfrid, who was one of Henry's governors, was murdered by the pagans. In Havelberg, in 1136, the sons of a Christian ruler called Witikind, who were pagans, destroyed the church in the fortress. It seems that the Wendish leaders realized that even under German rule they could maintain their social position by supporting the process of Christianization (Lotter 1992: 281–297).

Indeed, the Wendish campaign was an action carried out in economic and political interests, but its character was not an offensive one. At least not for the Saxons,²⁷ who wanted to reconquer their lands which had been lost after the Wendish uprising.²⁸ This intention is confirmed by the Magdeburg letter from 1107/1108.²⁹ Helmold of Bosau tells us that in the siege of Demmin in 1147, some vassals of the duke Henry the Lion and the margrave Albert the Bear complained that they had made a mistake in attacking the Wends who pay tribute to their lords.³⁰ In this case, it is possible that some of the Wendish tribes accepted paying the tribute, while most of them refused. This is why the refusal to pay tribute to the Saxon dukes was a great sign of disobedience for both the Saxons and the Church. The disobedience of Wends made them become apostates, and therefore, this action needs a divine punishment.³¹

²⁷ Those who participated in campaign in 1147 against the Wends were Saxons, Danes, and Poles (Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 25). For the Danish expansion in the Baltic region, the royal ideology of Valdemar I which follows a pattern for legitimizing warfare against heathens and the vision of a Danish kingdom with the same glory as the Roman Empire, see Jensen 2003; Jensen 2004; Bysted *et al.* 2012: 23–88; Jensen 2013a. For the Polish participation in the Wendish Crusade, see Gładysz 2012: 67–95.

²⁸ This opinion is also shared by Jay T. Lees who believes that “any (Saxon) incursion into Wendish territory was made with the conviction that the invaders were advancing claims to what they already considered to be their land” (Lees 2015: 290, 297).

²⁹ Wattenbach 1882: 626 *apud* Riley-Smith & Riley-Smith 1981: 76. Friedrich Lotter believes that the Christian intention to reconquer the whole region east of the Elbe is first attested in the “Magdeburg letter” (Lotter 1992: 275).

³⁰ *Nonne terra, quam devastamus, terra nostra est, et populus, quem expugnamus, populus noster est? Quare igitur invenimur hostes nostrimet et dissipatores vectigalium nostrorum? Nonne iactura haec redundat in dominos nostros?* (Helmold I, 65).

³¹ Friedrich Lotter believes that there is no evidence that Bernard regarded the Wends as

However, this was a good exercise in the expansion of Christianity along with the Saxon intentions to grab more land. The combination between Bernard's persuasiveness and the changing attitudes toward the Wends and their land created a situation that forced Saxon dukes to join the campaign in 1147 (Lees 2015: 276). In this speech from Frankfurt on 12–13 March 1147 there was to be no difference between the spiritual and material rewards of the crusaders from the Holy Land. Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt believe that only Bernard and German magnates defined the aim of the expedition as the conversion of the Wends. Unlike them, Eugenius III only supported the expedition, but he did not initiate it and did not define its purpose as a spiritual aim for conversion of the pagans (Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 37). Friedrich Lotter suggests that Eugenius promises those who will fight against the Wends an analogous remission of sins, but only on condition that nobody takes money from the pagans in exchange for allowing them to remain infidels. Eugenius appointed Bishop Anselm of Havelberg as papal legate in order to ensure "peace and unity" among the crusaders and to remind them about the main goal of the crusade: submission the Wends to the Christian faith (Lotter 1992: 288).

The initiative carried out by Bernard was good enough because he was faced with the possibility of completely losing Saxon support for his campaign against "Christendom's enemies". In his attempts to justify the "crusade" against the Wends, Bernard gives us a good example of the combination of divine vengeance and human justice, following the same biblical rhetoric of St. Paul: "God has aroused the spirit of kings and princes to take vengeance on the heathens and to extirpate from the earth the enemies of the Christian name".³² So, this speech suggests that for Bernard, a crusade against the Wends could be a good opportunity for Saxons to demonstrate their loyalty and win the remission of sins. Therefore, in his mind, a crusade would have two components: spiritual and military (Bysted *et al.* 2012: 48).

In the medieval period, most of the chroniclers were clerics who used biblical allusions to authorize human justice when they feared that crusaders would go to the Holy Land only for their own advantage. In 1147, Bernard tries to bribe his audience in Frankfurt to go on the campaign against the Wends by offering them the spiritual rewards granted to those who go to Jerusalem. From his speech we notice his fear that Saxons will cross the Elbe only for material interests (to take money or to collect tribute) (Lees 2015: 288–289). For that, Bernard tries to forbid these kind of actions

apostates. If this had been the case, the forced conversion in order to re-Christianize the Wends would have been sanctioned by the Church Fathers (Lotter 1992: 291).

³² *Suscitaverit spiritum regum Deus et principum ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus et extirpandos de terra christiani nominis inimicos.* Bernard of Clairvaux, Letter 457 (12–13 March 1147) *apud* Kahl 1992: 42.

using the same rhetoric for vengeance: “We prohibit completely that a truce be made for any reason with these people [Wends] either for money or for tribute, until such time as, with the aid of God, either their religion or their nation shall be destroyed”.³³

We can assume that Bernard was familiar with the intention of the Saxon nobility to seize more land from the Wends. Between 1140 and 1143, some dozen Saxon noble families pushed into Wagria, built forts, and settled. Among them were the counts Adolph II of Holstein and his rival, Henry of Badewide. The first received Wagria and the second some parts of Holstein. New colonists were brought to clear unsettled areas and increase the revenues of the new Saxon landlords. Helmold tells us that after his participation in the Wendish campaign in 1147, Albert the Bear, the margrave of Brandenburg, brought a large number of “Hollanders, Zeelanders and Flemings” to colonize the Wendish territory along the Havel and Elbe rivers (*Chronicle of the Slavs*, I, 89). With the support of the Saxon landlords, bishops like Vicelin of Oldenburg organized missions among the Wends (Christiansen 1980: 50). Later, count Adolph II secured colonization by making friends with the ruler of the Abodrites, Niclot, and his noble followers (Lotter 1992: 285). Therefore, when he saw in 1147 that Saxon nobles were interested only in material gains, Bernard tried to convince them that a conversion would be more important than any material rewards. The Cistercian abbot had already expressed his acceptance of divine vengeance in order to justify a military campaign against the Muslims after the fall of Edessa.

In a letter from 1146 addressed to the English people, Bernard exhorts them to participate in the Second Crusade by using biblical quotations. The letter is addressed to the people generally and does not single out King Stephen which was involved in a civil war against Mathilda at the time (Hosler 2015). The Cistercian monk urges the protagonists of the English civil war to not kill each other and rather to “take up arms with joy and with zeal for your Christian name, in order to take vengeance on the heathen and curb the nations” (Psalms 149.7).³⁴ Bernard sent 17 similar letters to all over Europe, something that suggests his deep involvement in the Second Crusade and his reforming vision for a united and “pure” *Christianitas*.³⁵

³³ *Illud enim ommimodis interdicimus, ne qua ratione ineant foedum cum eis, neque pro pecunia, neque pro tributo, donec, auxiliante Deo, aut ritus ipse, aut natio deleatur.* Bernard of Clairvaux, Letter 457 *apud* Kahl 1992: 42.

³⁴ An English translation of the letter was made by James 1953: no. 391, pp. 460–463. The manuscript of this letter is in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris (BnF ms. 14845, fol. 257), but I am not aware of any facsimile of this page.

³⁵ For the epistolary sources of Bernard’s involvement in the Second Crusade, see Robson 2004: 284–285.

Concerning the Wendish question, all issues were fixed one month later after his speech in Frankfurt, when Eugenius III issued his bull where he stated that the Wends need to receive Christianity by force, through subjugation – *eos Christiane religioni subiugare*.³⁶ In fact it was a good strategy of Eugenius III to re-establish the spiritual control over the Wends by using vengeance as a primary expression of God's judgmental punishment.³⁷ The papacy saw in the Saxon loss of Wendish territory also a loss for the Church. This is why in 1147 the Crusade was led by many prelates who wanted to re-establish their episcopal sees across the Elbe (Lees 2015: 294). Therefore, the military campaign against the Wends was sanctioned by the pope, who created an alliance between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities. War against pagans was now waged for a just cause (*bellum iustum*) and Christendom could be expanded.

“Just War” Theory and the Papacy

The papacy tried to justify the crusades by using the Augustinian “just war” theory (*bellum iustum*), which allowed for violence in response to injury, as a means of self-defense war. At the end of eleventh century, Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) fixed the idea of a “holy war” (*bellum sacrum*). In his texts, Gregory VII had begun to use the term “militia Christi” – the soldiers of Christ – to encourage the use of knights to fight in defending the rights of the Church against its enemies.

Yael Katzir believes that the Gregorian Reform movement was affected by the First Crusade by transforming the Gregorian concept of *Ecclesia*. This legislation originates from the Carolingian theologians, who developed a theory of *Ecclesia* that saw the papacy and the emperor as the supreme officials of two parallel hierarchies (clerical and lay). In the mid-eleventh century, however, the Gregorian reformers began to attack this theory by trying to assume that *Ecclesia* comprised only the clergy, and that the laity were just passive communicants within it. With the First Crusade, “a new structure emerged in the Latin West: a purely clerical *Ecclesia* surrounded by, and forming part of, a larger Christian society that some contemporaries called *Christianitas*”. By participating actively in the First Crusade, the laity was able to play an essential role within Christendom. This is why at Clermont, the call for the liberation of Jerusalem from infidels was the main task for the new *militia*. Between the late

³⁶ *Quidam etiam ex vobis tam sancti laboris et premii participes fieri cupientes contra Sclavos ceterosque paganos habitantes versus aquilonem ire et eos Christiane religioni subiugare Domino auxiliante intendunt (Divina dispensatione II (11 April 1147) apud Kahl 1992: 43–44).*

³⁷ In the Old Testament and also New Testament, only God claims the right to vengeance. See Psalms 94.1, 149.7; Deuteronomy 32.35, cf. Romans 12.19; Hebrews 10.30.

1120s and the early 1140s, the idea of the Church's coercive power was decisively linked with crusading.³⁸

In the eyes of the papacy, the First Crusade was a war of reconquest, and not an offensive campaign against the pagans. In a letter sent to Pope Urban II in 1098, after they had conquered Antioch in Syria, the leaders of the First Crusade wrote that they had fought against Turks and pagans, and not against heretics, and asked Urban to eradicate all heresies (Riley-Smith 2002: 10). Both popes directed the military profession to ecclesiastical ends, which became the Christian concept of knight-hood, obedient to the papacy. Therefore, the salvation could come through its weapons. At the end of the eleventh century, Bishop Anselm of Lucca in his collection of canon laws rediscovered and gathered the Augustinian texts regarding the *bellum iustum* theory for the first time. Augustinian texts about the just war theory appear only in some canonical collections after Anselm of Lucca; they rarely appear in the papal letters, sermons, chronicles, and popular literature of the crusade period. In the ninth, tenth and early eleventh century, popes had no unified theory on warfare and this is why they waged aggressive warfare against anyone who stood against their policy, one in which personal survival was the most important thing. The reformist papacy from Leo IX onwards extended warfare ideology by using scriptural imagery to show the juridical influence of a just war theory. In this rhetoric, divine vengeance can be used by Christians in order to fight with enemies of the Christianity. This situation created a type of institutionalized warfare that distinguished crusades from the holy wars of earlier ages.³⁹ Therefore, Augustine's theory had allowed the use of force in "winning back" the former Christians (heretics and apostates) to justify a crusade. For Augustine, the just war theory is based on divine vengeance, because "wars are usually called just which avenge wrongs, when a nation or a state has to be punished for refusing to make amends for unlawful deeds done by its citizens, or to

³⁸ For the evolution of the institution of crusades, see Katzir 1992.

³⁹ John Gilchrist believes that this theory of war widespread much later in the ninth century within the Carolingian state, because "from the fifth to the eighth century, given the special conditions in the West, the Augustinian doctrine of the just war could not take root. In the disorder created by successive waves of Germanic invasion and settlement, the Church viewed the profession of arms with suspicion; it forbade clerics to fight or bear arms, and imposed penance upon soldiers for killing in battle". For more details about the evolution of the "just war" theory of Augustine see Gilchrist 1988.

restore what has been wrongfully carried off”.⁴⁰ Thus, for the First Crusade, the papacy had no interest in converting Muslims.⁴¹

It seems that Augustine’s interpretation about the war gave theological justification to the action advocated by Bernard of Clairvaux and by Vincentius of Cracow who stated that Bolesław IV was therefore obligated to assure the Prussians’ salvation by “compelling them” to undergo baptism (Güttner-Sporzyński 2014: 284). Also, the Wends could be saved through a forced conversion, which works as a “moral agency”. Bernard sought to reconcile the holy war theory by setting limits on ecclesiastical powers to initiate warfare. The responsibility to initiate a crusade was morally proper for the papacy and perhaps for other bishops, but it was quite improper for clerics. Bernard saw a model for the collective identity of the crusading army in the monastic community. This concept of knighthood made the new crusaders dedicated to sacred violence and therefore, forms the central theme of Bernard’s treatise on the Templars. Crusaders, after all, took vows as monks did.⁴²

Forced Conversion

This idea of salvation through forced conversion is also emphasised by the bishop of Havelberg, Anselm, who participated in the campaign of 1147 as a papal legate. Therefore, Pegatha Taylor believes that “the Wendish Crusade borrowed from existing traditions of holy war, therefore, its object was not solely to defend Christian lands or even to force a ruler and his subjects to submit to Christian rule. Rather, it aimed to reform spiritually both of the societies involved”.⁴³ For the papacy, it was the mere denial of the Christian faith which made Bernard of Clairvaux ask for divine vengeance as the only option available. Thus, the forced conversion acted as divine will which became human justice for the Saxon dukes.

Nicholas Morton suggests that “the memory of the Maccabees and other Old Testament exemplars played an important role in shaping the idea of crusading and its subsequent evolution to encompass new frontiers in the Baltic and Iberia, as well

⁴⁰ *Iusta autem bella ea definiri solent, quae ulciscuntur iniurias, si qua gens vel civitas, quae bello petenda est, vel vindicare neglexerit quod a suis improbe factum est, vel reddere quod per iniurias ablatum est. Questionum in Heptateuchum*, ch. VI, 10 apud Schmandt 1975: 199.

⁴¹ For more information regarding the “just war” theory, see Bliese 1991; Brand 1984; Claster 2009: 36–37; Russell 1977: 16–39.

⁴² For the juristic concepts of Bernard of Clairvaux on crusade ideology, see Brundage 1992.

⁴³ A study concerning the forced conversion of the Wends in the eyes of Anselm of Havelberg was made by Taylor 2000.

as structural developments in crusading, such as the establishment of the military orders".⁴⁴ In the two books of Maccabees we have patterns relied on the wars fought by the Maccabees in the name of the God against the unbelievers.⁴⁵ In the Wendish question we have a close association between missions and defensive war against those who directly threatened the Christendom. This suggests that there was no alternative to the use of force in order to crush those who refused to accept the conversion. For Helmold, the Wends are compared to the Amorites who were defeated by the Maccabees and the people of Israel (Saxons) as a result of a divine vengeance (Helmold I, 22, 34, 64). In this way, the Saxons could wage a defensive war to take back their territories, as crusaders did in the Holy Land (Bysted *et al.* 2012: 52). Bernard of Clairvaux used the same rhetoric in 1146, when he accepted a Muslim conversion as a merely hypothetical possibility. Thus, Bernard states that if the Muslims were subdued to Christian rule, as the Jews are, the Christians would await for their conversion, but Muslims attack the Christians and therefore must be subdued (Kedar 2014: 60–61; Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 32–33). These things happened in 1147 when the two Saxon armies who fought against the Wends were accompanied by many clerics who tried to achieve conversion by force. The spiritual leaders of the two Saxon armies were clerics like archbishop Adalbero of Bremen, archbishop Frederick of Magdeburg, bishop Anselm of Havelberg (papal legate), bishop Thietmar of Verden, bishop Wigger of Brandenburg, Reinhard of Merseburg, abbot Wibald of Corvey, Stavelot and Hartwig, the cathedral provost of Bremen. The archbishopric of Bremen had claimed the legal jurisdiction in the Wendish territory since the reign of Otto I, so this is why bishops like Vicelin were sent by Adalbero of Bremen to preach among the pagans (Lees 2015: 289–296)

The idea of forced conversion and mission by the sword has provoked much debate among modern historians. As we have shown, this action is a result of God's vengeance upon the Wendish apostasy. Even if forced baptism was forbidden by both canon law and theology, there are previous examples which go back to the end of eighth century consisting of Charlemagne's intention to subdue the Saxons who are

⁴⁴ The Maccabean ideas in sources concerning the Crusades and divine vengeance are analyzed in Morton 2010.

⁴⁵ "And Simon answered him, and said to him: We have neither taken other men's land, neither do we hold that which is other men's, but the inheritance of our fathers, which was for some time unjustly possessed by our enemies" (1 Maccabees 15:33). In the letters of the popes from the twelfth century addressed to the military order of the Templars, the knights are called "the true Israelites", "the new Maccabites" or "the athletes of Christ" (Gilchrist 1988: 193–194).

accused of apostasy. Thus, for Charlemagne, the Saxons⁴⁶ had no choice but to accept baptism “preached with the iron tongue”. In his eyes, the resistance of the Saxons that had undergone baptism and signed a treaty of allegiance amounted to political high treason and religious apostasy. The Saxon rebellion against the Church, its members and also the apostasy are mentioned in the *Annals of Lorsch*.⁴⁷ It seems that each and every act of misconduct mentioned in the *Annals of Lorsch* is listed in the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* as a capital crime. Yitzhak Hen suggests that “the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* was issued around 795 in order to pave the way for Charlemagne’s final attack and for the mass deportation of Saxons from their homes”. Thus, the Charlemagne’s *Capitulatio* seems to have no precedent in the history of the Christian mission where we could not find any attempts to convert by force which reached the level of legislation. All eight canons of the *Capitulatio* do not leave much choice to the Saxons in order to avoid the baptism. Before the *Capitulatio* was issued, in October 782, at Verden, more than 4,500 Saxon rebels were beheaded in one day at the order of Charlemagne (Hen 2006: 34, 38–39, 47). Two centuries later, the military campaigns of Ottonians (Saxon dynasty) into the Wendish territory, pursued from the tenth century onward, used the same method of conversion, which could have been inspired by Charlemagne (Kedar 2014: 68; Becher 2013; Hen 2006). The example of Charlemagne’s forced baptism is mentioned in Robert the Monk’s version of Urban II’s sermon. In this sermon, Urban II praises the Franks because of the glory and greatness of Charlemagne who destroyed the kingdoms of pagans.⁴⁸

Another example of forced conversion is the missionary expedition led by the German bishop Otto of Bamberg, who, by his zeal for the faith, was qualified for the task of converting the Pomeranians (In the twelfth century, the Christian rulers helped maintain the missionary zeal of prelates such as Otto of Bamberg or the bishop of Oldenburg, Vicelin, the “Apostle of Abodrites” (Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 23–

⁴⁶ Linda Kaljundi believes that “the genealogy of the Northern pagan barbarians goes back to the tradition about the Saxon wars. It draws on the hagiographic sources about the early missions to Germania and Scandinavia, and on the annals of monasteries that tell about the persecution of Christians during the Viking assaults, which relied in biblical tradition and gave many models for depicting the ferocity and cruelty of our enemies” (Kaljundi 2008: 118–119).

⁴⁷ *Annales Laureshamenses*, 792, 35: *quasi canis revertit ad vomitum suum, sic reversi sunt ad paganismum quem pridem respuerant, ... conati sunt in primis rebellare contra Deum, deinde contra regem et christianos; omnes ecclesias que in finibus eorum errant, cum destructione et incendio vastabant, reiicientes episcopos et presbyteros qui super eos erant, et aliquos comprehenderunt, nec non et alios occiderunt, et pelissime se ad culturam idolorum converterunt.*

⁴⁸ Robert the Monk’s *Historia Iherosolimitana* is a prose chronicle describing the First Crusade. The importance of this chronicle relies on the fact that Robert claims to have been an eyewitness of the Council of Clermont in 1095. Strack 2012: 35–36.

78; Morris 1989: 276–277). This missionary enterprise from 1124 included both German and Polish soldiers, but its composition was clerical (German monks from Otto’s monasteries and Polish chaplains). Before this missionary enterprise, in 1121, the Polish Duke Bolesław III made an expedition to Szczecin and west of the Oder in order to subdue the Wends and to ensure the religious assimilation of his new tributaries. The conquest paved the way for the Christianization of Pomerania by the zealous bishop Otto of Bamberg sent by Bolesław to baptize the pagans.⁴⁹ After the departure of the missionaries led by the German bishop, who left behind them only a few priests and a neophyte community, a serious apostasy quickly followed supported by the pagan priests. They led attacks on churches, threatened bishop Otto with spears and set ambushes for him. The opposition to the missionaries was, naturally, led by the men most closely identified with paganism. Thus, a second missionary expedition by Otto of Bamberg took place in 1128 before a Christian community and an ecclesiastical organization were permanently established in Pomerania. Robert Bartlett believes that the radical conversion of Pomerania implies some fundamental changes. For the Wends, loyalty to their own gods and hostility to other gods was part of defending their community which overrode loyalty to the prince. This identification had been heightened by the opposition between Wendish paganism and Pomerania’s nearest Christian neighbor and enemy, Poland (Bartlett 1985: 190–191).

The military campaigns of Bolesław III “Wrymouth” in Pomerania are represented as wars of conversion not only by Vincentius of Cracow, but also by Gallus Anonymus, Poland’s first chronicler. In his *Gesta Principum Polonorum*, Gallus suggests that these holy wars had a just cause because they were a response to Pomeranian pillaging raids and incursions into Poland. Also, the author describes the apostasy of the pagan leaders and the attempts of the Polish dukes to maintain the Christianity among these pagans living nearby: “On the Northern Sea, [Poland] has as neighbors three most savage nations of pagan barbarians, Selencia, Pomerania, and Prussia, and the duke of the Poles is constantly at war with these countries, fighting to convert them to the faith. But neither has the sword of preaching been able to sway their hearts from faithlessness, nor the sword at their throats wipe out this generation of vipers in its entirety. Yet often their leaders when defeated in battle by the Polish duke have taken refuge in baptism, only to deny the Christian faith when they recovered their strength and take up arms afresh against the Christians”.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ For further details about the monastic reforms carried out by Otto and his missionary activity in the eyes of hagiographers, see Dragnea 2015.

⁵⁰ *Gesta principum Polonorum*, I: Prohem, p. 12 *apud* Güttner-Sporzyński 2011: 260.

Starting with Mieszko I, the Piast dynasty became a pillar of the Church and facilitated deeper Christianization of the Poles and other pagan neighbors by supporting the foundation of abbeys, churches and monasteries. As a reward, the Church legitimized the authority of the dynasty (*divine sacrum*), declaring the Piasts to be the *dominis naturalibus* of Poland. By the beginning of the twelfth century, under the first Piast rulers, the Church and the court adopted Latin as the official language. This action opened new communication channels between the Polish elites and Christendom, which led to crusade ideology being introduced among Polish clergy. The ideals of canonists such as Anselm of Lucca (1036–1086), Bonizo of Sturi (1045–1090) and Ivo of Chartres (1040–1115) had provided particular legitimacy for the theory of just war and crusading ideology. In the twelfth century, the inventory of the library of the cathedral school in Kraków indicates that the works of these canonists were available to the Polish clergy.

The holy wars waged by the Polish ruler Bolesław III against the Pomeranians and by his successors against the Prussians are an example of the close cooperation between the Church and the Piasts. In order to subdue the Prussian tribes, the Piasts copied the ideology and methods of conversion from Otto of Bamberg, the “Apostle of Pomerania”. Among the “architects” of the conquest and Christianization of Pomerania were prelates such as chancellor Michael Adwaniec, Archbishop Jakub of Żnin, Wojciech (Bolesław III’s chaplain, later bishop of Pomerania during the Wendish Crusade), and Bishop Alexander of Płock. Regarding the forced conversion used by the Piasts, Güttner-Sporzyński believes that according to Gallus Anonymus, the pagans sought baptism as a self-preservation measure under threat of death. Therefore, “their adherence to the Christian faith was short lived and as soon as the immediate danger of the retribution from Christian rulers had passed they rejected their forcibly acquired religion”.⁵¹

For the Pomeranian society, “this conversion represented a wrench because it meant a reorientation in so many everyday habits and responses”. Some examples are “kingship patterns” and “perception of time”. Thus, for bishop Otto of Bamberg, his missions were attempts “to bring the Pomeranian family into line with the Christian ideal” by using two powerful instruments of persuasion and control. In order to succeed, a precondition of Otto’s mission was the first and most important tactic: physical violence. For the Christians, the fierceness was more than necessary. The fear of Polish reprisals made the Wends see Otto as a preacher, and not as a warrior. Therefore, he could act like a mediator between the Wends and the Polish armies.

⁵¹ For more details about the expansionary policy of the Piast dynasty, their holy wars against the pagans and their cooperation with the Church see Güttner-Sporzyński 2011.

The only solution to not being punished was the acceptance of Christianity. In this way, Otto could protect them and he could bring peace in Pomerania.⁵²

A Danish Perspective of Forced Conversion

As we know, the Danish king Niels was ready to participate in the planned campaign against the Wends in 1108. However, his intentions were only political and not religious. The ideas concerning divine vengeance and human justice are related with the Danish campaigns against the Wends from 1130s onward and can be found in *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus, a secretary to Absalon, Archbishop of Lund, the foremost advisor to King Valdemar I of Denmark. For Saxo, the idea of vengeance is expressed through the forced conversion. Saxo tries to convince his “audience” that the Rugians (a Wendish tribe from Rügen island), might only pretend to have become good Christians after they accepted forced baptism without protest. During the 1120s, the Duke Canute (Knud) Lavard had secured a considerable extension of his lands east of the Elbe. He was appointed as ruler over the Abodrites by the German King Lothar and because of that, became a serious rival for the Danish throne. In Saxo’s eyes, despite the struggle for the Danish throne, one common enemy (the Wends) was able to unite all competitors (Hermanson 2004).

The Danish chronicler tells us that the Rugians, after their defeat to the Danish forces of king Erik Emune in 1130s, “they ordered to accept the solemn ritual of immersion, but they went to the pool rather to quench their thirst, than from zeal to enter the faith, and refreshed their weary bodies by pretending to undergo the holy rites”. In Saxo’s mind, this false acceptance of Christianity is the reason for their apostasy, because later the Rugians “cast off their feelings for the hostages they had given, turned again to their old idolatry, and betrayed the divine truth which they had accepted”.⁵³ Whether or not the Rugians really believed in Christ, their public immersion in water demonstrated their submission to the Christian Danes.⁵⁴

If for the Church, the apostasy could be a reason for divine retribution, for the Danes, the imminent danger from the Wends was a physical one. According to Saxo, the Wends were pirates who pillaged Danish shores and in the twelfth century had become a huge threat to the Danes. This danger clearly justified the use of violence

⁵² For more details about the conversion of Pomerania, see Bartlett 1985.

⁵³ Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 1: *Siquidem Archonenses, abiecta obsidum caritate, pristinum statuæ cultum repetentes, qua fide divinum susceperint, prodiderunt* (translation by Eric Christiansen).

⁵⁴ For more details regarding the ritualization practices and manipulation in *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo, see Esmark 2015.

and cruelty, seen as human justice.⁵⁵ In this sense, Saxo tells us that the slaying of Wends was believed to be pleasing to God, since a Dane called Eskil “followed on foot after one of them who was fleeing as fast as he could go, unarmed, across the parts that were marsh; and while the feet of the Slav sank down into the soft mud, Eskillus ran on with ease, unencumbered either by the slime of the marsh or by the weight of his armour. And having caught the barbarian, he cut off his head... This deed, which deserves our pious admiration, was performed not by the agility of his feet, but by the grace of God, and we should ascribe it to a heavenly miracle, rather than to manly courage”.⁵⁶ Even when the Bishop of Roskilde, Absalon had to interrupt his divine service during a campaign to resume fighting, he did so willingly because “what kind of sacrifice could we consider more pleasing to the Almighty than the slaughter of wicked man?”.⁵⁷

An important figure among the Danes is the archbishop Eskil of Lund (1137–1177), which is described by Saxo as a man of profound piety and always zealous for the welfare of the church (Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 26). In 1147, Eskil persuaded the Danish kings Canute V and Sven III to join their forces in a common crusade against the Wends (Jensen 2001: 168), in which he participated. The campaigns resulted in the conquest of the island of Rügen off the southern coast of the Baltic Sea in 1168 (Murray 2006: 411). Eskil’s interests in missionary activity seems to had been inspired from Bernard, whom he met on a visit to Clairvaux in the early 1150s. Eskil introduced the Cistercian order in Denmark and Sweden in the 1140s and after he decided to retire at Clairvaux in 1177 (Fonnesberg-Schmidt 2007: 53).

⁵⁵ For the relations between Danes and other peoples around the Baltic Sea, see Jensen 2002.

⁵⁶ Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 32: *Itaque Sclavis partim solido partim aquoso itinere dilabantibus, Eskillus, animi et generis nobilissimus eques, militaribus armis praegravis, unum ex iis, inermem per palustria loca citato cursu fugientem, pedibus insecutus, illius vestigiis limi mollitie subsidentibus, nec voraginum illuvie nec armorum onere depressus, facilem currendi eventum habuit. Quin etiam occupatum barbarum capite spoliavit ac tunc demum, ne plantis quidem caeno infectis, solidam humum repetiit. Quod factum, religiosa admiratione praedignum, non pedum agilitate, sed divino beneficio editum, potius caelesti miraculo quam humanae virtuti imputare debemus.* For Saxo Grammaticus, the opposition between Danes and Wends made him designate all the peoples of the Baltic region, as *barbari*. The Northern region (*aquilo*) played no role in Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum*.

⁵⁷ Saxo Grammaticus XVI, 5: *Quod enim sacrificii genus scelestorum nece divinae potentiae iucundius existimemus?*

Conclusions

The main thrust of the argument is that divine vengeance formed a fundamental role in conceptualising the Saxon expeditions against the Wends as a crusade, without which the Saxons would not have been seen to have a legitimate *casus belli*. The institutional religion had rejected vindication as usurpation of right that is God's, yet clerics approve God's vengeance when it served His purpose and is carried out by His human agents. We see that God uses secondary causes of all sorts to exercise His will, so He uses the decisions and actions of human beings against the enemies of the Church. Therefore, divine vengeance can be exacted by Christian believers who think they are on a mission of God.

From the primary sources we find that for the Saxons, their wishful vengeance must be requests for divine vengeance, otherwise it would be considered a sin. This is why the Saxon campaign and the Church intention to expand the Christendom were not two separate actions. The Saxon campaign needed to be authorized by the pope, who sought to legally and morally justify the war against the Wends as a crusade. Therefore, God's vengeance was the expression of a legal justice, like a "sanctified law"; a punishment for the Wends' apostasy. Thus, a crusade against the Wends became an institutionalized warfare which could follow the lineaments of the Augustinian "just war" theory.

Analysing the vocabulary of vengeance, I have noticed that the perception of God and his divine justice in punishing the "enemies of Christ" was the pillar of the "holy war" ideology which was carried out also in 1147. At the same time, the Wendish Crusade marked further development of the institution of crusades. Therefore, it can be concluded that vengeance was a tool of both divine and human justice, and it had an important position within twelfth century Christendom. The equality between these two components also influenced the strengthening of the link between human vengeance and justice, which was often represented as being divinely inspired.

Appendix

Vocabulary of Vengeance and Human Justice

Source	Latin	English
The letter of Paschal II (1100)	<i>Christianus populus... a barbarorum tyrannide et iugo strenuissime vindicavit atque plagas illas, lesu Christi sanguine et praestantia sanctificatas, pristino cultu, maiestati decori atque venerationi.</i>	“The Christian people...most strenuously avenged [Jerusalem] for the tyranny and yoke of the barbarians and, with God helping, restored those regions, sanctified by the blood and presence of Jesus Christ, to their former refinement and majesty with adornment and veneration.”
The Magdeburg letter (1108)	<i>Qui Gallos ab extremo occidente progressos in brachio virtutis sue contra inimicos suos in remotissimo triumphavit Oriente, ipse tribuat vobis voluntatem et potentiam hos affines et inhumanissimos gentiles subjugare et in omnibus bene prosperari.</i>	“May he who with the strength of his arm led the men of Gaul on their march from the far West in triumph against his enemies in the farthest East give you the will and power to conquer [subjugate] those most inhuman gentiles who are near by and to prosper well in all things.”
The Magdeburg letter (1108)	<i>Sanctificate bellum, suscite robustes. Surgite principes, contra inimicos Christi arripite clypeos... Erumpite et venite omnes aratores Christi et ecclesie, et sicut Galli ad liberationem Hierusalem vos preparate.</i>	“Prepare holy war , rouse up the strong. Arise, princes, take up your shields against the enemies of Christ ... Sally forth and come, all lovers of Christ and the Church, and prepare yourself just as did the men of Gaul for the liberation of Jerusalem.”
Letter of Bernard to England to Summon the Second Crusade (1146) (Psalms 149:7)	<i>Ad faciendam vindictam in gentibus increpationes in populis.</i>	“To take vengeance on the heathen (nations), and curb the nations.”
Bernard of Clairvaux, Letter 457 (12–13 March 1147)	<i>Suscitaverit spiritum regum Deus et principum ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus et extirpandos de terra christiani nominis inimicos.</i>	“God has aroused the spirit of kings and princes to take vengeance on the heathens and to extirpate from the earth the enemies of the Christian name”.
Bernard of Clairvaux, Letter 457 (12–13 March 1147)	<i>Illud enim omnimodis interdicimus, ne qua ratione ineant foedum cum eis, neque pro pecunia, neque pro tributo, donec, auxiliante Deo, aut ritus ipse, aut natio deleatur.</i>	“We prohibit completely that a truce be made for any reason with these people [Wends] either for money or for tribute, until such time as, with the aid of God, either their religion or their nation shall be destroyed ”.

Papal bull <i>Divina dispensatione</i> II (11 April 1147)	<i>Quidam etiam ex vobis tam sancti laboris et premii participes fieri cupientes contra Sclavos ceterosque paganos habitantes versus aquilonem ire et eos Christiane religioni subiugare Domino auxiliante intendunt.</i>	“Certain of you, however, [are] desirous of participating in so holy a work and reward and plan to go against the Slavs and other pagans living towards the north and to subjugate them, with the Lord's assistance, to the Christian religion ”.
Helmold of Bosau <i>Chronica Slavorum</i> I, 62 (1167–1168)	<i>Tercius signatorum exercitus devotaverunt se ad gentem Slavorum, Obotritos scilicet atque Luticios nobis confines, ulturi mortes et exterminia, quae intulerunt Christicolis, precipue vero Danis.</i>	“The third army of crusaders was directed against the Slavic people, the Abodrites and the Lutici, namely, on our frontier, in order to avenge the death and destruction that had been brought to worshippers of Christ, especially the Danes ”.

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