THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER TO THE EVANGELISATION OF PRUSSIA
Some Remarks Based on Synod Legislation

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ABSTRACT This article analyses archdiocesan and diocesan synod legislation in the four bishoprics of the Teutonic Ordensstaat in Prussia (Culm, Pomesania, Ermland and Samland) to reveal evangelisation processes in Prussia. Given the sparse nature of the sources available for studying local church history, synod legislation provides useful evidence of pastoral practice in the area. The author surveys methodological problems arising from this situation.

On the basis of Rigan archdiocesan statutes and diocesan legislation from the fifteenth century for the most part the author examines the evangelisation process and the problems facing the Church in Prussia.

The author examines obligations to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days. He deals with the teaching of basic prayers (the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed) in Latin and the vernacular. Rules for making confession and the advice of penitentials by the parish clergy are studied. The author asks how far the requirements of synod legislation were transmitted to the laity. Bishops recommended statutes be published in the chancel of churches but it is hard to know how illiterate Prussian laymen could use them. The author asks what negative aspects of Prussian religious and social life were not eradicated during almost two centuries of Catholic instruction; how effective were the efforts of German bishops and priests at proselytising the Prussian laity? The statutes examined here suggest that even in the fifteenth century Prussians lacked proper understanding of the sacraments of baptism, marriage or the Mass.

Even though ‘pagan’ practices survived in Prussia we must not underestimate the achievements of the local Church. There must be serious reconsideration of outdated scholarly claims that in the Late Middle Ages Prussia was Christian only in name and that evangelisation among the Prussian masses was out of the question.

The processes of Christianisation or the labours of evangelisation carried out by the Church as a consequence of pagan conversions are undoubtedly one of the most universal phenomena of Europe in
the Middle Ages in both the spiritual and institutional sense. However, at the same time we cannot fail to notice significant chronological differences between such phenomena, as the actual implementation of Christian missions began during Late Antiquity and continued still in the thirteenth century in Prussia and Livonia and in the fourteenth century in Lithuania.¹ The consequence of this was the gradual construction of local Churches or, as Johannes Helmrath has written, the *encadrement* or gradual framing of Europe at that time within a network of provinces, dioceses and parishes.² The parallel processes of acculturation, which can be observed, gradually led to the production of many common features throughout Europe, despite sometimes significant political, social and even cultural differences. These features also include definite common institutions, which developed in countries of various Christian traditions as the Church developed Her local structures.³

One institution which played an extraordinarily important role in the functioning of local bishoprics was the synod or meeting of clergy in which representatives of local chapter corporations, and monasteries, deans (archpriests), parish priests and lower clergy took part. It should be recalled that this type of clerical gathering is known from the third century and from the Council of Nicea (AD 325) onwards they were organised regularly in accordance with Canon Law.⁴ As a result of the diocesan courts, which accompanied the synods, the latter became exceptionally important sources of


⁴ *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, I: (325-787), ed. A. Baron, H. Pietras (Cracow, 2001), pp. 30-31 (Canon 5).
information for local bishops concerning the religious and moral state of particular parish communities and clergy, despite the fact that from the thirteenth century they gradually came to surrender their judicial functions to diocesan officials and vicars general. In addition, the activities of diocesan synods became concentrated on pastoral activities, the supervision of how the laity were given instruction (here we have in mind the form as well as the content of what was taught by priest to people in addition to the state of clerical knowledge). Synods also dealt with issues relating to the lives and morals of diocesan clergy. They provided a forum for promulgating canon law. The statutes, which were drafted on the basis of synod decisions, allow us to glimpse the profile of local European Churches in the Late Middle Ages and see both its monolithic nature and regional and national differences. The questions raised in these monuments of regional canon law concern the clergy and laity alike. Very often norms affect issues relating to the actions of priests and people in such areas as, for example: instruction in the faith and regulations for teaching catechetics, administering the Sacraments, issues related to *libertas ecclesiae* and benefice of clergy, the award of benefices, the life and morals of the clergy, matters of excommunication and interdict, testamentary issues referring to Jews, heresy or economics (for example the prohibition on usury). An analysis of the contents of these works of diocesan synod legislation permit us to grasp how very varied they were as well as the lack of a single pattern for drafting them.

It has already been noted that christianisation campaigns were carried out in Prussia in the thirteenth century primarily by the

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5 See S. Zachorowski, *Sądy synodalne w Polsce* (Cracow, 1911).

Cistercians, especially Bishop Christian of Prussia, followed by priests of the Teutonic Order, and to a considerable degree by regular and secular clergy under the supervision mainly of bishops belonging to the Teutonic Order. After several unsuccessful attempts this led in the end to the foundation of local church organisation. The legal basis for the organisation of diocesan structures on the territory of the developing Teutonic Ordensstaat in Prussia and the diocese of Kulm was a document issued by the papal legate, William of Modena, on July 28 1243. On the strength of this four bishoprics were founded: Culm, Pomesania, Ermland and Samland, which on March 31 1255 were joined with the Livonian dioceses of Riga, Courland, Dorpat and Ösel to form the newly-erected archdiocese of Riga.

One of the most important legal institutions in the Prussian dioceses was that of synods which played an essential role in procedures for controlling and disciplining clergy and Christian communities, by issuing and propagating fundamental canon law texts for the local church and bringing this legislation into line with general law issued by Church Councils.


10 One outcome of a diocesan visitation was the issuing of the first known statutes in Samland by Bishop Siegfried von Regenstein in 1302-1310. C. Krollmann, ‘Eine merkwürdige Samländische Urkunde’, Altpreussische Forschungen, 11 (1934), pp. 36-38. In its turn a diocesan synod summoned in Kulm by Bp Johann Marienau in 1438 aimed to bring local legislation into line with that of the Council of Basle. Urkundenbuch des Bisthums Culm, I, ed. C.P. Woelky (Gdańsk, 1885), No. 563.
The problems connected with archdiocesan and diocesan synod instructions in Teutonic Prussia have not been a subject of comparative and generalised study hitherto. Problems connected with evangelisation have also not been studied more broadly in the context of synod statutes. However, general and as yet insufficient research on the statutes of separate dioceses, which has been carried out usually in connection with the publication of texts, has issued from the pens of Heinrich Friedrich Jacobsen, Franz Hipler, Christian Krollmann, and more recently, Jan Wiśniewski, Stefan Kwiatkowski and the present author.\footnote{H. F. Jacobson, \textit{Geschichte der Quellen des katholischen Kirchenrechts der Provinzen Preussen und Posen mit Urkunden und Regesten} (Königsberg, 1837), pp. 3-328. This volume includes the first printed edition of Rigan provincial statutes and several diocesan statutes from Prussia. F. Hipler edited and gave brief introductions to statutes from the four Prussian sees – Ermland: ‘Geschichte und Statuten der ermländischen Diöcesansynoden’ [ED], \textit{Pastoralblatt für die Diözese Ermland} [PDE], 27 (1895), pp. 64-69, 74-83, 86-94, 98-104. Samland: ‘Die samländische Diöcesansynoden’ [SD], PDE, 29 (1897), pp. 108-114. Pomesania: ‘Die Pomesanischen Diöcesansynoden’ [PD], PDE, 30 (1898), pp. 50-59. Kulm: ‘Die kulmischen Diöcesansynoden’ [CD], PDE, 36 (1898), pp. 63-65. This has been re-edited as \textit{Constitutiones synodales necnon ordinationes dioecesis Culmensis} [CS]. Ed. A. Mańkowski (Toruń, 1929) [= \textit{Fontes TNT}, 24], pp. 13-19 (in both editions we find only German excerpts from Kulm statutes of the first half of the fifteenth century, as made by K. Hartknoch in his \textit{Preussische Kirchenhistorie} (Leipzig, 1686), pp. 210-212). Elbing and Riga provincial synod legislation: ‘Die Statuten des Elbinger Provinzialkoncils vom J. 1427’ [EP] and ‘Die statuten des Rigaer Provinzialkoncil vom J. 1428’ [RP] in: ‘Die provinzialsynoden von Riga und Elbing gehalten 1427 u. 1428’, PDE, 30 (1898), pp. 77-99. C. Krollmann, ‘Eine merkwürdige’, pp. 32-38 contains the oldest statutes from Samland – see n. 10. J. Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne synody pomezańskie} (Elbląg, 1998) discusses mediaeval Pomesanian diocesan synods and the legislation they issued. S. Kwiatkowski, \textit{Klimat religijny w diecezji pomezańskiej u schyłku XIV i w pierwszych dziesięcioleciach XV w.} (Toruń, 1990), pp. 171-72 (diocesan legislation), 179-81 (brief discussion of the Rigan provincial statutes of 1428). See also Radzimiński, \textit{Synodalstatuten} (see above, n. 6).}

Bearing in mind the relatively small number of sources relating to the ecclesiastical history of Prussia, synod legislation common to the four Prussian dioceses can provide a starting point for analysing pastoral activities in that area, certain reservations notwithstanding. We must always bear in mind possible methodological doubts, especially concerning whether the surviving law texts reflect in their component instructions and prohibitions actual reality and if so, on what scale. How accommodating were they in their reaction to situations arising in the localities? Could bishops, making excessive use of legislation

already made for other dioceses, not create very fictitious impressions of situations and problems existing on the ground in their own sees? Moreover, what effect does the possession of such resources of local particular legislation by individual dioceses have on the process of evangelisation at parish level? Of course it is often very hard or even impossible to give an unambiguous answer to such questions. However, when studying normative sources, we must realise first and foremost that many methodological problems can arise.

Here we will examine how the process of evangelisation took place primarily among the local Prussian population and what impediments were faced. In this we will bear in mind the normatisation of synod legislation in the four Prussian dioceses and also instructions issued by metropolitan synods concerning select issues. At the same time it is worth establishing the way in which synod statutes affected or could affect parishioners. On the basis of fifteenth-century statutes we will try to answer the question of what sort of negative phenomena from pagan religion and practices could not be rooted out in the course of almost two centuries of pastoral activity on the part of parish clergy. Thus it would appear that an extraordinary, albeit not the most important role in pastoral activity was played by Mass heard on Sundays and holy days, albeit not in the liturgical sense. Lay people most often took part in Latin Masses as they would attend a spectacle, which to a large extent they could not understand because both the language and the ecclesiological expression of the sacrifice were unknown to them. However, during the Mass, as we will see below, they could learn basic prayers and hear sermons and various kinds of chant as well as taking part in the choir. Attending Mass also offered an opportunity to make Confession, which, insofar

12 From the example of the Pomesanian statutes of Bp Kaspar Linke (1440) we can see borrowings from Johann Mewe’s code of 1428 and the resolution of one problem as given in the Elbing Statutes of 1427. However, the statutes of Bp Johann Kierstani of Pomesania (1480) borrowed as many as 16 points (out of 20) from the statutes of Bp Franz Kuhlschmalz of Ermland (1449). In turn a significant part of the latter code was taken almost word for word from three statutes issued by Bp Heinrich Sorbom of Ermland. See Radzimiński, *Synodalstatuten*.


14 An analysis was made of synod legislation from the four Prussian bishoprics, including that of Ermland, which was not incorporated into the Teutonic Order. See I. Skierska, *Obowiązek mszalny w średniowiecznej Polsce* (Warsaw, 2003).

as this Sacrament was administered by the priest in accordance with synod statutes and the counsels offered in penitentials, played an essential role in the evangelisation process. According to undated legislation from Bishop Michael Junge of Samland (1425-42), each Prussian of either gender who had reached the age of reason, or 12 years, was obliged to take part in the Mass liturgy in his parish church on Sundays and holy days. From that age the faithful were to begin to deepen their Christian education. From the age of 12 the faithful were obliged not only to attend church on those days but also they were made aware of the prohibition on carrying out various acts and taking part in trade and attending markets on those days. We must remember that the Christburg Treaty of 1249 obliged Prussians ‘dies dominicos er festivos ab omni servili opere observabunt’,18 Even so, in the first half of the fifteenth century archdiocesan legislation and Landesordnungen issued by the grand masters of the Teutonic Order permitted people to work in full on such days.19 Military campaigns and defence of the motherland also released men from attending their parish church on Sundays and holy days.20 On Sundays and holy days the liturgy was celebrated in people’s own parish churches. It was to be celebrated in line with the liturgy as practised in the central or cathedral church of the diocese and parish priests were not allowed to introduce any new things to the liturgy without the bishop’s permission.21 Religious awareness, particularly among Prussians, was built up when parish churches were founded and built. In the Christburg treaty of 1249 Prussians were obliged not only to build parish churches and equip them with the relevant liturgical

18 PU, I, No. 218.
19 Acten des Ständetagen Preussens unter der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens, I-V, ed. M. Toeppen (Leipzig, 1861-1874), I, No. 82 (Landesordnung, 30.10.1409); No. 261 (Verordnung über Heiligung des Sonntages, 06.11.1418); RP, p. 82, § 9 – de feriis.
20 As formulated in Heinrich Sorbom’s statutes – ED, p. 77, § 1.
21 EP, p. 74: Elbing Provincial Synod Statutes, 1427 – de cantu divino: volumus quod deinceps quelibet parochialis ecclesia et alias omnis clerus in predictis sue cathedrali ecclesie se conformet et ab omnibus novis adinvencionibus absque ipsius ordinarii auctoritate et licencia penitus se abstinent, sub pena ad sui ordinarii arbitrium infligenda.
items such as a chalice, but also to buy liturgical books.\textsuperscript{22} Certainly some influence on religious consciousness was enjoyed by the endowment of individual churches. A set of synod statutes issued at the beginning of the fourteenth century by Bishop Siegfried von Regnstein of Samland ordered the decoration of altars in churches. This decoration consisted, in addition to the compulsory crucifix, of various images, including depictions of Scripture, \textit{imagines sacrae scripturae}.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, the faithful above the age of 12, whatever language they spoke, were obliged to attend Sunday and holy day Mass, listen to sermons and take care of their parish church.\textsuperscript{24} Failure to attend Mass was punished accordingly. The example of believers in Pomesania shows that such miscreants could face reprimand from their priest or even the refusal of Christian burial.\textsuperscript{25} In Samland during the first half of the fifteenth century those who missed Mass on Sundays or holy days without justifiable reason were summoned for instruction on this matter from the parish priest and the local bailiff. The secular authorities also had power to punish such misdemeanours.\textsuperscript{26} The important role played by bailiffs in Samland parishes arose from the fact that in that diocese parish and bailiwick boundaries coincided.\textsuperscript{27} An interesting local dealing with the failure to attend Mass can be seen in Ermland. Sources tell us that two representatives of each

\textsuperscript{22} PU, I, No. 218: \textit{Et quamlibet istarum ecclesiarum tenebuntur edificare et ornare ornamentis, calicibus et libris et aliis necessaritis.}


\textsuperscript{24} On the matter of taking care of parish churches see too the Rigan Statutes of 1428 – RP, p. 91, § 32, \textit{De ecclesiis edificandis.}

\textsuperscript{25} See the statutes of Bp Johann IV Kierstani of Pomesania (1480), PD, p. 58, § 11: \textit{Item statuimus quod parochiani, cuiuscunque lingue fuerint, diebus dominicis et festivis fideliter ad suam ecclesiam parochialem confluant, divina et predicaciones ad edificacionem fidei audiant, si boni christiani velint reputari; negligentes et remissi in premisssis per suos rectores moniti, si se emendare non curaverint, careant ecclesiastica sepultura.}

\textsuperscript{26} SD, p. 110, § 17: \textit{Et si quis illorum diebus dominicis et praecipue festis principaliioribus divinis non interfuerit absque legitima causa, per plebanum et camerarium loci vocetur et corrigatur. Aliquick talis incorrigibilis tradatur brachio saeculari puniendus.}

\textsuperscript{27} M. Biskup, ‘Parafie w państwie krzyżackim’, \textit{Państwo Zakonu}, p. 84.
village within a parish were delegated to the parish church on Sundays and holy days. This practice, however widely practised it may or may not have been, is mentioned in the mid-fourteenth-century Ermland statutes of Bishop Heinrich Sorbom, which criticise such behaviour.28 The bishop reminded Prussians and other neophytes of the obligation to hear Mass and the Word of God in their parishes on Sundays and high holy days, unless they be prevented from so doing by the duty to defend their homeland or carry out labour for their masters or some other pressing reason.29 Failure to carry out this obligation without justification gave rise to a fine of one shilling, which was to be paid to the local bailiff. The income from these fines was to be divided threefold: one third for maintaining the fabric of the church (fabrica ecclesiae), one third for the parish priest and one third for the bailiff.30 In this context it is worth considering how often the faithful were obliged to attend Mass and how many festa fori (feast days, when work and trade was prohibited) were celebrated in individual dioceses, especially given that a Decretal issued by Gregory IX in 1234 limited their number to 92. Thus in the diocese of Pomesania, according to the Statutes of Bishop Johann Ryman (1411), the faithful were obliged to attend Mass 94 times a year (52 Sundays and 42 holy days of obligation).31

We have already noted that one important element of basic religious instruction within the parish was the teaching of prayers, which reflect the basic truths of the Faith.32 The contents of the Apostles’ Creed and the Our Father were undoubtedly the fundamenta fidei christianae, forming the basic expression of Christian Faith. Each Christian should know them by heart. By the early Middle

28 ED, p. 77, § 1: Ut omnes et singuli Pruteni et alii neophiti nostrae dioecesis ad ecclesiam sicut alii christiani venire teneantur. Nec sufficiat amplius, tantum duos ex illis de una tota villa ad ecclesiam mitti, vobis et vestrum singulis inungi entes et mandantes, quatenus quilibet vestrum diebus, quibus in ecclesia sua praedicaverit, hoc statutum nostrum saepius publicet et ipsos Prutenos ac neophitos moneat, ut singulis diebus dominicus et festivis, quibus expeditionibus et terrarum custodis, dominorum suorum servitiis ac alii iustis impedimentis occupati et impediti non fuerint, ad ecclesiam veniunt, missa et verbum Dei audiant et in fide proficiant ut alii christiani.

29 Ibidem.
31 PD, p. 54, § 43; Wiśniewski, Średniowieczne, pp. 46-51.
32 Skierska, Obowiązek mszalny, pp. 173-89.
Ages the practice had arisen of teaching the faithful both of these prayers in Latin and the vernacular. From the example of the Synod of Wrocław (1248) held under the papal legate to Poland, Pomorze and Prussia, Jacques de Liège, parish priests were obliged to recite together with the faithful on Sundays and high holy days the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed in the vernacular, or at least the Lord’s Prayer in Latin and the Creed in the vernacular. The canon of compulsory prayers in Prussia also included the Creed, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary. These were to be recited in the vernacular after the sermon along with the general confession. These prayers had to be known by the faithful of 12 years and over in the dioceses of Pomesania, Kulm, Samland and Ermland. Bishop Johann Kierstani of Pomesania wrote in his statutes of 1480 that priests should teach these prayers first and foremost to Poles and Prussians. A problem lay in the fact that often the priests did not know these languages and for this reason bishops ordered parish priests to employ a cleric who knew the local language. In that same diocese attention had been paid to this in a previous period so that texts of such prayers as the Our Father and Creed in the vernacular be kept in parishes to be worded secundum tenorem registri nostri, according to statutes of 1428 and 1480. One of the statutes of Bishop Heinrich Sorbom of Ermland contains an injunction on clergy to teach the Our Father, Creed and Hail Mary in prutenico, if there be Prussians in their parish. Only Bishop Siegfried von Regenstein of Samland outlines in his statutes how instruction should be given by the priest or curate

35 PD, p. 58, § 6.
37 PD, p. 56, § 1; p. 57, § 4.
38 ED, p. 78, § 2.
in the parish on Sundays and holy days. In a later undated set of statutes from the time of Bishop Michael Junge of Samland (1425-42) we read that Prussians should learn the Our Father and Creed from their parish priest, or by themselves or via an interpreter according to how they are instructed from the pulpit. The instructions repeated almost throughout the fifteenth century, for example in the statutes of the diocese of Pomesania concerning the instruction of the faithful in those three ‘canonical’ prayers might suggest the existence of more serious problems in that province. It is worth recalling that these may have been learned when people married, or were taught by their godparents. During sung Masses the faithful also had a chance to hear such prayers as the Gloria recited by the choir. The prayers learned by the faithful may also be reflected by lists of prayers mentioned in indulgence formula contained in statutes. For example, the Pomesanian Statutes of 1411 say that in order for priests and faithful in that diocese to obtain a ten-days’ indulgence they must confess and pray for the bishop’s intention, reciting three times the Lord’s Prayer and the Hail Mary. Similarly an indulgence...


41 PD, p. 52, § 27 (Pomesanian Statutes, 1411); p. 56, § 1 (Pomesanian Statutes, 1428); p. 57, Nr. 4 (Pomesanian Statutes, 1440); p. 58, § 6 (Pomesanian Statutes, 1480).


43 As in Pomesania – PD, p. 56, § 4: Item quod Gloria in excelsis, credo et pater noster (in missis cantandis) non pretermittantur, sed integre a choro cantentur.

44 PD, p. 54, § 43: Item volumus, quod in omnibus missis sine nota vel cum nota, in collectis ultimis secretis et complendis dicatur: et famulum tuum antistutem nostrum cum omnibus sibi commissis ab omni adversitate custodi. Sacerdotibus hec facientibus et laycis cum tribus oracionibus dominicis et totidiem angelicis salutacionibus Deum pro nobis deprecantibus decem dies indulgenciarum de inunctis sibi penitenciis in Domino relaxamus.
of ten days could be obtained by laymen who made their confession and took part piously in Mass. One condition was that they invoke the Holy Name of Jesus or Mary, be present at the elevation of the Host and during the Pax, bow as the words ‘And the Word became Flesh’ at the end of the reading from St John’s Gospel, beginning ‘In the beginning was the Word’ (Jn. 1:1-14). This indulgence was also granted to those who listened reverently to the Gospel or took part in a Christian burial.\textsuperscript{45} A condition for the forty days’ indulgence was participation in the daily Mass or vespers, after which, as the bells tolled the believer was to kneel and recite three times the Our Father and the Hail Mary.\textsuperscript{46} Bishop Kaspar Linke of Pomesania also dealt with indulgences in his synod statutes of 1440. Those who piously recite the Hail Mary while kneeling, and sing the \textit{Te Deum} with the versicle \textit{Benedicimus Tibi} were to obtain an indulgence of fourteen days.\textsuperscript{47} Other fourteen days’ indulgences were offered to the faithful in the diocese of Pomesania in the 1440 Statutes if they heard the Genealogy of Christ Gospel (Matt. 1.1-18) and afterwards sang solemnly \textit{O Virgo Virginum} [‘Virgin of all Virgins’] with the versicle ‘Mother and Virgin’ and the collect, \textit{Deus, qui salutis eternae}.\textsuperscript{48} In their statutes the bishops of Pomesania propagated the feast of the diocesan patron, St John the Evangelist. We find the first references to this in Johann Ryman’s statutes of 1411. Priests of the diocese were obliged to honour the patron by praying solemnly in his honour every day during vespers and the night office. The clergy were obliged to celebrate a Mass for St John’s intention every month and the faithful who took part in it reverently and thrice recited the Our Father and Hail Mary for the intention of the state, peace and the bishop could receive an indulgence of 40 days.\textsuperscript{49} In 1480 Bishop Johann Kierstani established a solemn Mass every Tuesday for St John’s intention and those who attended it were granted an indulgence of forty days.\textsuperscript{50} In general the Pomesanian diocesan statutes place

\textsuperscript{45} PD, p. 54-55, § 43b; Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne}, p. 51-52.
\textsuperscript{46} PD, p. 55, § 44 – \textit{Item volumus ut singulis diebus, finitis missis et vesperis, trina vice pulsetur campana pro pace et quicunque Christi fidelis tres dominicas orationes et totidiem salutaciones angelicas flexis genibus dixerit, XL dierum indulgenciarum de inuinctis eis penitenciis in Domino misericordialiter relaxamus.}
\textsuperscript{47} PD, p. 57, § 8; Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne}, pp. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{48} PD, p. 57, § 11; Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{49} PD, p. 54, § 43a; Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne}, pp. 50-51.
\textsuperscript{50} PD, p. 59, § 18; Wiśniewski, \textit{Średniowieczne}, p. 51.
importance on liturgy devoted to Our Lady. Apart from the instructions referring to this from the 1411 Statutes, which we have already mentioned, attention should be paid to the 1440 Statutes. These raise the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to the rank of *totum duplex* or major celebration.\(^{51}\) In another place the statutes oblige the faithful of the diocese to recite the antiphon *Mater Salvatoris* with the reponsé, *Ora pro nobis* and collect, *Concede, Misericors Deus, fragilitati nostrae.*\(^{52}\) Furthermore, legislation from Samland includes prayers to be recited in honour of St Adalbert, patron of the local church. Priests of this diocese were instructed to sing the antiphon *Sanctus Iste* during vespers and include the antiphon *Nisi granum frumenti* and the collective prayer *Domine te petimus* and the introit *De uno martyre.*\(^{53}\)

An extraordinarily essential part of the Mass on Sundays and holy days alike was the sermon. The sermon played a general role in the education of the laity, although in essence it is very difficult to assert that every parish priest was capable of meeting this requirement. The bishops of Pomesania called upon their parish clergy to learn sermons *de libro* in order to avoid various errors.\(^{54}\) In his turn, Bishop Michael Junge of Samland instructed parish priests to preach the Gospel on Sundays and holy days in the local language with extracts from the Gospel.\(^{55}\) The statute, which contains this instruction, explicitly mentions serious shortcomings in parish preaching, suggesting that the reason for such procedures on the priest’s part was a desire to please the common people.\(^{56}\) Priests in the diocese of Kulm were obliged by Bishop Johann Marienau to own books containing commentaries on the gospels and the epistles, on which basis they should teach the faithful.\(^{57}\) At the same time, however, as we can

\(^{51}\) PD, p. 56, § 1; Wiśniewski, *Średniowieczne*, p. 49.

\(^{52}\) PD, p. 56-57; Wiśniewski, *Średniowieczne*, p. 49.


\(^{54}\) This instruction was based on the Pomesanian statutes of Bishop Johann Mewe (1428) – PD, p. 56, § 2.

\(^{55}\) SD, p. 114, § 5 – *Quare volumus et mandamus, quatinus ab omnibus et singulis rectoribus ecclesiarum parochialium nostrae diocesis in singulis diebus dominicis et alis festivitatisibus ... Dei evangelium, quod in talibus diebus ac festivitatisibus legi continget, coram communitate parochianorum in vulgari praedicere allis materiis utilibus ipsum evangelium declarantibus non postergatis.*

\(^{56}\) Ibidem.

\(^{57}\) CS, p. 19 – *Zuletzt wird gesetzt, dass die Priester ihnen einige Bücher, insonderheit Auslegungen über die Evangelien und Episteln anschaffen und dem Volcke predigen sollen.*
see from the provincial statutes of the archdiocese of Riga, it was forbidden to translate certain types of book into the vernacular (theological, historical and canon-law books). This was because of possible errors in interpretation, which might on occasion lead to heresy.\textsuperscript{58} In their sermons priests should on no account present new and uncertain issues to ordinary people.\textsuperscript{59} Attention was also drawn to the fact that the process of religious instruction through sermons should take place gradually, depending on the extent to which the laity had been converted.\textsuperscript{60} Preaching in the vernacular (\textit{in vulgari}) on Sundays and holy days was an important matter. Certain problems cropped up in parishes, as in the diocese of Ermland, where because the population comprised both German and Prussian elements parish priests were obliged to work alongside Prussian chaplains. If this were not possible, a German chaplain was to preach the Gospel to Prussians. Attention was also drawn to the fact that where there was no Prussian-speaking German chaplain, parish priests were to preach to the Germans in German and have a simultaneous translation into Prussian for others, unless the latter spoke German.\textsuperscript{61} It is worth remembering that in effect on the basis of Martin V’s bull of 1426 the bishops of Ermland founded a school in Heilsberg (Lidzbark) for Prussian boys to train them for the priesthood.\textsuperscript{62}

We learn from provincial regulations issued for the archdiocese of Riga in 1428 what kinds of subject could be selected for sermons. The statute \textit{de penitenciis et remissionibus} instructs rectors to explain to the simple people and those ignorant of the law on Sundays during

\textsuperscript{58} RP, p. 99, § 50.

\textsuperscript{59} See the statutes of the provincial synod held in Elbing in 1427, in the section titled \textit{De predicacionibus}, EP, p. 79 – \textit{nullis predicatorum provincie Rigensis singularitatis sive novitatis obscuris vel altis materiis et questionibus presertim ad populum se ostendat, sub pena suspensionis ab officio predicacionis per tempus semestre}. Cf. on this matter the statutes of Bishop Michael Junge (1441) – SD, p. 114, § 4.

\textsuperscript{60} As said in the statutes of Bishop Siegfried von Regenstein of Samland – Krollmann, ‘Eine merkwürdige’, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{61} Regulations on this matter are given in Bishop Franz Kuhlschmalz (1449), ED, p. 90, § 29. Cf. The later statutes of Bishop Lukas Watzenrode (1497), which offer the same solution – ibid, p. 102-103, \textit{De predicacione verbi Dei}. Cf. Jähnig, ‘Verkündigung’, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{62} M. Borzyszkowski, ‘Szkoły diecezji warmińskiej w okresie od XIII do połowy XV w.’, \textit{Studia Warmińskie}, 2 (1963), p. 54.
Advent and Lent what breaches of Canon Law could lead to excommunication.\textsuperscript{63}

It has been noted already that annual confession in accordance to canonical requirements could also be part of the catechism.\textsuperscript{64} We recall that the faithful of four dioceses in the Teutonic \textit{Ordensstaat} in Prussia, who had reached the age of reason, were obliged to confess to their priest every year.\textsuperscript{65} Synod regulations there obliged chaplains in no way to reveal what had been confessed either by word or sign.\textsuperscript{66} The secret of the confessional was guaranteed by the instructions of the Fourth Lateran Council.\textsuperscript{67} In cases of necessity a parish priest could allow his parishioner to confess to another priest. In such exceptional situations, for example in the diocese of Pomesania, confession to a priest who was not the believer’s parish priest was possible with the permission of the bishop and without the permission of the parish priest. This regulation was implemented only as an exception.\textsuperscript{68} It should be remembered that for example in the above-mentioned Christburg Treaty of February 7 1249 Prussians were commanded to confess expressly every year to their own parish priest.\textsuperscript{69} At the same time priests who did not know the language of their flock had to hear confession with the aid of an adult interpreter.\textsuperscript{70} Parishioners who failed to fulfil their obligation to confess were banned from entering the church and denied Christian burial. It should also be stressed that not all sins could be absolved by parish clergy, since absolution from certain sins was reserved to the local bishop.

\textsuperscript{63} RP, pp. 97-98, § 48.


\textsuperscript{65} See the statutes of Bp Franz Kuhlschmalz of Ermland (1449), ED, p. 89, § 16: \textit{Item omnis fidelis, qui ad annos discretionis per venit, debetingulis annis omnia sua peccata confiteri suo curato et penitentiam inuictam peragere.}

\textsuperscript{66} PD, p. 52, § 26; SD, p. 110, § 24; CS, p. 15-16.

\textsuperscript{68} PD, p. 52, § 25.

\textsuperscript{69} PU I, No. 218: \textit{et confessiones suas ad minus semel in anno facient proprio sacerdoti.}

\textsuperscript{70} Krollmann, ‘Eine merkwürdige’, p. 36, § 4: \textit{Preterea sacerdos, qui linguam volencium sibi confiteri non noverint, non nisi per interpretem virum adultum confessionem audiant, nisi contigerit ex mortis articulo aut alia necessitate legitima alter faciendum.}
Such reservations, in the case of Pomesania applied to incest, ravishing a maiden, zoophilia, sodomy, murder, fortune-telling, blasphemy, atheism, abuse of children, insults against God and man, heresy, adultery, public and secret usury, oath-breaking, violence in a cemetery or church, parricide, violence against clergy. Given the certain restriction of access for ordinary folk to their bishop, access to absolution for such sins was severely restricted. Sometimes bishops would delegate the faculty of remitting reserved sins to a lesser member of the diocesan hierarchy. Bishop Michael Junge of Samland empowered a Teutonic Order priest to hear such confessions and grant absolution for sins usually referred to the bishop. Such agreements on the part of the bishop were often temporary and concerned only some of the sins reserved for the diocesan ordinary. This is illustrated well by an undated document issued by Bishop Johann Marienau of Kulm addressed to a parish priest in the Old Town of Toruń, who received the right to absolve certain reserved sins for one year only. The bishop reserved for his own remission sins connected with excommunication, murder and evident adultery. We should note in addition that confessors in the diocese of Kulm were prohibited from absolving the faithful of future sins, which might point to the existence of certain irregularities in this context.

Pentitentials provided indispensable assistance for the clergy hearing confessions. These handbooks listed sins and suggested possible penances. They also provide information about how confession should be carried out. They show how gradually from the fifteenth century the Ten Commandments formed the basic structure for confessions and how far there was no set structure for making confession before then. One such pentitical from the beginning of the fifteenth century, which was written almost certainly by Johann of Marienwerder (Kwidzyn), has survived from Teutonic Prussia and

71 PD, p. 53, § 37 (1411 Statute). Cf. This material with instructions in the statutes of Bishop Johann Kierstani (1480) – ibid., p. 58, § 7; and the statutes of Bishop Johann Marienau of Kulm (CS, p. 16) and Bp Heinrich Sorbom of Ermland (ED, p. 77, § 23), and the Rigan Provincial Synod of 1428 – RP, pp. 97-98, § 48.
73 Ibid., pp. 310-311.
74 CS, p. 16: Die Beicht-Väter sollen ihre Beicht-Kinder von kunfftigen Sünden nicht absolviren.
was published by Hans Westpfahl.\textsuperscript{75} In the first part of this manual explanations were given mainly for the clergy of the meaning of penance and the role of contrition or satisfaction for sins. It also mentions the role of so-called secular confession and the fact that ‘eyner in noten mag bichten vor den anderen’. In the second part an ideal confession is presented which covers the five senses, the seven cardinal sins, the Ten Commandments, and the ten acts of mercy. The content of this model confession points to the fact that confessors must not only pay attention to the penitent’s acts but also to the reasons behind them.\textsuperscript{76} Part Three contains five prayers, including one for making a good confession. In all probability this penitential provides evidence of the possible role it might have played in expanding Christian education in cases where priest made proper use of it.

An interesting issue arises as to the question of how the synod statutes were spread among the clergy and laity alike, although evidence of this appears only sparsely in our sources. We should recall that to a large degree the proper course of evangelisation depended on the efficiency in which the contents of the penitentials were passed on to the faithful. In a codex issued by the Samland bishop, Siegfried von Regenstein at the beginning of the fourteenth century we find a recommendation to clergy to copy out the statutes within three months of their being issued and then hang them up in the chancel of their church or some other public place so that, as it is written, the constant view of what is allowed and what is forbidden will gradually enshrine the rules in people’s memory.\textsuperscript{77} Obviously the issuer of the statutes had the clergy exclusively in mind in this instance, or those who knew Latin. Laymen would find out about the instructions of synod statutes certainly only on certain occasions such as when they were mentioned in a sermon and only when these instructions were relevant to them. In a codex of instruction issued more than a century later by another bishop of Samland, Michael Junge, we find similar resolutions even though the bishop set down an additional reading of the statutes for clerics during meal times and the failure to copy down the statutes in the bishop’s chancery, this time within a term


\textsuperscript{76} For a general account of changes in the meaning and form of the Sacrament of Penance, see A. Vauchez, \textit{Duchowość}, p. 144 and more broadly: A. Angenandt, \textit{Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter} (Darmstadt, 2000), pp. 630-58.

\textsuperscript{77} Krolmann, ‘Eine merkwürdige’, p. 38, § 23.
of two months, was threatened with a fine of three marks.  

Interesting information about the spread of particular regulation by local churches is provided by a codification of the Rigan Synod Statutes of 1428, which also applied to the Prussian dioceses. This states expressly that some of the statutes, especially those relating to the laity should be preached from the pulpit at various times of the year by parish clergy within the archdiocese of Riga and dioceses in Prussia alike. This referred, for example to the prohibition on work, trade and dicing on holy days, the introduction of the principle of equality in contracts of sale and purchase, forbidding laymen to act against the interests of their local church, forbidding contracts of marriage without reading the bans, the obligation for clergy to administer the sacraments without charge, the prohibition on military aid for Saracens (pagans) and Rus’ians and also a ban on counterfeiting coin.

Finally we will give a few examples, mostly on the basis of fifteenth-century synod legislation, which reveal the limited effect of two centuries of activity by the local Church in Prussia, mostly dominated by the Teutonic Order. It emerges from Bishop Michael Junge of Samland’s decree that in the fifteenth century the dark masses were still adding to a ‘new’ baptism for children who had been christened already by their parish priest, giving them different baptismal names from their original ones. This involved removing the stain of the Christian God’s baptism from their children and submitting them to their own gods. Thus, it is hard to be surprised that Prussian bore pagan names in the fourteenth century alongside

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80 Okulicz-Kozaryn, *Dzieje Prusów*, p. 487.
Christian ones. We will add that such a repeated baptism was punishable by a fine of three pounds of wax or a whipping.\textsuperscript{81} Funeral ceremonies were also duplicated.\textsuperscript{82} Also in the fifteenth century people in the Kulm diocese also regarded Transubstantiation as a charm, as we can see from the synod statutes referring to this issued by Bishop Johann Marienau of Kulm.\textsuperscript{83} The laity were also quite unsure as to what the consequences of the sacrament of marriage are, namely ‘quod Deus coniunxit, nec per se nec per alikos poterint ab invicem separari’. For they considered that if a marriage was not contracted in Church in the presence of a priest and had not been blessed by him officially, but enacted only ‘per verba de presenti’, such a formula did not oblige them to keep to the contract.\textsuperscript{84} We should also remember in addition that as late as the fifteenth century the Prussians retained the tradition of burying their dead with grave goods, often with weapons, in forests and other unconsecrated land, rather than in cemeteries. Often funeral feasts were held in church or in cemeteries to bring rest to their dead kin and friends.\textsuperscript{85} In the diocese of Samland such burials were forbidden on pain of a whipping or pecuniary fine of 3 marks.\textsuperscript{86} In that same diocese forbidden meetings and ceremonies were held in

\textsuperscript{81} ‘Articuli per Prutenos’, Jacobson, \textit{Geschichte} p. (127), No. xxxii: \textit{Item ut pueros suos per eorum plebanos baptisatos nec in fluminibus nec alias rebaptisent aut alia nomina imponant quam eis in baptismo sunt imposita sub pena trium lapidum cere vel rigide flagellacionis.} \\
\textsuperscript{82} Okulicz-Kozaryn, \textit{Dzieje Prusów}, p. 473. \\
\textsuperscript{83} CS, pp. 14-15: \textit{Sie sollen auch mit allem Fleiss verhüten, dass mit der consecrirten Hostia von bösen Leuthen Zauben getrieben werde.} \\
\textsuperscript{84} RP, p. 93, § 35. On this matter cf. the synod statute of Bp Lukas Watzenrode of Ermland (1497), \textit{de matrimonio – contrahentes vero matrimonium per verba de presenti vel futuro, carnali copula subsecuta, non possunt se invicem absolvere, vel ab invicem propria auctoritate discedere, licet per sacerdotem matrimonium in ecclesia non sit auctorisatum vel sollemni benedictione roboratum}, ED, p. 101, § 12. \\
\textsuperscript{86} ‘Articuli per Prutenos’, p. (128), No. xxxii.
Viewing this matter from the other side, we see, for example, that parish priests in the diocese of Kulm officiated at the burials, against Canon Law, in their cemeteries of people who had been excommunicated, drunkards, those who had been killed in tourneys and also usurers. In parish communities within the archdiocese of Riga in the first half of the fifteenth century various types of idolatrous practices were carried out. According to a section of the Rigan Statutes of 1428, *de reliquiis et veneracione sanctorum*, people from the area often approached the forces of Nature, especially thunder, which they regarded as a god, heavenly bodies, serpents, insects and trees, which they believed would bring them good fortune. The clergy also failed to eliminate practices, which were unacceptable to the Church such as putting those suspected of a crime to trial by ordeal (with hot iron or boiling water). Moreover, several problems arose from the custom of Prussians to performing fasts.

In summary, it is difficult not to appreciate if not the accomplishments, then at least the attempts of the local Church in Prussia in the process of Christian education and the spread of Christian ceremonies and customs in more than two centuries of introducing Christianity to the country. Thus the categorical assertion of Łucja Okulicz-Kozaryn, to the effect that the Teutonic *Ordensstaat* in Prussia was Christian only in name during the first two hundred years of its presence in Prussia, and that there can be no talk of the Christianisation of the vast masses of the population, is not correct. We should appreciate greatly the attempts to make parish clergy familiar with the role of the sacrament of penance and the various subtleties associated with it. The consideration given to understanding penance, the role of

87 Ibid., p. (127), No. xxxii.
90 RP, p. 97, § 47: *de purgacione vulgari*.
91 Witness records provide excellent examples of such changes. Here we have in mind the ‘Prussian goddesses’, which were hidden in the walls of many parish churches in Prussia and represent a very expressive element of the transformation of ideas. See the recent work of M.J. Hoffmann, ‘The Prussian transition from paganism to Christianity: material relics of the transformation of beliefs’, *Christianisation*, pp. 65-74.
contrition and attempts to make amends for sin, which we find in the early fifteenth-century Prussian penitential composed most probably by Johann of Kwidzyn, is very important. Of similar interest is the model confession this penitential offers, concerning *inter alia* the five senses, the seven cardinal sins, the Ten Commandments and the acts of mercy. This text also points to the need to interest the clergy not only in the acts of the penitent but also in the reasons behind them. It presents also a model prayer for the grace to make a good confession. We must note that this is fine material helping the clergy to hear confessions. However the question of whether this was merely the hermetic consideration of a fifteenth-century intellectual or whether these thoughts gradually filtered down to parish clergy and were put into practice by them in everyday ministry remains open. Certainly the fact that some of the issues raised here referring to the sacrament of penance and the way confession was made were also written into the Rigan provincial statutes of 1428 points first and foremost to the existence of a need for them to be put into effect more broadly. Although we know little of the education of parish clergy outside the large urban centres, there is no doubt that they included well-educated priests, with interesting book collections. An excellent example of this is provided by the curate of Mühlhausen in Natangia, who had a collection of theological, liturgical and history books. At the same time, the parish clergy had every opportunity to educate themselves further, albeit on the basis of a fifteenth-century manual by Johann Maerkelin, *Liber de instructione simplicium sacerdotum*. On occasion it is hard to fail to notice the often very elementary problems facing the parish clergy a full two hundred years after the foundation of ecclesiastical structures in Prussia. These include such issues as baptism, penance, marriage, the Liturgy of the Mass and general changes. We should also add here hatred and lack of respect for other sacraments such as Confirmation. After more than two centuries of the Church’s activity we can still observe many idolatrous practices among the local populations, although it would be hard on the basis

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94 RP, pp. 97-98, § 48: *de penitentiis et remissionibus*.
of the normative sources we have analysed to assess the scale of the spread of such phenomena. On the other hand, as we can see from the sermon delivered by Bishop Johann Marienau of Kulm in 1427, some share of the blame for such matters lies with the parish clergy themselves. In the bishop’s opinion clerics, who were ill-educated or unfit for the ministry were ordained and when these took charge of their parishes they were ignorant not only of canon law but also of the diocesan statutes. Furthermore, in their activities they were more interested in money than devotion to their flock. Thus it comes as no surprise, as we hear from Johann Marienau, that ‘Prutheni post baptismum minime in fide instruuntur’. The Church in Prussia, especially at parish level and where ethnic Prussians were concerned, certainly still had very much more to do.

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VOKIEČIŲ ORDINO NUOPELNAI PRŪSAMS ATNEŠANT EVANGELIJĄ

Pastabos iš sinodų aktų.

Santrauka

ANDRZEJ RADZIMIŃSKI

Keturių Prūsijos (Kulmo, Pomezanijos, Sembos bei Vārmės) vyskupių sinodų autorius tiria Vokiečių ordino bei vietinių dvasininkų pastangas prūsų pagonims įdiegti katalikų tikėjimą (XIII-XV a.).
