A silver, universal ring-dial, made in the Baltic state of Livonia and dated 1684, is described. The maker was a scholar-craftsman, who has not hitherto been identified as such. The dial was a gift to Generalsuperintendent Johann Fischer, sometime Prokonzler of the University of Dorpat (modern Tartu).

THE DIAL

A silver, universal ring-dial, made for Johann Fischer (1636-1705), is in a collection belonging to the National Trust of England.² This sundial consists of three principal parts, an outer meridian ring (diameter 69 mm), an inner hour ring, pivoted at the XII hour positions to the outer, and a central disk, pivoted to brackets fixed to the outer ring. The dial is signed and dated on the hour ring: ‘J. Daniel von Berthold. fec. in Liv. Åd 1584 [sic]’.

The meridian ring carries a small suspension ring on a movable clip that adjusts to the required latitude. A quadrant is inscribed on one side of the meridian ring, calibrated from 0° to 90°, together with the inscriptions: ‘Jactura temporis irreparabilis, et Nihil tempore praetio-

¹ Waddesden Manor, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England; James A. de Rothschild Collection, no. W1.142.8. There is no provenance to this dial. For a catalogue of other metal work in the Collection, see Claude E. Blair, Arms, Armour and Base-Metalwork, Fribourg, 1974.

The hour, or equinoctial ring, is divided on one side into twenty-four hours, the calibration being taken to the inside of the ring, while on the other side is engraved the signature (given above), and the inscription: ‘Der Todt ist gewiss, Ungewiss der Tag, Die Stund’ auch niemand Wissen mag. Drumb suchte Gott, Und denk dabey, Dass jede Stund die Letzte sey.’.

In the centre of the dial is a disk that has a slot in which slides a small index, with a pin-hole in it. On one side of the slot are engraved the months of the year, and on the other the corresponding zodiacal signs, constituting a declination scale. Both sides of the disk are engraved with images of the harvest of Death, and the inscriptions:


LIVONIA AND FISCHER

Livonia was at one time a separate country on the Baltic coast. In 1621 it was annexed by Sweden from Poland, and in 1654, and at the beginning of the 18th century, was the scene of further conflict between Poland, Sweden, and Russia. The province of Livonia was divided, in 1918, between the new Republics of Estonia and Latvia.²

Johann Fischer was baptised on 15 December, 1636, in Lübeck, and he died on 17 May, 1705, in Magdeburg.³ He studied at Rostock and Altdorf, and in 1673, he was appointed Superintendent of the Livonian Church by Charles XI of Sweden. He assumed the title of

³ These dates are taken from Neue Deutsche Biographie, Berlin, 1953, vol. 5 (1961), p. 189, where the date of baptism is given. The date of birth is given merely as 1636 in Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Leipzig, 1875-1912, vol. 17 (1878), p. 72.