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Christianity in Latvia in the Twentieth Century

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GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

CHRISTIANITY IN LATVIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century. The country of Latvia is located on the southeastern shore of the Baltic Sea in Northeastern Europe. Christianity was brought to this country at the end of the twelfth century. Only in the twentieth century did the Christian Church in Latvia become truly indigenous and diverse.

The Church history in Latvia began with the crusading attempts of German bishops and religious orders that brought Roman Catholicism to Latvia at the end of the twelfth century. The Catholic bishops and religious orders dominated both the ecclesiastical and political life in Latvia until the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Protestant Reformation introduced Lutheranism to the inhabitants of Latvia. The events of the Reformation triggered the Counter-Reformation that was the response of the Roman Catholic Church. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, both the Lutheran Church and Catholic Church dominated in the territory of Latvia, with Lutheranism spreading throughout the country and Catholicism concentrating primarily in Latgale, Latvia's southeastern region. Pietism, in Latvia commonly referred to as Hermhutism, was a renewal movement within the Lutheran Church. It came to Latvia in the eighteenth century and flourished for most of the nineteenth century. These three movements within the Christian Church have played a significant role in forming the character of Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century.

For most of the twentieth century the Church in Latvia has been forced to adjust to new political situations. In the history of the Church in Latvia, the twentieth century actually started in 1918 when Latvia became an independent state. From 1918-1940 different Christian denominations flourished under the legislation of the

new state. The next period in Latvian history was introduced in 1940 when, as a result of the Molotov-Rebentrop pact between Russia and Germany, Latvia was occupied by the USSR. The Church had to adjust to the new political situation that brought changes in religious legislation, as well as physical, emotional, and social repressions against Christian believers. The Soviet period in Latvia's history, as well as in Church history, lasted until 1991 when Latvia became an independent state once again. The political independence of Latvia inaugurated a new period in Church/state relations and in the development of a great variety of Christian denominations.

In this new political situation, there is a need of investigation into the ecclesiastical history of Latvia. This research is of importance for the Latvian Church in a time when it seeks its identity in a new political context. The consideration of the past and present ecclesiastical developments of the Latvian Church is important as the Church seeks to be relevant in Latvian society of the twenty-first century. The history of the Church offers many lessons that can help us to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

To my knowledge, there have been no publications about Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century that would provide a broad and interdenominational perspective. Although some work has been done to explain the developments of Christianity in the previous centuries, the examinations of more recent developments have been limited to interest in particular denomination or particular periods of time (the Church under Soviet rule in particular). Thus, a unifying perspective on the developments of the whole Christian Church in Latvia has not been available.

The history of Christianity in Latvia is an area of Church history that has not been thoroughly researched. Christianity in Latvia has not been sufficiently studied by the Latvian researchers in Latvia. The most extensive contributions to Church history of Latvia were made during the immediate pre-World War II period, as well as by Latvians in exile during and after World War II. The works of such respected

Latvian historians as A. Svabe, A. Spekke, A. Bilmanis, and the University of Latvia professor of Church history, L. Adamovics, are still valuable sources for both political and ecclesiastical history of Latvia from ancient times to 1940. During Soviet rule (1940-1991), when atheism was the official state policy, the Church was regarded as an enemy and depicted as a hostile philosophy in state supported research. There was no serious work done by Soviet historians in the area of Church history during this period. The interest in Christianity has increased dramatically since 1991, and some studies of the Christian denominations, mostly of the Catholic Church, have been published or re-printed. But there have not been any major new publications about the trends of the Christian Church in Latvia.

The primary focus of the Western authors has been an analysis of the changes that have taken place in Latvia during Soviet rule and, to a lesser degree, the first years of independence in the 1990s. The American historians have contributed to the study of the German Crusades in the twelfth century, some aspects of the Reformation and the history of such denominations as the Baptists, Methodists, The Evangelical Church, and Adventists. Yet the Western scholars also have failed to provide a broader perspective on Christianity in Latvia.

Besides academic reasons for the present research, there are my personal interests as well. Born in the 1970s, I grew up with almost no awareness of Christian faith or activity. When I became a Christian in the 1990s, I became interested in its history, particularly in Latvia, my home country. This paper is my attempt to search for my Christian roots. Though I am a Latvian from Latvia, my Christian experience has been predominantly American. Part of my Christian roots, American evangelicalism, I have discovered through my studies at the seminary and my experience in the States. This paper is an expression of my awareness of my Latvian Christian heritage. Lastly, this research is my attempt to answer those many Western people who wonder about the fate of Christianity during the Soviet years. I have

learned, and continue to learn, about many ways in which Christians continued to confess their faith in spite of their circumstances.

Considering the limitations of available research about the history of Christianity in Latvia, as well as my personal interests, the purpose of the present thesis is to identify and trace the significant developments of Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century. Its primary focus is an ecclesiastical analysis, not an analysis of theological issues. The trends that are evident in the Church in Latvia throughout the centuries are considered. These trends include the relations between Church and State (the State's treatment of the Church and the Church's attitudes and practices toward the State), developments within denominations (effective ministries, publications, educational institutions, and changes in ecclesiastical structure), and response and involvement of the indigenous people in the ministry of the Church. Though these trends do not present a complete picture of the life of the Church or of a particular denomination, they still provide insight into areas that are crucial for understanding the Christian Church in Latvia.

In Chapter 1, the historical perspective of the history of Christianity in Latvia is considered, focusing on three significant developments of the Church in Latvia from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. The Christianization process of the Latvian tribes in the period from the twelfth to the sixteenth century is discussed. Particular attention is paid to the close ties between Church and State, the Christianization process carried out by the German bishops and religious orders, and some weaknesses of the Christian outreach to the indigenous people. The spread of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation and their aftermath is considered. The influence of Pietism, or Herrnhutism, a movement within the Lutheran Church, on the faith of the indigenous people of Latvia is discussed at the end of Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, the denominational variety in the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century is demonstrated by briefly reviewing the history of such

denominations as the Russian Orthodox Church, the Old Believers, Baptists, Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Evangelical Church. The situation of these denominations in the independent state of Latvia (1918-1940) is also discussed in this part of the paper, including Church and State relations and changes within the denominations.

In Chapter 3 the Church during the years of Soviet rule (1940-1991) is discussed. The relationships between Church and State, set out in the State's legislation and practice, greatly affected the life of the Church. The changes in Church and State relations and within particular denominations in the 1980s are also discussed.

In Chapter 4 the situation of the Church in the first decade of newly independent Latvia is considered. The positive changes in Church and State relations are indicated, and important developments within denominations are discussed. Also the missionary activity of the Church and popular interest in Christianity is recognized.

There are several problems that hinder the research of the history of Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century. First, the twentieth century has come to its end very recently, or as some argue, has not ended yet. Thus, it is more difficult to distance oneself from the recent events and attempt to identify trends that have carried throughout the twentieth century Latvian Church history.

Second, the present research is based primarily on secondary sources. The reason for extensive use of secondary sources lies in the fact that most of the primary sources on the history of Christianity in Latvia are not available in the United States. The limited access to literature has also contributed to the lack of extended treatment of the Orthodox Church in Latvia from 1940-1991 and the limited discussion of such Protestant denominations as the Adventists, Methodists and the Evangelical Church. Though there are references made in the recent literature to the existence of

Pentecostal groups in Latvia, there is no published research available on the history of these groups in Latvia.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY IN LATVIA FROM THE TWELFTH CENTURY TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Christianization of Latvia from the Twelfth Century to the Sixteenth Century

Though the local tribes in Latvia first encountered the Eastern Orthodox variant of Christianity through their contacts with Russian people,¹ the beginnings of Christianization in Latvia are associated with the expansion of the Western Church. By the end of the twelfth century, the flourishing Catholic Church was attempting to subjugate the unchristianized nations at the northern and eastern periphery of Europe. The attempts of both archbishops of Hamburg and Bremen, as well as of Scandinavian bishops did not have much success at Christianizing the Baltic peoples in the eleventh century and the first half of the twelfth century.²

The Beginnings of the Christian Mission

In 1180, an Augustinian friar, Meinhard, set his foot ashore on the banks of the Daugava river at Ikskile where he constructed a church. From there missionaries

¹Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institute, 1995), 14; Ludis Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture* (Nebraska: Sejejs, 1961), 9; Julians Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā* (Riga: Rīgas metropolijas kūrīja, 1994), 34; Edgars Andersons et al., *Cross Road Country: Latvia* (Waverly, Iowa: Latvju Gramata, 1953), 272-273; A. Svabe, *Latvijas vēsture. I. daļa* (Riga: Avots, 1990), 93-94; Henry of Livonia, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James A. Brundage (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), chapters XI 7, XVI 3, XVIII 3, X 3, XIII 4. The Russian Orthodox Church did not develop a systematic mission work in the Baltic area but its ideas reached Latvia through merchants and through partial Russian dominion in northeastern territories from the second half of the tenth century. Russian Orthodoxy was not just familiar to the Latvian tribes but it was formally accepted in some northeastern regions.

²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 10.

sought converts among the surrounding Livs. In 1188, to formalize their missionary efforts, Pope Clement III confirmed Meinhard as the first bishop of Ikskile (see appendix 1). Those early missions, however, did not yield many converts because the Livs proved resistant to Christianity. Meinhard attempted to bribe the Livs by building them a castle, but, when this plan did not work, he began thinking about a crusade. In 1196, Meinhard died without converting many of the indigenous people.³

After becoming Pope in 1198, Innocent III proclaimed a crusade against the pagan Balts. Another church worker, Bertold, a Cistercian abbot from Loccum, was named the second bishop of Ikskile. He arrived in 1198 at the mouth of the Daugava river.⁴ Bishop Bertold believed that he would gain his goal faster by using arms. With the sanction of the Pope he brought the first crusaders to Riga but shortly afterwards lost his life in a fight with the Livs in 1198.⁵

The third bishop, Albert, a relative of the Archbishop of Bremen, was far more ambitious and a much better strategist than his predecessors. Before coming to the Baltic, he persuaded Innocent III to proclaim a second Baltic crusade. Thus Albert arrived at the mouth of the Daugava River in spring of 1199 with twenty-three ships and five hundred Saxon soldiers. He believed that a serious Christianizing effort required a permanent presence and territorial control. To accomplish his goals, Albert first co-opted the Liv elders in the immediate area by taking them hostage and forcing them to agree to his terms. In 1201, he began building the city of Riga close to the mouth of the Daugava near a cluster of Liv villages on the Ridzene River.

In 1202, bishop Albert transformed his military contingent into an order of knights called the Swordbrothers (Fratres Militae Templi de Livonia or the Livonian Brothers of the Sword). This military force was directly subject to him, and the

³Plakans, *Latvians*, 15.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 273.

soldiers became his vassals who oversaw the lands of the Order. The Order obtained one-third of all lands of the baptized local inhabitants for sustenance.⁶ Though the Swordbrothers fulfilled their mission relatively successfully, they suffered a major defeat at Saule (in Lithuania) in 1236 from a combined army of Lithuanians and Semigallians. The Order was nearly destroyed in this battle, but in 1237 the Swordbrothers were united with the German Order.⁷ The Baltic branch of the German Order came to be known as the Livonian Order.⁸

During the thirteenth century both the bishops and the Order were interested in acquiring more territories and Christianizing more people.⁹ For most of the time, they acted together and employed common means. As Latvian historian A. Plakans has stated, “They came with the cross and the sword.”¹⁰

Bishop Albert soon after his arrival in Ikskile, managed to subjugate the local tribes through treaties with their elders. Some submitted voluntarily, others were forced to make a treaty, but in all cases the land of the tribe became the possession of the bishopric or the Order. The new subjects were to pay taxes and formally accept Christianity.¹¹ Henricus Lettis, an eye witness of these events, testified that there was no serious preparation of people who were to become Christian.¹²

The military attacks of the Germans, conducted by the Order and endorsed by

⁶Ibid., Plakans, *Latvians*, 15.

⁷Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 63; Andrejs Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1997), 47. The German Order, founded in Jerusalem in 1189, had moved its headquarters to Prussia. It had gained a considerable experience in the crusades in the Holy Land, but now took over the effort against the pagans of the Baltic region.

⁸Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 47.

⁹For detailed account of the Christianizing of different peoples, including some treaties, see: Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 45-52.

¹⁰Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 273.

¹¹Henry of Livonia, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, chapters XXIV 3, IX 9, X 13.

¹²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 11.

the Church, were launched in all directions toward the Latvian tribes. By 1207, military action against the Livs was concluded, and was followed by the conquest of the lands of the Selonians.¹³ The second attack was directed against the Eastern Latvians-Lettgallians. The third attack was directed against the Couronians in the western territories. In 1230-1231, the Couronians together with their Semigallian allies faced a major thrust by the crusaders to the west and southwest. The thrust was successful, and much of the Couronian territory was overrun and its inhabitants Christianized.¹⁴ The fourth main thrust of German expansion was directed towards the south, to the remaining Semigallian districts. The Semigallians gave up the fight only in 1290, when the last Semigallian stronghold at Sidrabene fell. With that battle the military conquest of the Livonian territories was completed.¹⁵

By the end of the thirteenth century, the Church and the Order had carved out in the Baltic five small states: the Riga bishopric, the bishoprics of Courland, Dorpat and Osel, and the lands of the Order that together were referred to as the Livonian Confederation.¹⁶ Continuous and bitter rivalry between the Church and the Livonian Order, among the vassals who oversaw the land, and between the lords of the states was characteristic to the Confederation.¹⁷

The principal reason for their disputes was territorial control. In the thirteenth century the original formula for dividing newly acquired territories called for one-third of them to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Order and two-thirds under the control of the Church. But the principle broke down when, after the conquest of each

¹³Selonians lived in the eastern parts of Kurland and western areas of Semigallia. Lettgallians inhabited Latgale, and Couronians lived in Kurland. See appendix 1.

¹⁴Plakans, *Latvians*, 16-17.

¹⁵Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 273-274; Plakans, *Latvians*, 17-18.

¹⁶Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 47.

¹⁷Plakans, *Latvians*, 18.

indigenous people, exceptions were made to the rule. As a result of the exceptions, the Order controlled far more territory than the Church.¹⁸ The political and military action between the Order and the bishops ended in 1526 when all the Livonian bishops recognized the authority of the Master Pletenberg of the Livonian Order.¹⁹ Soon after, during the Livonian War (1558-1583), the last Master of the Livonian Order, Gotthard Kettler, signed a treaty with Sigismund II Augustus of Poland in 1561 becoming the latter's vassal.

The Christianization Process

Along with the ongoing political and military activities in the Livonian Confederation, the Christianization process continued. Historian A. Plakans describes the process as being not only a matter of beliefs but also of “institutions, such as parishes, congregations, clergy, places of worship and housing for the clergy, and formalized contributions from the congregations. There were also new forms of control: rules on admitting converts to the church, regulations about marriages with close kin, required attendance at worship, the manner and frequency with which sacraments were taken, and rules about burials.”²⁰ Latvian Church historian L. Adamovics estimates that by the end of the fifteenth century, outside the city of Riga there were some 70 congregations.²¹ Each congregation had its church building and a rector who was nominated by the bishop and approved by the landowner, the patron

¹⁸Ibid., 18-19. By the mid-fourteenth century, the Livonian Order had become the largest landholder in the Livonian Confederation. It controlled about 67,000 square kilometers of land; the ecclesiastical lands contained only about 41,000 square kilometers. The largest church state was the Riga archbishopric, which controlled about 18,000 square kilometers. The Courland bishopric was next, with control over about 4,500 square kilometers. The lands of the Order were in turn divided into some forty smaller districts, each governed by a vassal.

¹⁹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 10.

²⁰Plakans, *Latvians*, 21.

²¹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13; Zanis Karlsons, *Ordēna laikmets Latvijā* (Grand Haven: AKA/ Raven, 1976), 51.

of a local church. The needs of a rector were met by the income from land that was designated for his use though its size was not equal in all congregations.²²

The historians are not certain about the role of laity in church activities. Some historians suggest that the activity of laity was limited to keeping the rector's house and collecting donations while others insist that besides collecting donations, lay people also provided bread and wine for sacraments.²³

The sacraments took place in the church building but other activities were held in smaller chapels that were dedicated to patron saints. The churches were also dedicated to their patron saints. Doma Church in Riga was dedicated to St. Mary (Mara). St. George (Juris) was the patron of the Swordbrothers and there was also a hospital and a convent in Riga that were dedicated to him. St. Jacob's church, originally built outside the walls of Riga was designed for the countryfolk. St. Peter was the patron saint of the city of Riga and his church was the citizens' (German) church.²⁴

The work of the Church was also carried out by the members of religious orders. Bishop Albert reorganized the Augustinian order according to the Premonstratensian rule.²⁵ The main purpose of these monks was preaching, spreading the faith among non-believers, and promotion of science, such as agriculture.²⁶ In the Baltic area, the Cistercians,²⁷ Dominicans,²⁸ and Franciscans²⁹ also were active.

²²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13.

²³Ibid., Karlsons, *Ordeņa laīkmets Latvija*, 52.

²⁴Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 12-13.

²⁵John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. VIII (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1894), 509. Premonstratensians were a monastic order founded by St. Norbert of Cleves at Premontre, France about 1120, to restore the discipline of the regular canon that had greatly deteriorated. In the beginning, they had a strict rule of poverty.

²⁶Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 42.

²⁷ Ibid., 41. Cistercians were a monastic order, founded in 1098 in Cîteaux by Father Robert

The first Cistercian monastery, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the protector of sea travelers, was built by bishop Albert. Located at the mouth of the Daugava river, it allowed Albert to gain full control over Daugava navigation. The Daugavgrīva monastery became a model farm as the monks were developing rather sandy soil. They also built a mill, created fish ponds and developed irrigation. In the second half of the thirteenth century a Cistercian nunnery was also founded in Riga. Later it was named after Mary Magdalen, and a church was built bearing the same name.³⁰

The first Dominican monastery was built in Riga in 1234, and for the next 300 years the Dominicans were a constituent part of the religious life of medieval Livonia. Their monastic institutions were closed and destroyed in the violence that accompanied the introduction of Lutheranism to the Baltic lands.³¹ The Franciscans established a monastery in Riga in the 1230s. By 1500 there were some seven Franciscan monasteries in Livonian territory, but by the 1560s, all had been closed or demolished.³²

Both the Dominicans and the Franciscans made great contributions to the conversion of the people. The monks were travelling around, seeking the peasants out

of Molesme. Their monasteries were built in remote places and their main occupation was land cultivating and other physical jobs.

²⁸Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 55; Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Vol. I. The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation.*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), 304-305. Dominicans were a mendicant monastic order, founded by St. Dominic in 1215 in Toulouse, France. Also called the Order of Preachers, it came to be known for study, preaching and teaching.

²⁹Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 302-304; Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 67. Franciscans were a mendicant monastic order, founded by St. Francis of Assisi in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Franciscan order was known for preaching, singing, begging and rejection of the need for study.

³⁰Alfred Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays* (Washington, D.C.: Latvian Legation, 1945), 20; Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vesture senajā Livonijā*, 41; Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 69.

³¹Plakans, *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, 55.

³²*Ibid.*, 67.

in their homes and preaching, teaching, and healing the sick. They were especially noted for their preaching in the indigenous language. Monasteries also established and supported hospitals, shelters, libraries, and schools.³³

The Involvement of the Indigenous People

The indigenous people were more involved in the life of the Church in cities than in rural areas. It was especially true in Riga, the center of spiritual life. There the Latvian servants, artisans and craftsmen constituted about one-third of the population. Their participation in trade-unions also required participation in certain church activities. Some trade-unions built and maintained altars to their patron saints in the churches.³⁴

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Christian faith of the indigenous inhabitants of Livonia was described as unstable, and they did not appear to be true believers. Until the sixteenth century, in the official Church documents the Latvians were referred to as new believers. Historian L. Adamovics explains such references by the fact that Latvians had been Christianized recently and were not established in their faith.³⁵ The local population continued to practice their old customs and pagan cults. The washing off of the baptism that was described by Henricus Lettis, and the postponing of confirmation until sickness or death was common. Belief in pagan deities, superstition, divination, feeding the dead, and stealing the bride, and other customs continued to be widespread among the Latvian people.³⁶

The Catholic Church responded to this adherence to paganism by using some

³³Karlsons, *Ordēna laikmets Latvija*, 52-53; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13.

³⁴Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13-14.

³⁵Ibid., 14.

³⁶Ibid.; Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 275.

of the pagan traditions for its benefit. In the pagan places of worship and graveyards, churches and chapels were built and crosses erected. The functions of many home and nature spirits were transferred to different Christian saints and angels. The name of the pagan God, *Dievs*, was used to address the Christian God. Family rites were transformed into Christian baptism, marriage and funeral. The rituals that did not contradict Christian faith were preserved. The annual celebrations were tied in with the Christian calendar year. The sacral vocabulary, borrowed from Russian language already before the arrival of the Catholic Church in Latvia, was maintained, and more Christian words were added to it describing new realities of Catholic faith.³⁷

The Weaknesses of the Catholic Mission

One of the main weaknesses of the Catholic mission from the perspective of the indigenous people had to do with their lack of knowledge of the indigenous language and lack of desire to learn it. It appeared that the newly established congregations suffered from a lack of members of the clergy, especially of those who spoke indigenous languages.³⁸ Already in 1198, Pope Innocent III, anticipating this problem, gave the order that the people of Vidzeme were to be taught the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed in their language.³⁹ Historians suppose that essential religious texts, hand-written in Latvian language, existed already before the Reformation but they were destroyed in many wars. Apart from this, the services of the Catholic Church were mainly conducted in Latin; the clergy did not find it

³⁷Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 9, 11; Karlsons, *Ordēna laikmets Latvijā*, 55-56; Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 33.

³⁸Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13; Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 274-275.

³⁹Janis Andrupis and Vitauts Kalve, *Latvian Literature* (Stockholm: M. Goppers/ Zelta Abele, 1954), 47-48.

necessary to take an interest in the languages of Christianized peoples.⁴⁰ As Latvian historian Z. Karlsons puts it, “they did not attempt to learn Latvian language, to understand the spirit of their new fold.”⁴¹ The lack of interest in communicating with the local people indicates the lack of concern about their faith and its understanding. Baptism remained an outward act without any internal changes required.⁴²

Some Latvian historians believe that there were priests, particularly in rural areas, who came from the middle of the indigenous people and were educated abroad, in Riga, or in monasteries. Still, at the end of the Middle Ages, the Church in Livonia was dominated by foreigners, mostly by Germans. The efforts to educate Latvian priests were insufficient.⁴³

There were also problems raised by the conduct of the Catholic clergy. They were charged with being greedy (the reason to obtain as large a congregation as possible) and with immoral behavior (keeping concubines).⁴⁴ Though the Popes continually reminded the bishops and the Order to take care of new converts and not to oppress them, these orders often were not followed. The members of the Order in particular were known for their cruelty toward people in their lands, and their oppression which led many away from Christianity.⁴⁵ The more widespread reaction

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Karlsons, *Ordena laikmets Latvija*, 50.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 43; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13; Karlsons, *Ordena laikmets Latvija*, 50.

⁴⁴Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 13; Karlsons, *Ordena laikmets Latvija*, 50-51.

⁴⁵Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 11; Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 273-74; Vaivods, *Kristīgas baznīcas vēsture senajā Livonijā*, 65, 82-83. Vaivods sums up fourteen violations conducted by the Order that were stated in a bull by Clemens V in 1309. They revealed the cruelty of the members of the Order to pagans, new converts and even the bishops. Andersons relates one of the incidents. In 1299 two Semigallian ambassadors appeared before Pope Boniface VIII in Rome with complaints against the barbarism of the Livonian Order. In 1312, Pope Clement V received the same kind of complaints from the Archbishop of Riga, and he excommunicated the Order of Livonia.

of the indigenous people to this oppression was hatred toward foreign lords and priests.⁴⁶

The Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and Their Aftermath

Both the Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation greatly influenced the future of Christianity in Latvia. As a result of events taking place in the sixteenth century, Lutheranism came to dominate most of Latvia--Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme, while Latgale under the Polish rule remained Catholic (see appendix 1). Throughout these changes, both Lutheranism and Catholicism became more organized as denominations. Their ministry to the local population continued.

The Reformation

There have been many differences among historians (particularly Latvians of Lutheran and Catholic convictions) in evaluating the Reformation in Livonia because of their denominational ties. Protestant historians have emphasized the positive influence of the Reformation on the spiritual freedom of people. Catholic historians, on the other hand, have often considered the Reformation as an attack against the Church to decrease its power.⁴⁷

Historians have mentioned various reasons for the spread of the Reformation in Livonia. Some pointed out the corruption of the Catholic Church and its priests.⁴⁸ Many believers in Livonia, as in Germany, were not satisfied with the extreme

⁴⁶Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 11.

⁴⁷Valdis Mezezers, *The Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic: and Its Outreach into America and Elsewhere in the World* (North Quincy, Mass.: Cristopher, 1975), 40.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

attention paid to conducting rituals, nor with some teachings and practices of the Church, such as selling the dividends. The immorality of the priests was also a well-known factor. Some historians stressed the political and material interests of the vassals of the bishop and the Order who had gained more control over the land they oversaw, and the German merchants who controlled the life in the cities. They were attempting to gain greater political independence while the Church was interested in the centralization of power.⁴⁹ Others ascribed to the Reformation the sincere religious interests of pastors who were taken by the reforming ideas of Erasmus and Luther. These ideas demanded a return to the Bible, as well as the rejection of both the infallibility of the pope and the use of indulgences. The new teaching of salvation by faith alone captured many Catholics.⁵⁰

Livonia became the first land outside Germany in which Lutheranism gained ground and gained it fast. The ideas of Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses (1517) reached Riga late in 1521. Andreas Knopken (ca.1468-1539), who some historians named the "Reformer of Livonia,"⁵¹ arrived there in 1517, but soon he returned to Germany. There he was introduced to the humanistic teachings of Erasmus and to Luther's reforming writings. In 1521, carrying a letter of recommendation from Phillip Melanchthon, he returned to Riga. As pastor of St. Peter's Church, he preached evangelical sermons and lectured on Paul's letter to the Romans.⁵²

In 1524-1526 a more radical movement broke out among the citizens of

⁴⁹Fridis Zalitis, *Latvijas vesture vidusskolam* (Riga: Valters un Rapa, 1937; reprint, Riga: Zvaigzne, 1991), 101 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁵⁰Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 47, 49.

⁵¹*Luther und Luthertum in Osteuropa: Selbstdarstellungen aus der Diaspora und Beitrage zur theologischen Diskussion* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 357.

⁵²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 15; John C. Wohlrabe, Jr., "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," *Concordia Journal* 11, no. 3 (May 1985): 84; Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 45; David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492-1772* (London: Longman, 1990), 82-83.

Riga.⁵³ Another leader of the Reformation, Sylvester Tegetmeyer (d.1552),⁵⁴ a pastor of St. Jacob's Church in Riga, incited the people to storm various churches, removing and destroying altars and statues. Violence spread in other cities of Livonia and caused German landowners, bishops and the Order to unite to limit the movement of the Reformation. After these events, the radical expressions of the Reformation in Livonia ceased.⁵⁵

Though the Reformation did not radically change the political situation in Livonia, the political powers attempted to use it for their own benefit. The city of Riga, controlled by German merchants, as well as many of the vassals who oversaw the land outside the cities, supported the ideas of the Reformation to express their opposition to both the bishop and the Order. The Germans of Riga expressed their support first of all by appointing Knopken and Tegetmeyer as pastors against the will of the bishop of Riga. Later, the fear of peasant uprisings forced the vassals to side with the greater landowners, the Order and the bishops, but the citizens of Riga remained on the side of the Reformation. Pletenberg, the Master of the Order, gave the city the right to remain Lutheran in 1525.⁵⁶ In 1554, the Landtag of Valmiera granted religious freedom to the inhabitants of Livonia that was supposed to put an end to political rivalry. But the political changes that took place in 1561, subjecting most of Livonia to Polish rule, interrupted these plans.⁵⁷

⁵³Zalitis, *Latvijas vesture vidusskolam*, 101-102. The reason for violence was that the German citizens of Riga were upset by the gossip that spread, saying that monks of one of the Catholic monasteries in Riga had asked the Pope to curse the city.

⁵⁴Werner O. Packull, "Sylvester Tegetmeier, Father of the Livonian Reformation: A Fragment of His Diary," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 16, no. 4 (1985): 343-356.

⁵⁵Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 84; Plakans, *Latvians*, 31; Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 275; Walther Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1954), 17; Zalitis, *Latvijas vesture vidusskolam*, 102.

⁵⁶Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 15.

⁵⁷In 1561, Latgale, Vidzeme, and Kurzeme became part of Catholic Poland.

The Protestant movement in Livonia was concentrated only in major cities, among the German nobility, and among the German clergy.⁵⁸ By the middle of the sixteenth century, Lutheranism was the religion of the majority of the ruling class.⁵⁹ Latvians were actively involved in the Reformation only in Riga, where in 1524, the first Latvian Lutheran congregation was established. Services in Latvian languages were held also in St. Peter's and St. Jacob's Churches, and St. George's shelter.⁶⁰

The events of the Reformation had almost no influence on Latvian population in the countryside. Some historians have suggested that the new faith might have spread to the countryside through fairs and markets that brought peasants to towns.⁶¹ Formally, all the Latvian peasants whose landlords were converted to Lutheranism were Lutherans, after the principle *cujus regio ejus religio* (whose rule, his religion).⁶² Outside Riga it is not possible to speak about Latvian churches, only about separate services.

Thus most of the population of Livonia remained rather passive and indifferent during the initial events of the Reformation. Not until 1526 was a noticeable part of the Livonian population acquainted with the Protestant movement, and not until the 1530s did the Lutheran doctrine penetrate from the towns to the countryside and became widely disseminated.⁶³

⁵⁸For the discussion of the historians' evaluation of the role of Germans in the Reformation in Riga, see Egil Grisliis, "Recent Trends in the Study of the Reformation in the City of Riga, Livonia," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 7, no. 2 (1976): 145-169.

⁵⁹Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 84.

⁶⁰Plakans, *Latvians*, 39; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 16; Svabe, *Latvijas vēsture*, 153.

⁶¹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 17.

⁶²Plakans, *Latvians*, 31; Kirchner, *Rise of the Baltic Question*, 18; Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 51.

⁶³Kirchner, *Rise of the Baltic Question*, 18; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 16.

The Counter-Reformation

Roman Catholicism still remained part of the religious landscape of Livonia. The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation came to Latvian territories in the second half of the sixteenth century when Livonia came under the control of Poland, which supported the Catholic Church.

The Counter-Reformation was particularly successful in Latgale that was under Polish control from 1561 until 1772, and in Vidzeme, controlled by Poland from 1561 to 1629. Re-Catholization was ordered and supported by the rulers of Poland. The renewed Catholic bishopric of Livonia was successful in its efforts of re-Catholization as more and more people and congregations identified themselves as Catholics. Church buildings were given back to Catholics and so were the monasteries and nunneries. Among the most active Catholics were Oto Schenking who was appointed to the position of bishop, and Ertman Tolksdorf who was highly respected by the peasantry. In 1584 a Jesuit college was established in Riga. The influence of the Jesuit Order grew as priests traveled vast areas preaching, giving sacraments, fighting pagan beliefs and traditions, as well as attracting people by charity, blessings and visual effects. The monks also attempted to learn local languages and to seek out peasants at their homes.⁶⁴ Historian A. Plakans suggested that by the end of the sixteenth century the number of Catholic congregations exceeded the number of Lutheran ones.⁶⁵

Other parts of Livonia were also affected by the attempts of the Counter-Reformation, but to a smaller degree. Catholic churches were built in some cities in Kurzeme and Zemgale (Jelgava, Kuldiga, and Liepaja), and a Jesuit college established in Jelgava. Some fifteen congregations in Kurzeme converted to

⁶⁴Svabe, *Latvijas vesture*, 159, 168; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 18-19.

⁶⁵Plakans, *Latvians*, 38; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 18. In 1613 in Vidzeme, including Estonian territories, there were 48 Catholic congregations with twelve priests and only eight Lutheran pastors (in Cesis, Allazi, Araisi, Burtņieki and Gaujiena in Latvian lands).

Catholicism.⁶⁶ The city of Riga proved to be the most resistant to the Counter-Reformation. The resistance to Catholicism was expressed in Riga in 1584-1589 when the so called *Kalendaru nemieri* took place there after Pope Gregory XIII introduced the new calendar in Catholic lands.⁶⁷ Thus the Catholic Church successfully reestablished its presence in Latgale, while in other parts of Livonia Lutheranism remained the dominant Christian faith.

After the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Lutheran Church was officially established in Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme while Latgale was a Catholic land. After the Reformation and Counter-Reformation events, both Lutheran and Catholic Churches continued to expand their presence in the territory of Latvia. Their main efforts were directed toward developing church organization and centralization, and toward ministry to the local population.⁶⁸

The Lutheran Church

Due to the political situation, the Lutheran Church in Kurzeme and Zemgale region, and Vidzeme remained separated. In both areas, the Lutheran Consistory was established as the higher authority of the Lutheran Church. The Consistory of the Church in Kurzeme and Zemgale was subject to the local ruler, and in Vidzeme, to a board of landowners.

Two kinds of congregations were widespread. The patron of so called *krona* congregations was the ruler of the land. The patron of so called private or free churches was the local landowner who was sanctioned by the ruler to have the rights

⁶⁶Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 19.

⁶⁷Ibid., 18; Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period*, 92-93.

⁶⁸Plakans, *Latvians*, 65-66.

of a patron. The private congregations dominated in Kurzeme and Zemgale while the majority of the congregations in Vidzeme remained under state control.

The Lutheran Church continued to struggle with the need for pastors, especially during the post-war periods. Many people came from abroad for a pastor's job was well paid in these lands, particularly in Kurzeme and Zemgale. Soon pastors' families came into being where a son would take over his father's work or where the new pastor would marry the previous pastor's daughter. There were still many pastors who did not know Latvian language, although native Latvians were also admitted into ministry.⁶⁹

The situation of the Lutheran Church changed during the first part of the nineteenth century under Russian political rule. In 1819, the Tsar named a bishop for the Lutherans in the Russian Empire with his seat in St. Petersburg, placing all the Lutheran churches under his direction. Also, a Consistory was created that supervised Lutheran religious matters and clergy. The Consistory was subject to both the bishop and the Ministry of the Interior, and through it the government was able to exert influence over the Lutheran Church. Thus, the Lutheran church in Latvia lost its independent character. Like other non-Orthodox churches in Russia, it became a "tolerated church."⁷⁰

During the first part of the nineteenth century, a law was issued which prohibited Lutheran pastors to minister to members of the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, the law stipulated that a non-Orthodox person who married an Orthodox Christian had to pledge to baptize and raise their children in the Orthodox faith.⁷¹ This law played a crucial role during the second half of the nineteenth century

⁶⁹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 24, 27, 31; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 85.

⁷⁰Edward C. Thaden, ed., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 121; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 42.

⁷¹Thaden, *Russification*, 122.

when mass conversion to Russian Orthodoxy and later a return to Lutheranism took place among the peasants. The dilemma of the pastors, as one historian put it, was whether to “refuse sacraments to those desiring them on genuine religious grounds and thereby be derelict in their pastoral duties, or give the sacraments and thereby be in violation of the law of the land.”⁷²

Since most of the Lutheran clergy decided to minister to those desiring to reconvert, the state laws were enforced against them. The world-wide Evangelical Alliance (founded in 1846) whose goal was to help the victims of religious persecution, became involved in the situation, and the Tsar ordered the legal action against Lutheran pastors to be suspended.⁷³

The Catholic Church

Meanwhile the Catholic Church in Latgale under the control of Poland was flourishing, and the remains of Lutheranism were almost completely destroyed. The city of Daugavpils was established as the residence of the bishop and the center of spiritual life. In the village of Aglona, a Dominican monastery was built in the beginning of the eighteenth century, which housed the icon of Mary, and gradually it became the new center of spiritual life in Latgale. The Catholic bishopric in Latgale was reorganized under Russian political rule and, after 1798, did not have its own bishop.

The monks continued their work in Latgale until the 1860s. Jesuits organized their work around Daugavpils, and Dominican monks chose the village of Pasiene as their base in 1694. The monks worked among the common people as missionaries

⁷²Ibid., 147.

⁷³Ibid., 147-148.

fighting pagan beliefs and establishing churches.⁷⁴ After the Bull of Clement XIV in 1773, the activities of Jesuit missionaries were limited and in the beginning of the nineteenth century they were banished from the Russian Empire.⁷⁵ Few Dominicans remained in Latvia at the end of the nineteenth century.

Religious Writings

Both Lutherans and Catholics continued to seek ways to reach the Latvian population, which never gave up its pagan beliefs and rituals. One of the most effective ways for sharing the Christian faith came to be religious writings translated from other languages (Polish in Latgale, and German in other territories).⁷⁶ For Lutherans, translations were a response to Luther's requirement to use vernacular languages. Although most of the Latvian peasants could not read, they could listen to such texts as catechisms, sermons and songs read to them in their native tongue.⁷⁷ The books in Latvian also provided Lutheran clergy with means for learning the language of their parishioners.

The first printed book in the Latvian language was *Cathechismus Catholicorum*, a Jesuit publication, translated by Peter Canisius (1521-1597) and printed in 1585 in Vilnius (Lithuania). It was followed a year later by the Lutheran handbook and catechism *Enchiridion*, published in Königsberg (Germany).⁷⁸

⁷⁴Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 30-31, 50.

⁷⁵Ibid., 50.

⁷⁶Ibid., 28, 35. Bilingualism and trilingualism of the first translators and authors is discussed in Velta Ruke-Dravina, *The Standardization Process in Latvian: 16th century to the Present* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 25-26. For extensive discussion of the characteristics of the religious writings see O. Čakars, A. Grigulis, M. Losberga, *Latviešu literatūras vēsture: No pirmsakumiem līdz 19. gadsimta 80. gadiem* (Rīga: Zvaigzne, 1987), 19-121.

⁷⁷Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period*, 93; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 85.

⁷⁸Kirby, *Northern Europe*, 94; Plakans, *Latvians*, 39-40; Aleksis Rubulis, *Baltic Literature: A Survey of Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre

The first publications were followed by many others. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the total number of new titles in Latvian was almost sixty.⁷⁹ The most significant works in the seventeenth century were those composed by German Lutheran pastor Georgius Mancelius (1593-1654). His handbook *Vade mecum* (1631), the first Latvian dictionary *Lettus* (1638), and his sermons laid the foundations of Latvian prose style.⁸⁰ Christopherus Fureccerus (1615-1685) was the first to introduce verse convention into Latvian poetry that made songs and hymns more pleasing to the ears of Latvians.⁸¹ The first author of Latvian descent, Janis Reiters (1632-1695) was an active translator of the Lord's Prayer (into 40 languages) and participated in Bible translation as well.⁸²

The greatest achievement of this period was the translation of the Bible that was published in 1687 under Swedish rule and with the support of Sweden's King Charles XI. The translation was done by a German Lutheran pastor Ernst Gluck (1651-1706) with the assistance of others, from 1685-1691.⁸³ One of the Latvian historians assessed the importance of this translation saying that "the new translation (there had been earlier translations of individual passages and chapters) demonstrated that all the biblical imagery and ideas could be rendered into Latvian which had been

Dame Press, 1970), 114; Janis Andrup and Vitauts Kalve, *Latvian Literature*, 50-53. Some historians suggested that there were other Latvian texts published as early as the 1520s. Those could have been catechisms and other short religious writings but their copies have not been preserved. Rubulis, Andrup and Kalve suggested that the first Latvian text is the Lord's Prayer quoted in the chronicle of the Dominican friar Simon Grunau between 1526 and 1531.

⁷⁹Plakans, *Latvians*, 57.

⁸⁰Andrup and Kalve, *Latvian Literature*, 57-62; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznicas vesture*, 25-26.

⁸¹Andrup and Kalve, *Latvian Literature*, 62-65; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznicas vesture*, 26.

⁸²Andrup and Kalve, *Latvian Literature*, 66-70.

⁸³Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 69-70; Andrup and Kalve, *Latvian Literature*, 70-73; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznicas vesture*, 28-29.

held to be an unpromising peasant language.’’⁸⁴

Like Lutherans, the Catholic Church was encouraging the translation of religious texts into local language. In Latgale the local language was the Latgalian dialect of the Latvian language. Catholic hymnals, catechisms and a collection of epistles as well as an alphabet primer were published beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century. Among Catholic authors, the greatest contribution was made by the Jesuits. Juris Elgers, a Latvian Jesuit, translated *Religious Hymns* in 1621, *Gospels* in 1672 and a Polish-Latin-Latvian dictionary in 1683. Mikelis Rots, another Jesuit, published four books, among them translations from the Old and New Testaments.⁸⁵

The tradition of translation was continued in the following centuries by both non-Latvians and Latvians. During the eighteenth century the religious texts of the first Latvian authors were circulating in handwritten copies and printed publications. By the beginning of the nineteenth century secular literature was published, and it came to compete with the religious texts.⁸⁶

The Faith of the Indigenous People

Two reasons brought about slow change in the attitude of the Latvian peasants to the Christian faith. One of them was the longlasting presence of Christianity in Latvia supported by the organization of the Church where Latvians could participate at least minimally. The other reason was the spread of religious texts among the increasingly literate population.⁸⁷ Through these two channels Christianity was

⁸⁴Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 69.

⁸⁵Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 30-31, 50; Rubulis, *Baltic Literature*, 114.

⁸⁶Julians Vaivods, *Baznīcas vēsture Kurzeme XIX un XX gadsimtos* (Rīga: Rīgas metropolijas kūrīja, 1994), 33-34, 326-332; O. Čakars, A. Grigulis, M. Losberga, *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*, 111-113; Plakans, *Latvians*, 67-68.

⁸⁷Ludis Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 35. By the end of the eighteenth century,

gradually affecting the lives and faith of the Latvians. Their pagan beliefs and practices, though prohibited by various laws of the Churches,⁸⁸ were still part of their lives. The Churches were constantly fighting against immorality. The efforts of the Churches were to some degree successful. At the end of the seventeenth century Latvian peasants conformed to the requirements of both the Lutheran and Catholic Churches at least in the outward expressions (church attendance, sacraments, baptism, etc.) of faith.⁸⁹ In the eighteenth century, almost every household owned a hymnal or Bible, and the importance of knowing catechism was emphasized. Historians concluded that by the middle of the nineteenth century Christianity appeared to have taken root among the Latvians. The participation in the Church appeared to be prompted by inward desire, not outward force.⁹⁰ The results of the census of 1897 testify to this conclusion. In Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme and Latgale together there were 1,140,173 Lutherans, out of them 1,009,994 were Latvians. There were 286,085 Catholics in Latgale (214,790 Latvians), and many people reported that “Catholic” denoted their nationality.⁹¹

The Spread of Pietism in Latvia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

After the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Lutheranism increasingly dominated in most parts of Livonia, except for Latgale, the south-eastern region of Latvia, which remained predominantly Catholic (see appendix 1). Through Pietism, a

about 60 percent of the peasants were literate.

⁸⁸For the specific laws, see Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 28, 25, 34.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 28, 31, 34.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 35, 45; David Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia* (Lansing, Ill.: D. Krueger, 1984), 4.

⁹¹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 42, 50.

movement within the Lutheran Church that flourished in Latvia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Christian faith finally spoke to Latvian hearts and lives.

Pietistic teachings made their way to Latvia through Moravian missionaries. The Moravians, also called the Herrnhuters or Brethren, came to Latvia from Saxony where they had found refuge on the estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, that was transformed into a village called Herrnhut. Moravians were the remnant of the Hussite church of Bohemia that, after the martyrdom of John Huss (1415), attempted to preserve the spirit of his teachings in Bohemia and Moravia. In 1722, a group of the Moravians was welcomed by Count Zinzendorf,⁹² who saw them as “a body of soldiers for Christ, to advance His cause at home and abroad --a new Protestant monasticism without vows of celibacy--but bound to their Lord by daily prayer and worship.”⁹³

The Moravians started to arrive in Latvia in the late 1720s preaching the importance of personal religious experience.⁹⁴ Soon Valmiera in Vidzeme became one of the most important centers of Pietism. General Nikolai von Hallert and his wife, Magdalen Elizabeth, friends of the German Pietist August Herman Francke (1663-1727) and Count Zinzendorf, owned property in Valmiera. They welcomed Christian David, one of the most active Moravians in Latvia, and later other Moravian missionaries to their estate. In 1736, Count Zinzendorf visited Latvia to see his friends and to observe a rapidly growing ministry work.⁹⁵ Two years later, in 1738, a teachers’ seminary was founded by the von Hallerts on their property to educate local

⁹²For discussion of the relations the Moravians and Count Zinzendorf, see: Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 102-108.

⁹³Wilston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959), 450.

⁹⁴Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 115-116; Plakans, *Latvians*, 66.

⁹⁵Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 64-67; Hamilton, J. Taylor and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum. 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, Pa: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church of America, 1967), 99.

men as teachers and religious leaders.⁹⁶ The following year, 1739, became a time of religious awakening in Vidzeme. By the end of the eighteenth century, the number of the brothers and sisters was 5,000.⁹⁷

The success of the Pietistic awakening was disturbed by a governmental order of Elizabeth I of Russia in 1743. Under the pressure of the Lutheran Church, she prohibited Pietistic teaching and closed the worship meetings and all the dwelling places of the Herrnhuters. Though soon after that the German Brethren started to leave Latvia, the movement continued to grow. In 1770, the superintendant J. Lange put an end to the persecutions of the Brethren in Vidzeme. It prompted the growth of the Brotherhood, and, at the end of the eighteenth century, there were already about 10,000 Brethren in Vidzeme.⁹⁸

In 1817, the Tsar Alexander I granted the Moravians freedom of action in his "Letter of Mercy." It gave a new impetus to the growth of the movement among the Latvians. In 1843, their number was estimated to be 25,000 to 30,000 people.⁹⁹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the movement started to decrease. On the one hand, it was the result of increased activity of the Lutheran Church, which saw the Moravians as its rival in the battle for the hearts of the Latvians. Though originally the Lutheran Church had little success controlling the movement, after some time the Brethren gave up their habits and organization. On the other hand, the members of the movement began to exhibit a spirit of pride and self-righteousness,

⁹⁶Ludis Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi* (Latviesu Ev.-Lut. Baznīca Amerika, 1978), 67-68; G. Straube, "Vidzemskiye Gerngutskiye Bratskiye Obschiny," in *Pravoslaviye v Latvii: Istoritsheskiye ocherki, b 2-x tomax*, vol. 2, ed. A. V. Gavriljin (Riga: Balto-Slavyanskoye Obshchestvo kulturnovo razvitiya i sotrudnichestva, 1993), 30-31.

⁹⁷Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 72; Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 115.

⁹⁸Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 74; Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 74; Alekandrs Veinbergs, "Baznīca un Latviesu tauta," in *Baznīca un draudze: Rakstu krājums arhibīskapa Dr. K. Kundzina godināšanai* (Lincoln, Neb.: Augstums Printing Service/ Sejejs, 1966), 220.

⁹⁹Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 90-91.

immorality and narrow-mindedness. The movement started to take on the characteristics of a sect.¹⁰⁰

Though Moravians were a movement within the Lutheran Church, their relationship with it was complex. Initially, the Moravians were supported by the Lutheran Church and local pastors, who insisted that increased peasant piety was a positive thing because it would encourage the peasants' obedience. They could not deny the high morality and work ethic of the Brethren peasants.¹⁰¹ But the increased attendance of the peasants at the Moravian meetings began to look like opposition to the established Lutheran Church. Although Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians did not intend to establish a new church, the Lutheran Church often regarded their efforts as such. They also regarded Brethren meetings as encouraging peasants' freedom and independence that could lead to rebellion against their masters. The Brethren teaching of the equality of all Christian believers was unacceptable to the German led Lutheran Church.¹⁰²

The attitude of the Lutheran Church to the Moravian Brethren changed for a short time in the 1840s, when there was mass conversions of peasants from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy. According to a Latvian historian, during this period the Lutheran Church regarded the Brethren movement as a force that could draw people away from Orthodoxy and thus help Lutheranism maintain its ground among Latvians.¹⁰³

The ministry of the Brethren among the Latvian people grew steadily. Though at first their attempts to reach the Latvian peasants were not successful (because of the

¹⁰⁰Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 91-92; Straube, "Vidzemskiye Gerngutskiye Bratskiye Obschiny," 32.

¹⁰¹Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 88; Plakans, *Latvians*, 66.

¹⁰²Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 74; Plakans, *Latvians*, 66.

¹⁰³Straube, "Vidzemskiye Gerngutskiye Bratskiye Obschiny," 32-34.

Latvians' hatred toward Germans), the missionaries persisted.¹⁰⁴ Since the missionaries were predominantly common people who earned their living by manual work, they soon found ways to the Latvian peasants. They learned the language to be able to communicate with the Latvians.¹⁰⁵

During the initial Pietistic awakening in the 1730s and 1740s, the Latvian followers of the Moravians were organized in groups in the parishes, attempting to follow Spener's *ecclesialae in ecclesia* model. Though the leaders of the congregations were German brothers, Latvians, both men and women, were responsible for meetings and services.¹⁰⁶ The role of the Latvians grew particularly during the "quiet walk" period (1743-1770). During this time, when the movement went underground, the Latvians gained increasing control of their activities while the missionaries remained responsible for the general supervision of the movement and advising on particular matters.¹⁰⁷ The Latvians were elected to the positions of elders, assistant elders, teachers (only men), helpers, encouragers, and servants. Among the most distinguished Latvian Brethren leaders were Skestera Peteris (1702-1787), Kisa Peteris (1698-1771), Vaitinu Janis, and Jaunraunas Kaca.¹⁰⁸

The Brethren devoted much attention to the care of individual souls. In congregations both married and single men, as well as married and single women, had leaders who were responsible for inquiring about and conversing with them about their spiritual health. During the "quiet walk" time, increased attention was paid to

¹⁰⁴Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 67. Their first recorded convert was Kisu Peteris, a peasant at the estate of the von Hallats in Valmiera in 1738.

¹⁰⁵David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change* (London: Longman, 1995), 72-73.

¹⁰⁶Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 38.

¹⁰⁷Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 82; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 39.

¹⁰⁸Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 40.

this kind of ministry, particularly among young people. Mutual evaluation was introduced as a church discipline during this period.

Particular attention was paid to the morality of the followers of the Brethren. Historians credited the movement with success in fighting the Latvians' sexual immorality (which in part came from peasants of both sexes sleeping in the same room) and stealing from their masters.¹⁰⁹

The influence of the Moravian Brethren on peasant education in Latvia was strongly felt. They encouraged the founding of schools as well as home instruction in reading and writing. The Latvian Brethren were able to read Pietistic and other writings, to copy them to spread among others, and to record their own experiences. Because they were more well educated than others, at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the peasants could serve in government or church, people of Pietistic convictions were preferred to other Latvians for such jobs.¹¹⁰

It is important to note that the Pietistic awakening in some parts of Latvia reduced the social gulf between the peasants and their lords. As historian V. Mezezers has observed, "Pietism made a new bridge from heart to heart, regardless of whether the believer was a Latvian or a German, a peasant or a noble."¹¹¹

The Brethren missionaries translated and, with the support of favoring nobles, published Christian writings and songs in Latvian.¹¹² Their hymns were "simple, but filled with religious enthusiasm; not all were perfect in poetic mastery, but they were

¹⁰⁹Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 71; Kirby, *The Baltic World*, 74.

¹¹⁰Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas vēsturi*, 88-89; Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 60.

¹¹¹Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 72.

¹¹²Adamovics, *Raksti par Latvijas baznīcas*, 67-69, 84; Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 82, 84. In 1739 a Bible and 33 songs were published; in 1742, a collection of 234 songs. M. F. Buntebart provided *Losungsbuchlein* (1743), a manual of selected Scripture passages for every day of the year and for every situation. In 1746, Zinzendorf's Common Prayer Book was translated into Latvian. In 1790, a book of poems composed and translated by G. H. Loskeil, leader of the Brethren in Latvia in 1780s, was published in Riga. Hymns, sermons, speeches of interest to the community and important announcements were circulated in handwritten translation from German.

rich in feelings; they came from the hearts of those who wanted to put the praise of God into words, and they reached the hearts of those who wanted to sing the glory of God.”¹¹³ Latvian men and women also expressed their religious feelings and recorded their experiences in their letters and diaries.¹¹⁴

Thus Pietism greatly influenced the spiritual and social outlook of the Latvians. “They did not regard Christianity as a religion of orthodox church doctrines anymore, but as a *living religion*,” concluded one Latvian historian.¹¹⁵ Some historians believed that only the conversions brought by this movement caused the Latvians to give up their old (pagan) beliefs.¹¹⁶ The Brethren movement brought about a revival of the Christian faith in Latvia.

¹¹³Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 80.

¹¹⁴Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 39. In Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, Chapter 8, is devoted to the original texts of the letters of Latvian Herrnhuters.

¹¹⁵Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic*, 84.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 29; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 3.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Brief History of the Newer Denominations until the Twentieth Century

Lutheranism and Catholicism, though the two dominant Christian denominations after the Reformation, were not the only Christian groups present in Latvia in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Russian Orthodox Church, supported by the Russian government, gained more ground in the eighteenth century. Old Believers, a schismatic group that split away from the Russian Orthodox Church, had been present in Latvia since the middle of the seventeenth century. Protestant groups, such as Baptists, Methodists and Adventists appeared in the territory of Latvia as a result of spiritual quest among the local people or foreign missionary activity.

The Russian Orthodox Church

Though Eastern Orthodoxy was introduced to the eastern parts of Latvia before Roman Catholicism arrived at the end of the twelfth century, the Russian Orthodox Church did not become a part of the Latvian religious scene until much later. In the eighteenth century, the territory of modern Latvia came under the control of the Russian Empire. Then, the Russian Orthodox Church started to exercise influence in Latvia. In the nineteenth century, the efforts of its clergy were supported by the Russian Tsars and their Russification politics in the Baltic provinces of the Empire.

The Orthodox Church work in Latvia was particularly active in the nineteenth century. In 1836, an Orthodox bishopric was founded in Riga as part of Pskov (Russia) archbishopric, to initiate missionary work among the Latvians. Later, in 1850, the Riga bishopric was reorganized into an archbishopric with Platon as its first Archbishop.

A seminary was opened in Pskov in the first half of the nineteenth century, where students received instruction in the Latvian language (among others). The seminary became a place where religious materials (catechism, prayer books) were translated to be distributed among Latvians.¹ In 1850, a seminary was established in Riga, a special committee for translations of books was founded and the publishing of the Orthodox magazine “Uchilische Blagochestija” started.² All these activities were to foster the spread of the Russian Orthodox faith among the local people and increase the authority of the Russian Church in the Baltic Provinces of Russia.

The conversion of the Latvian peasants from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy is the most important event in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latvia during the second half of the nineteenth century. The conversion movement was motivated by socio-economical conditions rather than by religious convictions. In the beginning of the 1840s, after a few years of bad crops and famine, the news spread among the peasants about land in the southern parts of the Empire that was given to those willing to convert to Russian Orthodoxy.³ A great mass conversion

¹Thaden, *Russification*, 122; *idem.*, *Russia's Western Borderlands, 1710-1870* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 177. Making Russian Orthodoxy accessible to the Latvians was one of the main concerns of bishop Filaret during his term from 1842-1848. For his ministry, see A. V. Gavriljin, “Yevo Preosveschenstvo, Vikarii Episkop Rizhskii Filaret,” in *Pravoslaviye v Latvii: Istoritsheskiye ocherki.*, b 2-x momax, vol.2, ed. A. V. Gavriljin (Riga: Balto-Slavyanskoye Obshchestvo kulturnovo razvitiya i sotrudnichestva, 1993), 95-103; and Anthony S. Vitale, “Bishop Filaret Gumilevskii’s Role in the Conversion of Latvians and Estonians to Orthodoxy in the Diocese of Riga from 1841 to 1848,” *Saint Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1993): 331-342.

²A.V. Gavriljin, “Ob obrazovanii samostoyatel’noi Rizhskoi Eparhii,” *Latvijas PSR Zinatnu Akademijas Vestis* 3 (1990): 31.

³Plakans, *Historical Dictionary*, 131; Kirby, *The Baltic World*, 101.

movement started, and it flourished during 1845-1848, when some 100,000 Estonians and Latvians left the Lutheran Church and became Orthodox.⁴ But the peasants soon became disappointed when the news turned out to be false and the government denied its responsibility for such information. The majority of those who had converted to Orthodoxy desired to return to Lutheranism.

The conversion movement had several consequences,⁵ some of which were also religious. The conversion to the Orthodox faith was legally irreversible for both the converts and their children. But in the 1850s, there was a growing desire among the peasants to return to their old faith because the new faith had not given them what it had promised. Thus, the fate of the so-called reconverts became the central problem for both Church and State during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶ The Russian Tsar Alexander responded to the problem by permitting a gradual conversion of the next generation to Lutheranism. But his response did not solve the problem of the adults who desired to reconvert to the Lutheran faith.

In the 1880s and 1890s, both the Russian government (now as part of its Russification politics) and the Russian Orthodox Church were actively promoting the cause of Orthodoxy in the Baltic provinces. The laws favoring Russian Orthodoxy were enforced regarding mixed marriages and their children, property issues, and the use of taxes collected from Orthodox people.⁷ The activities of Lutheranism were

⁴Thaden, *Russia's Western Borderlands*, 178-179, 190. In Wilhelm Kahle, "Baltic Protestantism," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7 (winter 1979): 221, the number is 70,000-90,000 people; in Vitale, "Bishop Filaret Gumilevskii's Role," 342, it is 106,000.

⁵Thaden, *Russification*, 123. Other consequences included agrarian reforms (laws were issued that allowed peasants to buy land) and political changes (Germans maintained their autonomy from the Russian government though they recognized their need for Russian power to prevent agrarian crises).

⁶Ibid., 146.

⁷Ibid., 67, 161-162, 235, 322-323. In 1885 the Empire's law concerning mixed marriages was again enforced requiring parents of mixed Orthodox-Lutheran backgrounds to bring up their children as Orthodox Christians. The use of the taxes collected from Orthodox Latvians as contributions to the support of Lutheran churches was forbidden. The local governors were given the right to expropriate land from the German landowners for the needs of the Orthodox believers.

hindered. A number of Lutheran pastors were tried for ministering to Orthodox peasants under criminal code that permitted their banishment to Siberia.⁸ Both conversion and reconversion to Orthodoxy was encouraged again, stressing the material benefits that it would bring rather than its theological teaching. Despite the efforts of both the Russian State and the Orthodox Church, the conversion movement of the 1880s and 1890s was only a modest success. Only about one-seventh of the number of the mass movement of the 1840s became Orthodox.⁹

By the middle 1890s, due to the changes in its interior politics that brought greater toleration of the Baltic German local government in Latvia, the Russian government had weakened its Russification politics, and the anti-Lutheran laws were no longer enforced so vigorously. The Russian Orthodox Church also was less energetic in its activities.¹⁰ The conversion problem was solved by the Tsar's manifest of religious tolerance in 1905. Conversion from Orthodoxy to Lutheranism was legally permitted, and many conversions took place in Latvia.

Old Believers

Since the seventeenth century, the Old Believers who arrived from Russia, had been a separate group among the inhabitants of Latvia. They represented a diverse group of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, under the leadership of the Archpriest Avvakum (1620-1681), refused to accept the liturgical reforms of the Patriarch Nikon. The Old Believers were excommunicated by the Church in 1667, called schismatics and violently persecuted by both the Russian Orthodox Church and State. The Old Believers included many peasants and priests of the established

⁸Ibid., 68, 235.

⁹Ibid., 162.

¹⁰Ibid., 69-70, 166. The Russian government by the 1890s was more inclined toward co-existence with the Baltic Germans (Lutherans).

Church.¹¹

Already at the end of the seventeenth century, the Old Believers split into two sections: those who sought to establish their own priesthood, and those who denied its necessity. In Latvia the Old Believers were characterized by the denial of the need for priesthood, its identification with the antichrist, and strong eschatological hopes.

These beliefs led to such practices as the rejection of a need for marriage. The “bezpopovsty,” those denying priesthood, further split into two groups. One of the groups were those who continued to interact with the world (“pomortsy”). The other group perceived the world as hostile, continued to reject marriage, did not pray for the Tsar and consequently were regarded as the most dangerous of sects (“fedosejevtsy”). In the territory of Latvia, the Old Believers were the “fedosejevtsy” originally, but later became the “pomortsy.”¹²

Under the persecutions, many peasants fled from their homes in Russia and came to Latvia. The first wave of the Old Believers in the seventeenth century was followed by another in the beginning of the eighteenth century after the reforms of Peter I. In Latvia, they settled in Latgale and Kurzeme, mostly in the countryside, and in the city of Riga. The first Old Believers' congregations in Latvia were established as early as the 1670s by Father Terentyi who arrived in Kurzeme from Russia. In the first half of the eighteenth century, more congregations were established by Fjodor Samanskyi.¹³

¹¹F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1179. For a detailed account of the events in Russia leading to the Old Believer's persecution, see David Scheffel, *In the Shadow of Antichrist: The Old Believers of Alberta* (n.p.: Broadview Press, 1991), 12-54.

¹²A. A. Podmazov, “Staroobradechestvo v Baltiskom regione: Pervoye stoletie istorii,” in *Religija. Vesture. Dzive: Religiska dzive Latvija*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga: Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Sociologijas Instituts, 1993), 152-171; Tamara Lonngren, *Leksika russkih staroobradcheskih govorov* (Uppsala, Sweden: AUU, 1994), 33-34; Aleksij Zilko and Eduard Mekss, “Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya,” *Revue des Etudes Slaves* [France] 69 (1997): 74-77.

¹³Zilko and Mekss, “Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya,” 76-77.

As the territory of Latvia came under the control of the Russian Empire during the eighteenth century, the Old Believers experienced waves of persecution by the state there, too. Persecution came in the form of the decrees of the Russian Tsars. The sanctions against the Old Believers limited both their freedom to worship and their freedom to participate in the life of society. The condition of the Old Believers improved for a short time in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but in the 1830s another wave of persecution broke out.¹⁴

Under the pressure of persecution, the Old Believers in Latvia, as in other places where they settled, continued to be the preservers of the traditions of the “old” Russian Orthodox Church. The Old Believers’ community sought and found ways to preserve their distinct faith. One of the ways to maintain their identity was through education. In Riga, where the Old Believers made up one-third of the Russian population, their school was officially recognized in 1827 as the only school for the Russian population of Riga, but as a result of the persecution of the Old Believers, it soon went underground. Underground schools where students were taught the basics of the Old Believers’ faith, as well as reading and writing, were characteristic of the Old Believers’ communities in the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Among the Old Believers’ communities in Latvia, the Grebeschikov community in Riga has been the most important center for preserving their faith and identity. It was founded in 1760 by Fjodor Samanskyi. In 1833, it was named after Aleksey Grebenschikov who had played an important role in the Old Believers’ educational efforts. During the persecution in the nineteenth century, the Grebenschikov community in Riga was the only community that managed to protect

¹⁴Ibid., 77-79. Zilko and Mekss note that the Old Believers’ churches were closed and destroyed, their services forbidden, that marriages declared illegal and children--illegitimate. They also could not participate in trade unions or own land.

¹⁵Maksim Pashin, “Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii,” in *Religija. Vesture. Dzive: Religiska dzive Latvija* (Riga: Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Socioligijas Instituts, 1993), 176-177; Podmazov, “Staroobradechestvo v Baltiskom regione: Pervoye stoletie istorii,” 173.

their church from destruction. It became the center of the Old Believers' faith and education. In 1873, despite the persecutions, a legal Old Believers' school, Grebenshikov school, was opened where many students studied for free.¹⁶

The manifest of the Russian Tsar regarding religious freedom issued in 1905, gave the Old Believers more freedom and official recognition in Latvia.¹⁷ The new freedom fostered the activity of the Old Believers in their religious and communal life. In 1908, a society for the mutual support of the Old Believers in Riga was founded. The society published a magazine, "Staraja Rusj" (The Old Russ), and an Old Believers' calendar.¹⁸

The community of the Old Believers in Latvia became actively involved in the affairs of the broader Old Believers' community both inside and outside the Russian Empire. Regional and all-Russia meetings of the Old Believers dealt with the issues that historically had caused divisions among them as well as those that addressed the role of their community members in society. Their meetings also drew the attention of the general public that mostly had known about the Old Believers "from the books."¹⁹

Baptists

The Baptist movement in Latvia started as early as the 1850s. Its beginnings are associated with Latvian rural school teachers who lived in Kurzeme. Their dissatisfaction with the inactivity of the ministers of the Lutheran Church led them to seek new more relevant ways to express their faith. Among the first leaders of the

¹⁶Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 78-79; Pashin, "Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 176-177.

¹⁷Pashin, "Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 179.

¹⁸Ibid., 180.

¹⁹Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 80-81. Among these meetings the most important ones were the Congress of the Old Believers of the North-Western region in 1906 in Vilnius (Lithuania), and the First All-Russia Congress in 1909 in Moscow. These were the gatherings of the "pomortsy" group of the Old Believers, to which the community in Latvia belonged at that time.

Baptist movement in Latvia were Karlsons, T. Betchers, Kandiss, A. Hamburgers, Gertners and others.²⁰

In the late 1840s, they came into contact with German Baptists who had come from Klaipeda (now in Lithuania) and engaged into conversations about theological matters such as believer's baptism. The teachings of the German Baptists were acceptable to their Latvian listeners who wanted to be baptized. The first Latvian Baptists were baptized by a German Baptist pastor in Klaipeda (in modern Lithuania) on September 2, 1860. A year later Adam Gertner, one of the Latvian Baptists, performed the first adult baptism in Latvia.²¹

The Baptist movement grew rather rapidly. Starting in 1860, Baptist churches were organized first in Kurzeme, then Vidzeme and Zemgale. In 1864, the number of baptized adults reached one thousand. By 1900, there were 48 Baptist churches in Latvia with more than 3,500 members.²²

Like other religious groups in the nineteenth century, Baptists were actively involved in educational efforts. Already in 1870 the first Baptist private school was founded in Gramzda. Soon it was followed by the foundation of schools in many more Baptist congregations in Ventspils, Priekule and Liepaja. Baptist schools were a reaction against Lutheran education that dominated public schools and thus threatened the peculiarly Baptist faith. Sunday schools for children and Bible courses for adults also became part of Baptist religious education.²³

The Baptist movement was soon persecuted by the Russian government.

²⁰Olafs Bruvers, "The Revival in Latvia during the 1920's and Subsequent Baptist Immigration to Brazil." D. Miss. diss. (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991), 49-50.

²¹Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 51, 54-56; Julians Vaivods, *Baznīcas vesture Kurzeme XIX un XX gadsimtos* (Riga: Rīgas metropolijas kūrīja, 1994), 30.

²²Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 54.

²³Janis Tervits, "Nemeji un deveji: Latvijas Baptisti un skolu izglītība," in *Religija. Vesture. Dzīve: Reliģiska dzīve Latvijā*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga, Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Socioloģijas Instituts, 1993), 121-129.

Some were arrested, others exiled or fined. The Baptists appealed to the Tsar, who in 1865 decreed that all persecutions against Baptists in the Russian Empire were to end. But the persecution ceased only temporarily for, as one Latvian historian observed, “Because of the Baptists ‘aggressive’ missionary activity and because the majority of their converts were from the Orthodox Church,” persecutions started again.²⁴ Their meetings were forbidden and buildings confiscated. The Baptist groups continued to meet in places like cemeteries and forests. In 1879, the Baptist law was issued that granted the rights of a recognized denomination to all Baptists in the Russia Empire. Soon afterward the Baltic Baptist Union was founded. Though the Tsar’s manifest in 1905 granted tolerance to religious groups, the persecutions of Baptists continued even during World War I.²⁵

The Evangelical Church, Seventh Day Adventists, and Methodists

The Evangelical Church²⁶ moved into Latvia at the beginning of the twentieth century through the missionary efforts of its North Germany Conference. A request for a missionary came to the conference from Riga in 1909. Riga was visited by some of the North Germany Conference’s leaders, contacts with the local Germans were made, and a week of evangelization held in 1910.

The first missionaries, Rev. Reinhold Barchet and his wife, were sent to Riga on May 11, 1911.²⁷ Their mission was registered under the name “Evangelical

²⁴Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 55.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 57; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 45; Vaivods, *Baznīcas vēsture Kurzeme*, 30.

²⁶S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States: History and Renewal* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 223. The Evangelical Church (Evangelische Gemeinschaft) is commonly known in the United States as the Evangelical Church. From 1898-1926 a schism took place in the Evangelical Church in the States. One branch was known as the Evangelical Association and the other as the Evangelical Church. After they reunited in 1926, the denomination became the Evangelical Church. The mission in Latvia was started during the period of schism.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 84-85.

Association-White Cross” in 1912. The goal of the mission was to “contribute toward the moral uplift of the people in accordance with the principles of the Word of God.”²⁸ The work of the Evangelical Church found response among the local population, particularly among the Germans. The German congregation of the Evangelical Church was officially recognized in 1912. By 1913, it had begun adult, youth, and children’s work. Before World War I, the two congregations in Riga had 75 members.²⁹ During World War I, the work of the Evangelical Church was continued without missionary support. Two groups of women --German and Latvian--took over the work in Riga.³⁰

The first Seventh Day Adventists came to Latvia from the southern parts of Russia. In 1895, Johann Perk whose brother Gerhard was one of the first Seventh Day Adventists in Russia, arrived in Riga where he successfully preached among a predominantly German population. The first, though small, Adventist congregation was founded in 1896. By the time of World War I, there were already twelve congregations in Latvia, three of them in Riga. The first Latvian preachers were Janis Sprogis and Jekabs Sneiders.

Seventh Day Adventist congregations in Latvia soon were involved in the ministry of the all-Russia and worldwide Adventist Church. Latvia was part of the Russian mission field that was served by German missionaries.³¹

The Methodist work in Latvia also started in Riga. It was listed as a Methodist appointment in 1910, and the first missionaries arrived the following year. Georg R. Durdis, who transferred from Kaunas, was soon joined by Alfred Freiberg, a

²⁸Ibid., 86.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 87.

³¹Edgars Cernevskis and Izaks Kleimanis, “Septitas Dienas Adventisti Latvija,” in *Religija. Vesture, Dzive: Religiska dzive Latvija*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga, Latvijas ZA Filizofijas un Sociologijas Instituts, 1993), 108.

Moravian pastor who had become interested in Methodist literature through his correspondence with George A. Simons, the superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Their activities were also interrupted by World War I.³²

Christianity in the State of Latvia (1918-1940)

Church and State Relations

After World War I, and the following Soviet and German occupations, the Churches in Latvia were disorganized on all levels. The following twenty-two years (1918-1940) were a time of renewal and growth.

In the state of Latvia the Church was separate from the State. The state laws recognized full freedom of speech and religion. Not a single church was specially privileged or protected. The citizens could freely choose which religious group they desired to join. Any group of fifty citizens was entitled to register as a religious denomination or congregation of their choice. Any ten congregations could form a national religious association. The different religious organizations had the right to build churches, chapels, prayer houses, to establish cemeteries, schools, seminaries, and to publish religious literature.³³

Religious matters were supervised by the Department of Religious Affairs within the Ministry of Interior. The Department was made up of a special council of representatives of the registered religious organizations both Christian and non-

³²Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 99, 113.

³³Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 279; The Information Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Baltic States: A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure and the Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1938, reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1970), 38-39 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 18-19.

Christian. Religious instruction was carried out in all schools. Each religious group was entitled to claim special classes for the children if there were at least ten students of that particular faith in the school. These classes were subsidized by the state.

Civil laws were enacted to further favor the churches. Blasphemy, violent acts against church services, desecration of cemeteries and churches were punishable by law.³⁴

Thus, different religious bodies could grow and flourish under the protection of the state. Freedom of conscience and religion provided all religious bodies an equal chance for development. All ethnic minorities enjoyed religious freedom as well. In 1938, more than twelve different Christian denominations existed in Latvia. Protestantism was represented by Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Adventists, Anglicans, Moravian Brethren, Evangelicals, Reformed Calvinists and others. Full religious freedom was enjoyed also by Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Old Believers as well as non-Christian religious groups such as Jews and Moslems.³⁵

In 1935, official statistics reflected this broad spectrum of religious traditions.³⁶ Evangelical Lutheranism was the single most widespread denomination claiming the allegiance of 55.2 percent of the population and 68.3 percent of ethnic Latvians. The Roman Catholic Church was the second most popular choice, preferred by 24.5 percent of the population and 26.4 percent of ethnic Latvians. Seventy percent of the population of Latgale region were Roman Catholic. The Orthodox Church claimed as its followers almost nine percent of the population, mostly Russians and other Slavs and 33 percent of ethnic Latvians. Old Believers were five

³⁴Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 279; Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays*, 39-40.

³⁵Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 19.

³⁶Kirby, *The Baltic World*, 335-337; Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays*, 70-71; Plakans, *Latvians*, 132, 138. It should be noted that broad spectrum of religious traditions also reflected the broad spectrum of nationalities. Poles, Germans, Jews, Russians, Byelorussians (White Russians) constituted one-fourth of the population in Latvia in the 1930s.

and one-half percent of the population, being almost exclusively a Russian group. About five percent of the population was Jewish. The rest of the population--less than one percent--was scattered among an array of Protestant denominations and a few non-Christian groups.³⁷

The Lutheran Church

Though officially the government did not favor any religious groups, the relationships between the Lutheran Church and the state were much better than those between the state and other religious bodies. The line between the Lutheran Church and state was not clearly drawn. It was evident in the laws and regulations of the government that it supported the Lutheran Church. Because of this relationship between the state and the Lutheran Church, in 1934 President Karlis Ulmanis, following his *coup d'etat* and installment of an authoritarian government, could give more power to the Archbishop and consistory of the Lutheran Church.³⁸ The synodical-episcopal organizational system of the Church moved closer to the episcopal system.³⁹ Also during the period after 1934, the state authorities continued to support the Lutheran Church by issuing laws in its favor and by raising its authority in society. Religious education in schools was put under the supervision of the Lutheran Church. Representatives of the Church were invited to state ceremonies and celebrations. However, the state attempted to increase its control over the Lutheran Church.⁴⁰

³⁷Walter R. Iwaskiw, ed., *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Country Studies* (n. p.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1996), 121-122; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 53; Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 19.

³⁸Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 6.

³⁹Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 89.

⁴⁰Nikards Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznīca Latvija (1918-1940)," in *Religija. Vesture, Dzīve: Reliģiska dzīve Latvija*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga, Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Socioloģijas Instituts, 1993), 35-36.

Great changes took place in the organization of the Lutheran Church during this period. There was a growing national conscience, which led to an increase in the number of Latvian Lutheran clergy. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Lutheran Church had been an institution of Germans, the “masters’ church” where Latvians were a minority. In the fall of 1919, there were 194 Evangelical Lutheran congregations in the territory of Latvia; only twenty of them were German. In the late 1910s, the Latvian pastors were meeting at conferences to express their desire for a Latvian church. A temporary Latvian consistory was approved in 1917, but it could not begin its work because of war and Soviet occupation.⁴¹

In 1919, a law was issued that ended the dominance of patrons (private landowners who supported local churches) over Lutheran churches and gave the rights of self-government to the congregations.⁴² Consistories in Kurzeme and Vidzeme were reorganized, and Latvians were given top administrative posts. In 1922, governmental instructions were issued regarding the dissolution of the consistory and formation of a new governing body. The new consistory governed the activities of the Church and was also responsible to the Minister of the Interior. Latvians received two-thirds of the posts in the consistory, including the post of president. Germans received the rest of the posts, including the post of vicepresident. The first president of the consistory was pastor Karlis Irbe (1861-1934),⁴³ and the vicepresident was a German pastor, P. Pelchavs. Irbe and Pelchavs were also elected the bishops of the Latvian and German divisions of the Lutheran Church respectively.⁴⁴ In 1931,

⁴¹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 65; Gills, “Evangeliski Luteriska Baznīca Latvija (1918-1940),” 26; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 4; Wohlrabe, “Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between ‘Kultur’ and Faith,” 88.

⁴²Plakans, *Latvians*, 123.

⁴³ Gills, “Evangeliski Luteriska Baznīca Latvija (1918-1940),” 34.

⁴⁴Gills, “Evangeliski Luteriska Baznīca Latvija (1918-1940),” 28; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 53-54; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 4-5; Wohlrabe, “Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between ‘Kultur’ and Faith,” 89.

pastor Teodors Grinbergs was elected as Bishop Irbe's successor, and in 1933 he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop.⁴⁵

The changes took place also on other levels of Church organization recognizing the democratic self-government of local congregations. They were divided into districts of Deans; each district had its synod composed of the dean, board members, pastors and delegates of congregations.⁴⁶

The German congregations were organized in an autonomous body headed by a German bishop. It consisted of about 60,000 German Lutherans.⁴⁷ This group preferred to establish a separate German Evangelical Lutheran Church constituting its own synod, electing its own bishop and establishing its own theological faculty at the German Herder Institute in Riga.⁴⁸ The German Lutherans made great efforts to maintain their own congregations and tried hard to retain their presence in the largest Lutheran churches in Riga. To solve the problem between the Latvian and German Lutherans, the government issued a law establishing the Church of St. Mary in Riga as the seat of the Archbishop of the Latvian Lutheran Church.⁴⁹ In practice, the problem remained unsolved until almost all of the German Lutherans left Latvia for Germany in 1939-1940, following the order of Hitler.⁵⁰

After 1918 the Lutheran Church in Latvia needed to train a new generation of pastors to replace the heavy losses suffered during the military activities and changes

⁴⁵ Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 280; Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznica Latvija (1918-1940)," 34-35.

⁴⁶ Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 280.

⁴⁷ Kahle, "Baltic Protestantism," 222.

⁴⁸ Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays*, 106; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 90; Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznica Latvija (1918-1940)," 31-33.

⁴⁹ Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 280; Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays*, 106-107; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 6; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 89-90.

⁵⁰ Bilmanis, *Baltic Essays*, 107.

of political regimes in the 1910s. Out of 196 pastors who served in Latvia in 1914, there were only 110 left in 1920.⁵¹ Many had been killed in military activities, exiled, imprisoned, or deported. The Faculty (School) of Theology at the University of Latvia was opened in 1920 with four departments: history of religions and history of Israel; history of pre-Christian religion; department of Church history; and department of systematic religious science.⁵² In 1931, the department of practical theology was founded.⁵³ In the twenty years before World War II, 650 students were graduated from the Faculty of Theology including thirty-one women.⁵⁴

The Latvian Lutheran Church joined in the missionary activities of the Lutheran Church in Sweden as well as supported its own independent mission work in southern India. From 1924 on, Anna Irbe, the daughter of Bishop Karlis Irbe, worked as a missionary in the region of Coimbatore, India. Foreign missions in the Lutheran Church were guided by a special secretary, professor Edgars Rumba.⁵⁵ By 1933, the local missions to orphans, widows, and cripples were launched providing care and education.⁵⁶ The Church also maintained good relationships with sister churches in Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Germany (until Hitler's rise to power in 1933). The Latvian Lutheran Church actively participated in the work of the Lutheran World Convention.⁵⁷

Between the 1920s and 1940s the Lutheran Church grew considerably. The

⁵¹Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznica Latvija (1918-1940)," 26-28.

⁵²Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 280; Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznica Latvija (1918-1940)," 37.

⁵³Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznica Latvija (1918-1940)," 37.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁵Juris Rumba, "Dr. Edgars Rumba's Theological Contribution to Rapprochement Between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy," *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 7 (1990), 58-59.

⁵⁶Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 89.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

number of Lutherans grew from 914,409 in 1920 to 1,057,167 in 1930 constituting almost ninety-three percent of the population.⁵⁸ The number of congregations grew from 194 Latvian and twenty German parishes in 1920 to 272 Latvian and fifty-two German and one Estonian congregation in 1936.⁵⁹

There were more than a dozen Lutheran periodicals being published that addressed the interests of various groups. The newspaper, "Svtdienas Rits," was published without interruption for twenty years (1920-1940). Among the youth and children issues, the magazines "Jaunatnes Cels" (The Way of Youth), and "Bitite" (Little Bee) were popular. Religious-ethical publications included the magazines "Klusa Bridi" (During a Quiet Moment), "Vairogs" (Shield), and "Cels" (The Way). Philosophical and theological literature, as well as research, was published in "Latvijas Universitates Raksti" (Writings of the University of Latvia) and other periodicals for a broad spectrum of intellectuals.⁶⁰

The Catholic Church

The Latvian Catholic Church was not united before the establishment of independence in Latvia. The congregations in Latgale were under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Mogilev (Russia), but the few congregations scattered in Kurzeme and Zemgale were controlled by the Archbishop of Kaunas (Lithuania). On September 22, 1918, Pope Benedictus XV reestablished the independent Archdiocese of Riga. In 1920, the Latvian Catholic Antonijs Springovics (b. 1867) was elected Archbishop.⁶¹

⁵⁸Ibid., Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 53.

⁵⁹Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 89.

⁶⁰Gills, "Evangeliski Luteriska Baznīca Latvija (1918-1940)," 47-48.

⁶¹Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 280-282; Vaivods, *Baznīcas vesture Kurzeme*, 346.

The establishment of a united Catholic Church in Latvia was also fostered by the concordat concluded between the Latvian government and the Holy See regarding the position and obligations of Catholics in Latvia. The concordat stated that only prelates of Latvian origin could appoint the Archbishop and the bishops in Latvia. In 1936, the Holy See elevated the Archbishop Springovics to the rank of Metropolitan-Archbishop and reestablished the bishopric of Kurzeme with its seat in Liepāja. Bishop Antonijs Urbsis, a Lithuanian, was appointed the first bishop of Liepāja.⁶² By 1928, there were 146 Roman Catholic congregations in Latvia with 130 church buildings and ten chapels.⁶³ Most of the Catholic congregations were still located in Latgale.

The Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church was probably in the worst position in independent Latvia because of its original connection with the Russian Empire and the recent politics of Russification in the Baltic lands. The close ties of the Church with Russia made the government suspect it of disloyalty to the newly established state of Latvia. Orthodox Russians were generally excluded from government positions and many state jobs.⁶⁴

The Orthodox Church in Latvia was governed by the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia until 1921. Already in 1920, a temporary constitution of the Latvian Orthodox Church was adopted and a new synod elected. The first Latvian bishop of

⁶²Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 282; The Information Department, *The Baltic States: A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure*, 39.

⁶³Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 183.

⁶⁴K. Ozolins, "Polozheniye Latviskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v 20-ye godi XX veka," in *Pravoslaviye v Latvii: Istoritsheskiye ocherki., b 2-x momax*, vol. 2, ed. A. V. Gavriljin (Riga: Balto-Slavyanskoye Obshchestvo kulturnovo razvitiya i sotrudnichestva, 1993), 13-15; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 65.

the Church was Janis Pommers (1876-1934). The regulations of the Latvian Orthodox Church were approved by the Ministry of the Interior in 1924, and two years later the government confirmed the independence of the Church from any ecclesiastical organs outside Latvia. After gaining independence from the Russian Church, the Latvian Orthodox Church gained more favor in society.⁶⁵

The number of Russian Orthodox congregations, believers and clergy grew during this period. In 1920, there were almost 100,000 Orthodox Christians in Latvia.⁶⁶ By 1930, their number had increased to 169,625; the majority of them were Russians.⁶⁷ The Orthodox believers continued to be the largest religious body in Latgale (87,783 followers in 1925), particularly in the regions of Madona, Ludza and Jaunlatgale.⁶⁸ The number of parishes also grew, from 130 in 1923 to 153 in 1934.⁶⁹ The need for clergy was great, as most of the congregations did not have permanent ministers. In 1926, the Church received formal permission from the government to open Riga Seminary to train Russian Orthodox priests for service in Latvia. The seminary was reorganized in 1936 and became the Bogoslovskii Institute.⁷⁰

The Orthodox churches in Latvia were destroyed or in bad condition after World War I. New churches were built and the old ones restored, especially after 1921, when the Church started to receive a grant from the state.⁷¹ The material

⁶⁵Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 65-66.

⁶⁶Ibid., 64.

⁶⁷Ozolins, "Položheniye Latviskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," 16.

⁶⁸Ibid., Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 64.

⁶⁹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 64.

⁷⁰Ozolins, "Položheniye Latviskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi", 16-17; Trufanov, "Iz istorii Pravoslavnoi Duhovnoi Seminarii (1926-1936)," in *Pravoslaviye v Latvii: Istoritsheskiye ocherki.*, b 2-x momax, vol. 2, ed. A. V. Gavriljin (Riga: Balto-Slavyanskoye Obshchestvo kulturnovo razvitiya i sotrudnichestva, 1993), 5, 12; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 66. There was a seminary in Riga established in 1850, but it was evacuated to Russia during World War I and never returned to Latvia.

⁷¹Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 66.

condition of the Orthodox Church improved after Janis Pommers was elected to the Saeima (the parliament) in 1925. The Latvian state also helped the Orthodox churches in their attempts to have their possessions returned from Russia where they were taken during the war to protect them from destruction. The Orthodox Church and the Latvian state continually quarreled over the property that was confiscated by the state in the early 1920s. The Church lost its case and with it vast possessions of land and buildings, particularly in Riga.⁷²

During the independence period, the Orthodox Church started to publish its periodicals. The newspaper, “Ticiba un dzive” (Faith and Life), was published in both Latvian and Russian, as was the Latvian Orthodox Calendar.⁷³

Old Believers

During the period after World War I, the Old Believers continued to be the preservers of the traditions of the pre-reformed Russian Orthodox Church and to lead a life rather separated from society.⁷⁴ They had become the fourth largest Christian denomination in Latvia. In 1925, there were 89,239 Old Believers in 82 communities, and by 1930 their number reached 96,802.⁷⁵ Most of them continued to live in Latgale and Riga.

When Latvia became an independent state, the Old Believers lost their close organizational ties with the Old Believers’ community in Russia. Religious freedom provided them with opportunities for reorganization. On November 4, 1920, the first all-Latvia Congress of the Old Believers took place in Rezekne and the Board of the

⁷²Ozolins, “Polozheniye Latviskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi,” 19-28; Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 64.

⁷³Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 66.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., Zilko and Mekss, “Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya,” 83.

Old Believers in Latvia was elected. After the political changes of 1934, the governmental law of 1935 provided stewardship rights and religious independence for Old Believers' communities.⁷⁶ The lack of a centralized power within Latvia and among the Baltic Old Believers was strongly felt. In April 1939, the representatives from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland met in Vilnius, Lithuania, to prepare for the consolidation process. The process was interrupted by the events of 1940 and World War II.⁷⁷

Education continued to be one of the main concerns of the Old Believers in Latvia. Like the members of other denominations, they were able to teach their beliefs in public schools where the majority of students were Old Believers. This opportunity was taken very seriously. Teachers, who were Old Believers, had studied in the teacher institutes in Rēzekne and Riga. They were tested and certified, as well as trained, in special regular seminars for teachers of religion. Teachers gathered for the First Congress of the Old Believers' Teachers in Riga, in June 1931. The Congress approved a curriculum for teaching Old Believers' beliefs in public schools.

The annual Church calendar was published beginning in 1927.⁷⁸ Old Believers distributed the magazines "Nastavnik" (Discipler), "Staraja vera" (Old Faith), and "Zlatostrui" (Golden Stream).⁷⁹ In the beginning of the 1930s, one of the most popular Old Believers' magazines "Rodnaja starina" (Native Past), was published under the editorship of Ivan Zavoloko. Zavoloko, a prominent leader of the Old Believers during this period, was author of two textbooks for Old Believers' schools and was actively involved in preserving the traditions of art, iconography and

⁷⁶Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 82-83.

⁷⁷Ibid., 83.

⁷⁸Ibid., 82.

⁷⁹Pashin, "Staroobryadchestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 182.

singing.⁸⁰ The Riga community supported the workshop of iconography under the leadership of K. Pavlov, who was a successor of a line of great Russian icon masters.⁸¹

Baptists

In the period of the independent state of Latvia, Baptists became the second largest Protestant group. Their number grew from 9,657 in 1921 to 11,454 in 1930. New parishes were established, numbering eighty-nine in 1926.⁸² In 1938, there were 109 Baptist churches with over 12,000 active (baptized) members and ninety-six pastors.⁸³

Baptists were actively involved in Latvia's social and political life. In the late 1910s they informed foreign governments and officials about the help that was needed to renew life in Latvia after the war. Baptists E. Rimbenieks, J. Gibietis, and A. Dinsbergs were elected the members of Latvian parliament, the Saeima. Other Baptist leaders advocated the founding of "The Christian Working Peoples Alliance" in 1924.⁸⁴

Like other religious bodies, the Baptist Church was recognized by the Latvian state (1923). The laws of the government established the right of self-administration of the Baptist churches, and gave the Baptist Union the rights of a legal entity and responsibility for supervising parishes and preachers.⁸⁵

The attempts to renew Baptist ministry in Latvia after World War I started in

⁸⁰Ibid., Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 82.

⁸¹Pashin, "Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 183.

⁸²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 66; Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 65.

⁸³Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 80.

⁸⁴Ibid., 78-79.

⁸⁵Ibid., 79.

1918. J. Inkis and J. A. Freijs, Baptist pastors, returned to Latvia to summon a congress of Baptist delegates. The last such meeting had taken place in Riga in 1913 after permission from the Russian government was obtained with great difficulty. The first Baptist conference in independent Latvia was held in Priekule on May 26-28, 1920, with 130 delegates from seventy congregations present. At the conference, the project of the Latvian Baptist Union and the need for religious education was discussed.⁸⁶

The spiritual revival among the Latvian Baptists in the 1920s, discussed later in this chapter, created a tension among them and led to division. In 1926, William Fetler and his followers broke away from the Baptist Union and established the Second Baptist Union. The main Union, led by Janis Freijs, strongly opposed the Pentecostal nature and the proposed immigration to Brazil of the revivalist group. In 1934, after the President of Latvia, Karlis Ulmanis, urged unity, the Baptist groups reunited.⁸⁷

More than any other Christian group in Latvia, the Baptists received support from abroad. In particular, the Baptist churches in the United States of America, Canada, and England provided material, financial, and spiritual support. One of the special projects that received foreign support was the foundation of the Theological Seminary in Riga in 1922.⁸⁸ At the same time, Latvian Baptists were actively involved in worldwide Baptist organizations. The Third Baptist World Congress in Stockholm, Sweden in 1923 was attended by fifty-six Latvian delegates and a well-organized choir.⁸⁹

Ojars Bruvers, writing about the history of the Latvian Baptist Church,

⁸⁶Ibid., 62-63.

⁸⁷Ibid., 84-85, 88.

⁸⁸Ibid., 66-67; Tervits, "Nemeji un deveji," 130.

⁸⁹Ibid., 63-65.

describes a spiritual awakening among the Baptists that began in the small village, Lidere, in Vidzeme and spread throughout Latvia as early as 1918-1919.⁹⁰ Among other expressions of spiritual gifts such as signs and healing of the sick, speaking in tongues appeared for the first time in Latvia, but only for a short time.⁹¹ The revival brought great multitudes of people to Baptist churches. Soon rumors were spreading among Baptist believers that "Latvia would be swallowed by a 'Red Dragon.'"⁹² These eschatological expectations caused fear among the Baptists. The message spread among the revivalists that they should leave Latvia for a safer place--Brazil. During the years of 1922 to 1924 more than 2,500 people left Latvia for Brazil.⁹³ Two Latvian settlements, "Varpa" and "Palma," were established. The Latvian Baptists had a great influence on the Brazilian Baptists, particularly in the area of religious education.⁹⁴

There were some outstanding leaders among the Latvian Baptists during the 1920s and 1930s. One of them, William Fetler, a Latvian Baptist, after receiving his education at Spurgeon's College in London and performing missionary work in Russia and the United States, came to Latvia in 1921. Part of his missionary activity in Latvia was founding and running the Mission School (1925) and the Bible Schools in Riga.⁹⁵ Fetler also pioneered a mission to the Soviet border in the region of

⁹⁰Ibid., 98.

⁹¹Ibid., 100, 110.

⁹²Ibid., 113.

⁹³Ibid., 116.

⁹⁴Ibid., 236. Bruvers reports that in the 1990s there were still about 100 Brazilian Baptist churches that had been founded by Latvian Baptist immigrants with more than 8,000 members. The contribution of the Latvian Baptists in Brazil is discussed in *ibid.*, 235-241. Now the Latvian colonies in Brazil are almost completely abandoned; see *ibid.*, and Nora Vilmane, "Latviesu majas zem palmam," *SestDiena* [Latvia] July 10, 1999, 14-15, 19.

⁹⁵Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 67-71.

Latgale.⁹⁶ Janis Kurcitis was appointed the representative of the Cabinet of the World Wide Christian Couriers in 1929. During the same year he also was elected the Superintendent of The Russian Border Mission, started by Fetter. In 1932, this mission had thirty-two missionaries.⁹⁷ Great work was also done by Georg Urban who through printed materials was reaching Russian refugees in many European countries.⁹⁸

Attached to the churches were 140 Sunday schools with more than 600 teachers and about 7,000 pupils. Other religious and educational ministries included Young People's fellowship with over 2,000 members, Women's League, and choirs. Special notice should be taken of the Latvian Baptist Church choirs: 109 churches had 107 choirs with about 2,600 singers. Some churches also had orchestras with a total of about 800 participants. Several Baptist Sacred Song Festivals were held in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹⁹ The work of social welfare was carried out by an orphanage, *Saulstari* (Sunbeams), at Vainode where on a country farm estate some forty orphans found their home. This work was done and supervised by the Latvian Baptist Women's League.¹⁰⁰

The monthly, "Sauceja Balss" (The Caller's Voice), was published beginning in 1920.¹⁰¹ After 1934, the Baptist publishing house in Riga published four periodicals: "Kristiga Balss" (Christian Voice) for churches, "Rita Stari" (Morning Rays) for young people, "Dzirkstelīte" (Spark) for adolescents and "Svetdienas Skolnieks" (Sunday School Pupil) for Sunday schools. The Baptist bookstore also

⁹⁶Ibid., 72.

⁹⁷Ibid., 72-74, 76.

⁹⁸Ibid., 77.

⁹⁹Ibid., 80, 82-83.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 83.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 63.

helped to spread Bibles and religious books among the general population.¹⁰²

Methodists

Though Methodist missionary work was started in Latvia before World War I, its Latvian-speaking beginnings are associated with the 1920s. On April 17, 1921, Rev. Alfred Freiberg, a Moravian minister and his congregation united with the Methodist Church in Liepaja, and thus the first Latvian Methodist congregation was founded. During the same year, property in Riga was obtained, and in 1922, the Central Hall was purchased. The Hall functioned as Youth Headquarters, theological seminary and general headquarters for the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Baltic region (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia).¹⁰³

Until 1924 the Baltic and Russian missions had a united administration. In that year it was divided into two Mission Conferences. Latvia belonged to the Baltic and Slavic Mission (BSMC)¹⁰⁴ that in 1924 consisted of 1,639 members and in 1937 had grown to 2,122 members.¹⁰⁵ The representatives of the districts of the BSMC met annually, and their meetings rotated between Kaunas, Lithuania; and Tallinn, Estonia; and Riga. As part of the BSMC, the Latvian Church was involved in programs of evangelization, social outreach (meals for poor, orphanages), and education (schools for poor children and advanced education for laity and clergy).¹⁰⁶ In the fall of 1923, the Methodist Training Institute was founded in Riga to train clergy. Almost all ministers spoke at least one or two languages besides their native tongue.¹⁰⁷ In 1924,

¹⁰²Ibid., 80-82.

¹⁰³Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 115, 118.

¹⁰⁴BSMC included Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

¹⁰⁵Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 36, 116.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 117.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

there were fifteen pastors working in Latvia.¹⁰⁸

Methodism was officially recognized by the state of Latvia in 1931. Three years later the Methodist Church Law was issued by the Latvian government and in 1938 the constitution of the Methodist Church of Latvia was approved giving the Methodist Church equal rights with other religious groups.¹⁰⁹

The Latvian district experienced some growth. In 1931, there were eleven appointments in Latvia but by 1939, in the BSMC there were about thirty congregations with some 3,000 members.¹¹⁰ In the Latvian district the Methodist churches were in fourteen cities. There were two churches in Liepaja and five churches in Riga.¹¹¹

The Latvian Methodist Episcopal Church, though it remained rather small in numbers, was very active in independent Latvia carrying out social work in a true Wesleyan spirit. The mission provided food and shelter as well as built and sustained orphanages. The Latvian Methodist Children's Home in Riga cared for eighteen children.¹¹² In Riga during the school year 900 students of the University received a meal every day at the Methodist Central Mission.¹¹³ Latvian Methodist women were actively involved in the ministry of the Church. Kristine Gettheim became the first woman licensed to preach in Latvia. Mrs. Bergmanis and Mrs. Timbers were among the organizers of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.¹¹⁴ The BSMC supported

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., 124.

¹¹²Ibid., 35.

¹¹³Ibid., 120.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

four missionary day schools in China, Korea and India.¹¹⁵ One of the Methodist publishing houses in the BSMC was established in Riga. Methodist song books, catechisms, pamphlets, and handbooks were published. The newspaper, “Kristīgs Aizstavis” (Christian Advocate), was also published regularly.¹¹⁶

Like other Christian denominations, Methodism was greatly affected by the German repatriation in 1939. Some 500 Methodists from the Baltic region resettled in Königsberg, Germany.¹¹⁷ These and the following events of the Soviet occupation and World War II interrupted the Methodist ministry in Latvia.

The Methodists initiated some ecumenical work in the 1930s. A small but effective organization known as the *Union of Believers* was founded in Latvia. It consisted of members of the Evangelical, Lutheran, Orthodox, Methodist, and Baptist churches.¹¹⁸

The Evangelical Church

The work of the Evangelical Church was renewed in the early 1920s after Latvia was visited by several representatives of the North German Conference. In 1918 and 1919 Reinhold Barchet, a missionary in Riga before the war, returned to find the remnants of Evangelical groups meeting at homes in Agenskalns in Riga. Other visitors from Germany recommended the continuation of the mission work in Latvia by appointing a new missionary, purchasing property, and fostering bilingual work (in German and Latvian). An appointment of an American superintendant was

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 67.

¹¹⁷Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 126.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 121.

also requested.¹¹⁹ By 1921, the ministry in Riga was renewed. A year later the Latvian government recognized the Evangelical Church, and in 1923, it was recognized as a free church. The official recognition of the Church gave it legal status and fostered the spread of its ministry.

In Riga the Evangelical Church rented two halls for services and classes of instruction. Before the end of 1923, two new Latvian-speaking congregations were established, one in Sloka and the other in Sarkandaugava, both not far from Riga. Soon the Church was able to purchase its own property on Brivibas Street in Riga, and a new building was dedicated in 1928.¹²⁰ The other two centers of Evangelical activity were outside Riga, in the cities of Kuldiga and Liepaja (Kurzeme region). In Kuldiga the congregations consisted of about one hundred members in the first half of the 1920s. In Liepaja the property was purchased in 1928--a lot with two buildings, one of which was made into a chapel seating for about 400 people.¹²¹

The Evangelical Church in Latvia attempted to make its mission as indigenous as possible. All the workers were Latvian, except for the superintendent. The Latvian mission was also given its own identity separate from the European mission work, although the German bishops retained the responsibility for it.¹²² Two significant Latvian Evangelical Church workers came from Kuldiga--the brothers Hans and Rudolfs Kalnmalis. Rudolfs Kalnmanis became the first indigenous pastor in 1930.¹²³ From 1938-1940, R. Kalnmalis was the superintendant of the Latvian mission.¹²⁴ Another Latvian pastor, Bernhard Schobe, was appointed to the Latvian congregation

¹¹⁹Ibid., 88.

¹²⁰Ibid., 89-90.

¹²¹Ibid., 91-93.

¹²²Ibid., 93.

¹²³Ibid., 94.

¹²⁴Ibid., 96.

in Riga in 1938.¹²⁵ Two deaconesses, Sister Engels and Sister Lidwart served in Riga and Kuldiga having educational, pastoral, and preaching responsibilities. Sister Martha Beier, who served in Riga from 1926 to 1939, was in charge of youth work and social services.¹²⁶

The Evangelical Church in Latvia also experienced growth. In 1929, there were 196 members, almost equally spread among the congregations in Riga, Kuldiga, and Liepaja.¹²⁷ A German missionary reported that in 1931 there were 275 “friends” who supported the work of the Church and “in all about 700 persons are under our influence.”¹²⁸ The 1939 statistics of the Evangelical Church show that there were three pastors and two deaconesses, 223 members in five preaching stations, four Sunday schools with 210 children and two buildings of worship in Riga and Liepaja.¹²⁹

In the second half of the 1930s, the Evangelical Church in Latvia came under the growing pressure of Latvian nationalism. Also, Hitler’s call for Germans to return to Germany drained the German population of Latvia, especially those who were part of the Evangelical Church.¹³⁰ In 1938 the Latvian mission came under the jurisdiction of the American bishops.¹³¹

Adventists

Like Baptists, Adventists grew in numbers during the period from 1918 to 1940. There were 1,895 Adventists in 1925 and the number reached 2,395 in 1930.

¹²⁵Ibid., 95.

¹²⁶Ibid., 97.

¹²⁷Ibid., 94.

¹²⁸Ibid., 94-95.

¹²⁹Ibid., 96.

¹³⁰Ibid., 95.

¹³¹Ibid., 96.

By 1934 there were 59 Adventist congregations in Latvia with almost 3,000 members.¹³² As the congregations grew, there was a greater need for meeting halls. At first these were rented, but, in the first part of the 1920s, the Adventists started to build their own chapels in Jelgava, Valmiera, and Liezere. The chapel in Riga was dedicated in 1928.¹³³

The Latvian Adventist Union purchased the Suzi estate in 1923 where a mission school was founded in the same year. The school prepared preachers, missionaries, and other clergy. Some of the teachers were invited from abroad, and students came also from Estonia and Lithuania. In the late 1930s the school was reorganized into a gymnasium preserving the spiritual disciplines.¹³⁴ Among other types of education, Sunday school continued to play an important role in the education of believers.

The Latvian Union owned the publication house, "Latvijas rakstu apgādība." The publications of the Adventists included both translations and original works--religious books, pamphlets and other writings. The periodicals, a newspaper "Cinas Sargs" (Guard of Fight), and magazines, "Adventes Vestnesis", and "Musu Laikmets" (Our Age), were widely circulated among the Adventists in Latvia.¹³⁵

Other Christian Groups

In addition to the Christian denominations treated in detail, there were a number of smaller Christian groups that contributed to the variety of Christianity in the independent state of Latvia.

¹³²Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vesture*, 66-67.

¹³³Cernevskis and Kleimanis, "Septītais Dienas Adventisti Latvija," 109.

¹³⁴Ibid., 109-110.

¹³⁵Ibid., 110.

One was the Salvation Army that was registered with the Ministry of the Interior in 1923. Cities throughout Latvia, such as Riga, Liepaja, Cesis, Valmiera, Ventspils, Jelgava, and Tukums became centers for its activity. The headquarters was located in Riga where there was also a Sunday school, a station that provided for the poor, sick and neglected (since 1924), a soup kitchen (since 1926) and an overnight shelter (since 1927).¹³⁶

Since 1925 the Salvation Army published the weekly newspaper, “Kara sauciens” (Cry of the War). A songbook was published as well as translations of songs from other languages.¹³⁷ To educate the leaders of the Salvation Army, a school was founded in 1924.¹³⁸

Also among the smaller Christian groups were the Catholic Apostolic Church, with seven congregations and about 1,600 members in Riga, Ventspils, Liepaja, and Ventspils; the Kurzeme Mennonite Congregation in Lestene, with some 100 members; the Evangelical Fellowship in Riga; and the Evangelical Jesus Church in Riga and Zlekas, which followed the model of the Plymouth Brethren church organization. The Evangelical Brethren Church in Kurzeme came into being in the 1870s as a Baptist group that followed some Moravian teachings. It became a recognized denomination in 1922 with some 500 members.¹³⁹ Anglican and Reformed Calvinist groups were also present in Latvia.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶Adamovics, *Latvijas baznīcas vēsture*, 67.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰Bruvers, *The Revival in Latvia*, 19.

were not permitted to own property and they were not recognized as legal entities.² Another law of 1918 stated, among other things, that a minimum of twenty local citizens, forming a religious association, was required to receive permission to use religious property that now belonged to the state. They were obligated to relinquish such property at once upon the demand of governmental institutions. No religious ceremonies were allowed in any government or publicly administered building.³

Regarding the religious legislation of the Soviet state during this period, Paul Mojzes concludes that:

it seems clear that the notion of separation of church and state, declared in one provision is effectively contradicted by other legislation which gave the state thoroughgoing regulatory powers over religious activities, limiting the free exercise thereof severely. Such contradictions persisted throughout the history of the Soviet state. One might say that the church was separated from the state but not the state from the church because the state continued a very active interventionist role in the internal affairs of the church...⁴

During this period suppression and persecution was aimed mostly at the Russian Orthodox Church, the major religious body in Russia, which was perceived as a relic of the Imperial past.⁵ Clergy and laity were killed and tortured, churches and monasteries closed or destroyed. The entire Orthodox community was depicted as the enemy.⁶ The state even supported schism within the Orthodox Church and those opposing it were persecuted.⁷ In the 1920s, the anti-religious propaganda, which

²Ibid., 60-62; Pedro Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," in *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union*, ed. Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe (n.p.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989), 282; John Dr. Anderson, *Religion and the Soviet State: A Report on Religious Repression in the U.S.S.R. on the Occasion of the Christian Millennium* (Washington, D. C.: Puebla Institute, 1988), 13-14.

³Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 62.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 95.

⁶Ibid., 56-58.

⁷Ibid., 59.

started in 1917, became more extensive in the form of anti-religious periodicals and lectures. Toward the end of the 1920s, the Soviet government successfully obtained declarations of loyalty from all churches. Clergy that refused to recognize such declarations were imprisoned, murdered, or otherwise removed from their positions.⁸ Some historians estimate that more than 8,000 Orthodox clergy were murdered during the 1920s, including many of the leading bishops, monks, nuns, and priests.⁹

The period from 1928 to 1942 was a time of the mass murder in Russia. The figures given by different historians range from fifteen to forty million people.¹⁰ Though the destruction was not particularly aimed at religious people or the Orthodox Church, by the time of World War II almost all religious leaders and an unknown number of religious people had perished.¹¹ Mojzes concludes that it was “a systematic approach to all real or presumed enemies.”¹²

From 1928 to 1942 more repressive laws regarding religious matters were issued. In 1929, laws were passed that greatly limited the rights of clergy and churches. Clergy and their families had no right to vote and had to pay taxes five to ten times greater than other citizens.

The same year The Law on Religious Association was passed that had a lasting effect on the fate of religious bodies in the USSR. It established that a minimum of twenty people of the same religious cult could apply for registration to the city or district committee on religious matters. Such application could be refused without providing a specific reason. The associations were to be monitored by the

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 60.

¹⁰Ibid., 63.

¹¹Ibid., 63-65. Mojzes relates some of the stories of religious people that tell about these arrests, deportation, and disappearance.

¹²Ibid., 65.

Permanent Committee for Religious Matters of the Council of Ministers. Religious groups could not own buildings and objects of worship, but these could be rented from the district soviet free of charge. Religious communities were prohibited from renting printing presses for the production of religious materials. Only liturgical books were allowed in churches. Also the organization of any kind of small group and the opening of libraries were prohibited. Teaching of religion in public schools was prohibited, yet it could be taught in special state-approved schools for the training of leaders. Clergy were permitted to carry out their work only within the territory of the association that employed them. The churches also were not allowed to provide financial or material assistance to their members, nor was any other charitable, social, or educational work allowed.¹³ The law provided the government authorities with control over the registration of churches and clergy. Also the Constitution was changed so that only atheistic propaganda was allowed in mass media and public places.¹⁴ This period, as P. Mojzes observes, was the epitome of “the most thorough attempt at abolishing all organized religion and in suppressing even the minutest religious sentiments... Here religion was, indeed, restricted to the private sphere-the innermost secret of a person’s mind...”¹⁵

It was during this period of the history of the USSR, that in 1940 Latvia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. For about a year the Church in Latvia was subjected to Soviet religious politics. Massive restrictions and persecutions of people, including clergy, were ordered in 1941.¹⁶ Church property was nationalized.¹⁷ P.

¹³Ibid., 66; Michael Bourdeaux, Kathleen Matchett, and Cornelia Gerstenmaier, *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union (1960-70): A Report Prepared for the Minority Rights Group* (n.p., 1970), 7-8, 10-12.

¹⁴Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 67; Bourdeaux, Matchett and Gerstenmaier, *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union*, 8.

¹⁵Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 68.

¹⁶Andersons says that some twelve Latvian Lutheran clergymen and five Catholic priests were deported. Krueger, based on Western sources, suggests that of 230 Lutheran pastors in 1940, only 166

Mojzes somewhat emotionally maintained that repressions against religion in 1940-1941 in the incorporated territories were so damaging, that at the beginning of the German occupation, “the Nazis were perceived as saviors by the occupied people.”¹⁸ During the German occupation (1941-1944), Church life flourished for a short time until a new religious policy was put into effect.¹⁹

While the Germans occupied Latvia, the USSR relaxed its policy toward the Church. The year of 1942 brought new changes in Church and State relations within the Soviet Union. The Church was allowed to aid in the war against Germany and for the freedom of the homeland. Stalin, recognizing the role of the Church in wartime, granted some concessions to the religious organizations, particularly to the Russian Orthodox Church. The laws of 1929 were enforced less vigorously. The government continued to control all aspects of the churches' life. Religious bodies, the Orthodox Church in particular, responded by pledging its loyalty to the government and promising to obey its laws. Those few clergy who did not cooperate with the state, continued to be persecuted and harassed, imprisoned and exiled. During this period the Church was used by the Soviet government for the purposes of its foreign and domestic policy; the Church leaders had to explain abroad that religion in the USSR had full liberty.²⁰ The period of 1942 to 1958 was also characterized by unequal

remained in 1941; of 311 congregations, thirty were dissolved by 1941.

¹⁷Wohlrabe, “Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between ‘Kultur’ and Faith,” 90; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 8; Jouko Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism: The development of the status and activities of Soviet Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church during 1944-1950* (Rovaniemi: The Historical Society of Northern Finland, 1997), 11.

¹⁸Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 6. Similar evaluation is expressed in: Andrew Sorokowski, “Church and State 1917-1964,” in *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union*, ed. Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe (n. p: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989), 44.

¹⁹Andersons, *Cross Road Country: Latvia*, 285; Wohlrabe, “Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between ‘Kultur’ and Faith,” 90-91; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 9.

²⁰Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, “Church-State Relations in the USSR,” in *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power*, ed. Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 90-91; Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 68-70.

treatment of different Christian denominations; while some were favored, others were dealt with harshly. Though in general the treatment of the Church by the State was better, it still remained abominable.²¹

During the years 1942 to 1958, the conditions for religious groups in Latvia became very much like those in the rest of the Soviet Union. The separation of Church and State was affirmed. The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults was established in Latvia in October 1944.²² The Soviet legislation became the basis for laws on religion in Soviet Latvia. In 1945 instructions regarding the registration of congregations were issued stating that each church building or chapel could have only one congregation. As a result of this law, many local congregations were closed, while others denominations merged.²³ The public celebration of Christmas was prohibited in 1947, and it was no longer considered a national holiday.²⁴ The religious community of Latvia was once more decreased in numbers by the deportations of 1949, as well as by arrests, imprisonments, and executions.²⁵ Many nationalized church buildings were turned into concert halls, restaurants, sport clubs, or atheist museums.²⁶

The period of 1958 to 1987 started with the ascent of Nikita Khrushchev to the leadership of the Soviet Union. The year of 1958 was marked with the renewed

²¹Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 70; Marite Sapiets, "Anti-Religious Propaganda and Education," in *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union*, ed. Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe (n. p.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989), 97.

²²Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 288; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 91; *The Baltic States 1940-1972: Documentary Background and Survey of Developments presented to the European Security and Cooperation Conference* (Stockholm: The Baltic Committee in Scandinavia, 1972), 95.

²³Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 291.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 288.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 292-294; Kahle, "Baltic Protestantism," 222-223.

²⁶Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 14; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 92.

vigor of repressive measures against the Church. Churches, seminaries and monasteries were closed again, and clergy were persecuted and imprisoned, mostly for non-religious offenses.²⁷

The State continued to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church. Thus the Orthodox Church was forced by the state to place financial decision making completely in the hands of the parish committee which sometimes included non-believers placed there by the local authorities.²⁸ Pastors and priests were transferred from one congregation to another every few years by the Council for Religious Affairs. Those who succeeded in renewing the spiritual life of their congregations, were soon harassed and re-assigned to distant and small parishes.²⁹

During the 1960s, a massive flood of anti-religious propaganda proclaimed the necessity to remove religion from the life of society. There was a greater subtlety in the persecutions compared to those of the 1930s, for now educational approaches for destroying religion were preferred.³⁰ The anti-religious propaganda became mandatory in educational institutions and among professionals. Also, an emphasis was placed on denying parents the right to determine the religious orientation of their children.³¹

In the beginning of the 1960s, much persecution resulted from secret laws and even verbal orders; some of them were approved as legislation that was tougher than

²⁷For a list of such offenses, see Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 73.

²⁸Ibid., 72.

²⁹Ibid., 75.

³⁰Ibid., 73; John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 215; *Religion and the Soviet State*, 14-15.

³¹Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 74; Walter Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. S. P. Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 324, 326. Anti-religious propagand is discussed in detail in: Sapiets, "Anti-Religious Propaganda and Education.," 106-107; Andres Kung, *A Dream of Freedom: Four Decades of National Survival Versus Russian Imperialism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 1940-1980* (Cardiff: Boreas, 1981), 90-93.

the laws of 1929. More attention was paid to the persecution of unregistered churches and the increasing numbers of dissenters.³² Many were imprisoned, horribly tortured, and even murdered.³³

The 1970s were characterized by more relaxed governmental policies regarding religious groups. The government was ready to make concessions to the official leadership of Christian churches if they were willing to comply with the controls and restrictions of the laws, and during their trips to the West to proclaim the observance of religious freedom in the Soviet Union.³⁴

The law of 1975 provided churches with a legal status that was almost equal to that of a legal entity, which made it easier for local congregations to function. During the same year, the Soviet government signed the Helsinki Agreement of 1975 that affirmed human rights, including religious freedom. It created a situation where, on the one hand, certain concessions provided to the Church by the State, allowed the religious communities to increase in numbers and to experience renewed popular interest. On the other hand, many religious leaders continued to be harassed and persecuted.³⁵ For dissidents, it continued to be a time of harassment, arrests, torture, and, at times, even death. By 1979 the dissident movement began to decline under the pressures of the KGB. Some were exiled, others forced to recant, placed in psychiatric wards, or sentenced to Gulag for long terms.³⁶ During this period their fate

³²*Religion and the Soviet State*, 16.

³³Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 73-74, 75-76; Bourdeaux, Matchett and Gerstenmaier, *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union*, 9; Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 324.

³⁴Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 77.

³⁵Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 77-78; Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 216; John Hiden and Patrick Salmon. *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1991), 135.

³⁶Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 78-80.

became known in the Western world.³⁷

The first half of the 1980s did not bring any change in religious matters. It started with the period of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union. In state politics toward the Church from 1985 to 1990, three periods can be distinguished.³⁸ Around 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev proposed *perestroika* (restructuring of the system) and *glasnotj* (openness, publicity, public discussion), his decisions at first did not affect religion.³⁹ The new president of the Council for Religious Affairs, Konstantin Kharchev, expressed much more favorable views on religion and its importance than his predecessors.⁴⁰ The position of the new government regarding religious matters was clarified when the government greatly supported the celebration of the one thousandth anniversary of the Christianization of Russia, the Millenium of the Baptism of Russia, in 1988.⁴¹ More than 100 parishes were registered by the Council for Religious Affairs in 1987-1988. Religious dissidents were released from prison, though not all of them. On December 25, 1987, media for the first time reported on the Catholic and Protestant observance of Christmas, and in April of 1988 parts of Russian Orthodox Easter services were broadcast on television.⁴²

³⁷Ibid., 77.

³⁸In Sabrina Petra Ramet, "Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev," in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. S. P. Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33-38 a more detailed periodization of this time is proposed: 1) March 1985 to December 1986 (very few signs of change); 2) December 1986-fall 1988 (gradual rehabilitation of religion, particularly the Orthodox Church, as a healthy force); 3) fall 1988-spring 1989 (deepening liberalization and gradual extension of religious changes to all religious groups); 4) from spring 1989 onward (normalization of the religious life).

³⁹Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 82-83; Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 279-281.

⁴⁰Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 82-83; Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 281, 284; Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 327.

⁴¹The celebration of this event is discussed in: Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 82-84; Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 287; Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 333-334.

⁴²Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 283-284.

During 1988-1989 the government's position toward religion was expressed in both its legislation and practice. It was shown in practice as church buildings and monasteries were returned to churches, in particular to the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, churches were reopened, and new ones were built. Some religious prisoners were released. Religious books could be imported and theological schools could be opened. A number of emigrants were permitted to leave the country for religious purposes. Religious organizations were allowed to do charity and social work.⁴³

Although there were great advances made in providing religious freedom in the Soviet Union, there were still political and religious prisoners in imprisonment, religious education was still forbidden, the assignment of clergy was controlled by the government, and the legal status of some religious communities remained undecided. Thus, the improvement during the second half of the 1980s was relative.⁴⁴

P. Mojzes identifies the years 1989-1990 as the time of the Great Transformation for religion in the Soviet Union when changes became decisive and massive.⁴⁵ During this time, religious freedom that had been restored first in practice, was restored in legislation. The new law on religion was passed and the law of 1929 abolished.⁴⁶ The Law Concerning Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organization, published on October 1, 1990,⁴⁷ guaranteed to citizens the freedom of religious profession and the equality of citizens regardless of their religious

⁴³Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 84; Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 216; Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 283-284.

⁴⁴Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 85-86, 102; Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 221.

⁴⁵Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 102.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 282-283; Ramet, "Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev," in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. S. P. Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32. Work on the law was started in 1986 but it was held up until May 1988.

association. It stated that all religious institutions were equal before the law. Though the secular school system was separated from religious education, religious doctrine could be taught according to one's free choice. The law provided religious organizations with the right to lease and own property. They also could employ workers. The state agency did not have control over religious matters but served as a center for information, consultation and expert advice.⁴⁸ This law was a great step toward religious freedom in the USSR, though it still prohibited optional religious education in schools. The law continued to maintain a state institution that dealt with religious matters, and it was not clear regarding the registration of churches.⁴⁹

Almost all religious communities experienced greater freedom after the passing of these laws. Diminished oppression brought about social and political prestige for religious persons; some were elected to legislative bodies of the USSR. The former dissidents received much media and public attention and their reputations were cleared.⁵⁰

Religious organizations from abroad were permitted to open offices in the Soviet Union, as well as to set up relief work and food assistance. Both Western and local evangelists had opportunities to organize mass meetings and rent appropriate halls and buildings under the provisions of the new laws.⁵¹ Thus during the years of 1989-1990 the increasing freedom of religion fostered the development of Christian Churches in the Soviet Union. Churches now had an opportunity to recoup, rebuild and develop their spiritual lives in a new situation.

The anti-religious politics of the Soviet Union had a profound affect on the

⁴⁸Ramet, "Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev," 31-32; Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 339-340; Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 105-107; Ramet, "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," 282.

⁴⁹Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe*, 107-108.

⁵⁰Ibid., 108-110.

⁵¹Ibid., 110, 388; Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 334.

development of Christianity in Latvia after 1940. The periods of greatest difficulty were 1949-1953 and 1959-1964 when the Church suffered greatly. During the other periods, 1945-1948, 1953-1959, and from 1964 onward, the condition of the Church in Latvia was relatively easier.⁵²

Developments within the Denominations

The developments of the denominations in Soviet Latvia differed from denomination to denomination. While the Lutheran and Catholic Churches, called the region's oldest national institutions by one researcher,⁵³ remained independent of any all-union denominational organizations, both the Orthodox and Baptists were incorporated into the respective denominational structures of the Soviet Union. To a great extent such an approach can be explained by the fact that the majority of both the Lutheran and Catholic believers in the USSR were located in the Baltic Republics. The largest Lutheran communities were Latvia and Estonia, while the Latvian Catholic community was the second largest in the Soviet Union, after the one in Lithuania. Both the Orthodox Church and the Baptists were widespread in other parts of the USSR.

The present discussion will be concerned with the Latvian Lutheran Church, Latvian Catholic Church, and Latvian Baptists. About other denominations, such as Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists and Evangelicals there is little information. There is also a lack of research on the Latvian Orthodox Church within the Orthodox

⁵²Alexander Veinbergs, "Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics," in *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917-1967*, ed. Richard H. Marshall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 407-408; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 11.

⁵³Stanley V. Vardys, "The Role of the Churches in the Maintenance of Regional and National Identity in the Baltic Republics," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 18 no. 3 (1987): 288.

Church of the Soviet Union. The reaction toward state politics will be discussed as well as other developments within denominations--their statistical changes, their needs for publications and education of clergy, and their ecumenical efforts.

The Official Reaction of Denominational Leadership to the Soviet Politics

The leadership of the Christian denominations in Latvia in general followed the politics of cooperation with, and accommodation to, the state politics of the USSR. It was regarded as the best way to ensure the existence of the Churches under a hostile and oppressive regime.

The Latvian Lutheran Church and the Estonian Lutheran Church were the largest Lutheran communities in the USSR. They remained independent and were not forced to join any all-union organization. The Lutherans constituted a minority in the other republics of the Soviet Union.

The leadership of the Latvian Lutheran Church had continued its work throughout the first year of the Soviet occupation and World War II. Some Lutheran pastors, including professor of church history, Ludvigs Adamovics, and docent Edgars Rumba, were deported during the "Night of Terror" June 13-14, 1941.⁵⁴ Some fifty-five percent of the Lutheran pastors escaped to the West in 1944-1945. At the end of the War, the Archbishop Teodors Grinbergs and some other religious leaders were transported to Germany by the German army.⁵⁵ Rev. Karlis Irbe was elected archbishop in 1944. The arrests were carried out among the remaining members of the consistory, including Archbishop Irbe who was deported to Siberia.⁵⁶ In 1946,

⁵⁴Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 13.

⁵⁵Ibid., 288; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 92. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Exile was organized in Germany in 1945. Teodors Grinbergs and other prominent Latvian Lutherans were actively involved in its activities in the West.

⁵⁶Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 91.

Gustavs Turs, a rector from Aluksne, became the new “acting” archbishop of the Latvian Lutheran Church, and was elected as such in 1948. His leadership radically changed the Church’s attitude to the state to that of accommodation in order to preserve the Church. Turs policy was harshly criticized by rectors Hugo M. Grivans, Alberts Freijis, and others, who followed Irbe’s line of thought insisting that a spiritually strong Church could not be overcome by the Communists. Turs’ critics were soon arrested.⁵⁷ J. Talonen in his research on the Lutheran Church in 1944-1950 writes about Turs’ policy:

It can be said, perhaps, that he [Turs] made the Lutheran Church an instrument of Soviet Communism, but the motive behind it was to defend the Church in a rather complex manner. Turs’ policy, which was in a total contrast to that of Irbe’s in the attitude he adopted towards the Communists, led him . . . to exhort Lutherans to vote in Soviet elections, to initiate jubilee services on major Soviet holidays and to employ Communist slogans on the promotion of world peace . . .⁵⁸

This line of Church policy toward the State was continued by the successor of Turs, Peteris Kleperis, who became the archbishop in 1968. During the short term of Alberts Freijis’ leadership, who had been imprisoned for eight years during Stalin’s rule, nothing changed.⁵⁹ Archbishop Janis Matulis (1969-1985) was considered a “skilled exponent” of compromise with the state, and so was his successor, Eriks Mesters (1986-1989).⁶⁰ The Lutheran policy of accommodation to the demands of the state continued throughout the Soviet years. As such, it ensured the survival of the Latvian Lutheran Church as an institution, but not the effectiveness of its ministry. As pastor David Krueger in his paper on Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia rhetorically

⁵⁷Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 289-290; Wohlrabe, “Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between ‘Kultur’ and Faith,” 91; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 9.

⁵⁸Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 289-290; my emphasis.

⁵⁹Veinbergs, “Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics,” 419.

⁶⁰James R. Moss, “Recent Developments in the Latvian Lutheran Church,” *Lutheran Forum* 24 (fall 1990): 8.

exclaims, “The question for the Latvian Lutheran Church in Latvia is--has the salt [Matthew 5:13] lost its taste?”⁶¹

The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union was not permitted to establish a countrywide, centralized authority. The only established hierarchies were in Latvia and Lithuania.⁶² For practical purposes, the Latvian Archbishop was responsible for the entire Catholic community in the USSR.⁶³

During the first year of the Soviet rule in 1940-1941, the arrests and deportations of priests, nationalization of property, and the closing of Catholic schools and monasteries was conducted by the Soviet authorities. By August 1940, the concordat between the Vatican and Latvia was renounced, and the papal nuncio expelled by the Soviet government.⁶⁴

The lack of a centralized Catholic ecclesiastical organization shaped state politics towards this church similarly to that toward the Latvian Lutheran Church. After the reoccupation of Latvia in 1944, the state directed its attention to the destruction of the Catholic hierarchy and its organization. Still, the Vatican maintained its right to consecrate and appoint bishops in Latvia. The only remaining bishop in Latvia in 1944 was Metropolitan Antonijs Springovics of Riga. In 1947, he consecrated two bishops, Kazimirs Dulbinskis and Peteris Strods.⁶⁵ Dulbinskis was arrested and deported in 1949 and Strods succeeded Spriganovics after his death in 1958. Dulbinskis was allowed to return to Latvia in 1958, and then again in 1964, but

⁶¹Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 18.

⁶²Roman Solchanyk and Ivan Hvat, “The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union,” in *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 49-50.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 54.

⁶⁵Henriks Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca komunisma gados. 1940.-1990.* (Riga: Rīgas Romas katoļu metropolijas kūrija, 1992), 52.

the state did not permit him to assume his pastoral duties.⁶⁶ After the death of Archbishop Strods in 1960, the Catholic Church in Latvia was left without a functioning bishop for four years. The church hierarchy was restored in November, 1964. While in Rome for the Second Vatican Council, Julians Vaivods was consecrated bishop and named the apostolic administrator of the Riga Archdiocese and the Liepaja Diocese.⁶⁷ In 1982, Janis Tsakuls (Cakuls) was consecrated bishop and named an auxiliary in the Riga Archdiocese and the Liepaja Diocese.⁶⁸ Five years later, Vilhems Nukss was consecrated bishop.⁶⁹

Certainly the most important development in the life of the Latvian Catholic Church under Soviet rule was the elevation of Archbishop J. Vaivods to the dignity of cardinal.⁷⁰ The importance of this event was summarized by a reporter:

The most surprising of the four East European nominations was that of Julians Vaivods... He is not only the first-ever Latvian Cardinal, but also the first Soviet citizen ever to reach this rank in the Catholic Church . . . his appointment is not only a personal tribute, but an acknowledgement by the Vatican of the tenacity of the Latvian Catholic Church, . . . The Pope's choice of a Latvian Cardinal, . . . is a tribute to the tenacity under exceptionally difficult circumstances of Catholics in the Baltic region.⁷¹

⁶⁶Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 54, 59.

⁶⁷Petr Smykovsky, "Jubilee of Bishop Julian Cardinal Vaivods" *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 4 (1985): 64-65; Julian Vaivods, "An Interview with the New Latvian Cardinal." Interview by Gianni Varani, *Religion in Communist Lands* 11 (summer 1983): 207-209; Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 59.

⁶⁸Vladimir Dubakin, "Monsignor Janis Tsakuls Consecrated Bishop," *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 4 (1983): 65-66; Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznica*, 130.

⁶⁹A.K. "New Catholic Bishop of Latvia Consecrated," *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 11 (1988): 51-52.

⁷⁰Aleksiy Skobel, "Bishop Julian Vaivods - Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in Latvia," *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6 (1983), 72; Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznica*, 131-134.

⁷¹Carolyn Burch, "Julijans Vaivods," *Religion in Communist Lands* 11 (summer 1983): 206-207. C. Burch also comments on the Pope's choice of a Latvian instead of a Lithuanian cardinal: "What makes Vaivods' nomination surprising is that the Pope might have been expected to choose a representative of the Catholic hierarchy in Lithuania, where Catholicism is the majority denomination.

The leadership of the Latvian Catholic Church, particularly that of Archbishop J. Vaivods, pursued a constant non-confrontational policy of “quiet diplomacy,” or quiet pastoral activity within the limits of Soviet law, attempting to preserve the existence of the Church. At times the Archbishop was rebuked by his subjects for being too compromising, but “quiet diplomacy” proved to be successful at gaining concessions from the state in the late 1970s and 1980s.⁷² There was no visible human rights movement among Latvian Catholics (unlike those in the Lithuanian Catholic Church). A document signed by more than 5,000 residents of Daugavpils, the center of the Latgale region, reached the West in 1975 warning that officials intended to tear down a local Catholic church but it appeared to be an isolated event rather than an extensive movement.⁷³

The Latvian Baptists also suffered great losses of leadership during the war and subsequent repressions; several key leaders had emigrated to the West. The Baptists were visited by A. L. Andreev, the leader of the Baptists of the Soviet Union, in 1940. After the war, the incorporation of the Latvian Baptists into the All-Union Council of Evangelicals-Baptists (AUCECB)⁷⁴ was accomplished. In August, 1945, Latvian Baptists, along with Lithuanian and Estonian Baptists and Evangelicals joined the AUCECB. N. A. Levindanto, a Slavic minister who had spent many years

Two factors have prevented this. The first is the strong bond linking Catholicism with Lithuanian patriotism,... Secondly, the obvious candidate for Cardinal Archbishop Steponavicius... has never been recognized by the Soviet authorities. To appoint a Lithuanian Cardinal, therefore, would mean apparently attempting to provoke the Soviet government, and thus jeopardising the already difficult situation of Catholics in Lithuania.”

⁷²Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 160-161.

⁷³Solchanyk and Hvat, “The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union,” 73; Allworth, 173

⁷⁴Michael Bourdeaux and Peter Reddaway, “Church and State in Schism: The Recent History of the Soviet Baptists,” in *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power*, ed. Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 106. The title of AUCECB originated in 1944 when the state allowed the Baptist Church and the Evangelical Christian Church to unite under an all-union leadership. In 1945, majority of the Soviet Pentecostal were absorbed, and in 1963 some Mennonites. The AUCECB formed the only Christian group, other than the Russian Orthodox Church, that was permitted to organize on an all-Union scale.

in Moscow,⁷⁵ was appointed as the AUCECB plenipotentiary for the Baltic region with permanent residence in Riga, Latvia. His task was to make sure that churches adhered to the statutes of the All-Union Council.

There were numerous leadership shifts among the Latvian Baptists. In 1952, Friedrich Khuns (Fridrihs Kuns) at the age of sixty-nine was appointed to a leadership position, and he remained in office until his retirement in 1959. He was succeeded by N. A. Levindato (1959-1966), P. E. Egle (1966-1977),⁷⁶ and Janis Tervits (since 1977). The Latvian leaders carried the title of bishop.⁷⁷ After joining the AUCECB, the Latvian Baptists attempted to maintain friendly relationships with the leadership in Moscow and Levindanto, yet locally pursued a path more to their liking.⁷⁸

A reform movement rose among the members of the AUCECB in 1961, leading to a schism in 1965.⁷⁹ It came into being among the believers as a reaction to the extensive control of the State over Church life, exercised through state organs and the AUCECB, the official leadership of the Soviet Baptists and Evangelicals.⁸⁰ The problems of the Baptist and Evangelical community, according to the *Initiativniki*,

⁷⁵Steve Durasoff, *The Russian Protestants: Evangelicals in the Soviet Union 1944-1964* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 125; Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ont.: Herald, 1981), 92.

⁷⁶Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, 224. P. K. P. Egle, born in 1903, was the presbyter of one of the strongest Latvian churches in Talsi in the 1940s and 1950s.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 264-265.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁹Bourdeaux and Reddaway, "Church and State in Schism," 105.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 106, 109, 111-112. This control was expressed, for example, in the registration of congregations. The registration of the Evangelical and Baptist churches lasted for only two years, 1947-1948. During this time, a fraction of churches were registered but majority was left unregistered and consequently without any rights. In time they came to be considered illegal by the state and were subjected to persecutions with the aim of their liquidation. The AUCECB had no control over registration, for it was done by the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, and, according to the Soviet rules, it could maintain contacts only with registered communities. Thus the All-Union Council was representative of only a part of Soviet Evangelicals and Baptists. As a state recognized organization, the AUCECB could not openly support the registration of the illegal congregations and many of them were closed.

the reform movement, pointed to deeper problems in society and church. The principles of freedom of conscience and religion were violated severely by both the State and the AUCECB. The leaders of the All-Union Council were also blamed for subservience to the human directives coming from the state and forgetting the mission of the Church--spreading the Gospel.⁸¹ In 1965, the *Initsiativniki* and their supporters formed the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB) as the leadership of the persecuted church.⁸²

The Reform Baptist movement did not split Latvian Baptists. Historian Walter Sawatsky explained the lack of the schism in Latvia and Estonia saying, "Because both republics were small and their membership was relatively small, the leaders...settled their differences internally, invariably presenting a united voice in Moscow."⁸³ But that they were not satisfied with their status and restrictions imposed on their work, was made clear by P. K. Egle at the AUCECB congress in 1963. His speech at the congress also suggested that the information about the reformers that had reached Latvia, was contradictory and prevented the Latvian Baptists from forming a clear opinion of them.⁸⁴

⁸¹Ibid., 111-112. The attempts of the AUCECB at reconciliation with the CCECB were continuously rejected by the latter. The members of the CCECB congregations continued to be harassed and accused in the press as well as imprisoned under the state laws prohibiting religious education, mass distribution of printed materials, and other accusations.

⁸²Ibid., 127, 131-141.

⁸³Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, 264. He said that in 1955, one third of the Latvian presbyters were trained persons.

⁸⁴Ibid., 207-208. W. Sawatsky summarized P. K. Egle's speech: "Latvian presbyter P. K. Egle declared flatly that the situation in Latvia was not satisfactory... They [Latvian Baptists] would also like the freedom for their preachers to visit neighboring congregations,...Egle even took the liberty to express a personal assessment of Karev's [general secretary of the AUCECB] leadership. He continued the rather sharp needling by adding that the Latvians were a thrifty people, and they felt that the leaders' salaries were rather high. In fact, the Latvians sometimes thought that the union leadership was afraid of suffering and confrontation, and it also seemed to them that the leaders were hanging onto their positions a long time. He concluded his speech by asserting that the Latvians had no clear opinion about the *Orgkomitet* [of the *Initsiativniki*] because the information was contradictory, but they did know that these men were people of honor."

Still some Baptists in Latvia were involved in the reform movement. The leaflet of the reformers reported that on October 24, 1974, one of their printing presses, located on a farmstead in the Cesis region in Latvia, was discovered by the KGB. Five people, workers of the underground printing house “Khristianin”, were arrested. A hand-made printing machine along with over nine tons of paper, 15,000 printed Gospels⁸⁵ and other materials were confiscated.⁸⁶ In 1984, a declaration from a Latvian Baptist, Janis Rozkalns, reached the West. In his declaration Rozkalns, a prisoner of conscience in a camp in the Urals at that time, wrote about his arrest, trial, and imprisonment. He had been arrested for exposing the neglect of religious freedom and basic human rights in Latvia. Also 149 cassettes and religious books had been confiscated at his arrest. Rozkalns had been sentenced to five years in a strict regime camp and three years of exile.⁸⁷ There were other cases of Baptist activism and consequent arrests in Latvia in the late 1970s and 1980s.⁸⁸

The leadership of all the recognized denominations in the USSR was required by the state authorities to support the peace politics, declared by the state during the Soviet period. Latvian Catholic and Lutheran leaders participated in peace committees and visited peace related events abroad. Also their participation in international meetings and conferences was allowed under the requirement that the message of religious freedom and observance of human rights in the Soviet Union be conveyed to foreign organizations.⁸⁹

⁸⁵In Anderson, *Religion and the Soviet State*, 44, the number of the New Testaments quoted, is 30,000.

⁸⁶Kung, *A Dream of Freedom*, 99-100.

⁸⁷Janis Rozkalns, “Latvian Baptist Appeals to Stockholm,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 13 (summer 1985): 198.

⁸⁸Vardys, “The Role of the Churches,” 297.

⁸⁹Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 161; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 15; Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of People: Religion in the U.S.S.R.* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 184; Veinbergs, “Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics,” 419.

Other Developments within the Denominations

Besides Church and State relations, there were other developments taking place within the denominations in Latvia. Many of them came as a consequence of state politics or in reaction to them, thus shaping the appearance of particular denominations.

Decrease in Numbers

Membership and participation in almost all the Churches declined. The Latvian Lutheran Church during the Soviet period experienced great decline in numbers. In 1937, there were 308 congregations with some 1,000,207 members, in 1948 there were 322 congregations but only about 600,000 members. In 1983 there remained 210 Lutheran congregations with some 350,000 members.⁹⁰ It is difficult to know how many Lutherans were actively involved in their churches or even true believers. The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation in the early 1970's claimed that one to two thirds of former members of most congregations were still churchgoers. The number of regular communicants was under ten percent.⁹¹ The Lutheran Church had diminished in numbers while the membership of the free (Baptist, Adventist, etc.) churches had not changed significantly.⁹² Most of the baptisms, confessions, and burial rites were conducted among Catholics. The number of Catholic parishes was reduced from 241 in 1948 to 179 in 1964 and remained practically unchanged for about two decades. Two thirds of the parishes were located in Latgale. The Catholic Church in 1988 had 105 priests, compared to 135 in 1985. The number of Catholic believers was estimated at about 300,000 in 1987.⁹³

⁹⁰Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 11.

⁹¹Veinbergs, "Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics," 416.

⁹²Kahle, "Baltic Protestantism," 224.

⁹³Vardys, "The Role of the Churches," 292.

Still the numbers of Christians quoted by a state official in 1986 indicated that some forty percent of the population of 2.5 million people were believers. Of those, some 50 percent were Catholics, 30 percent were Lutherans and the rest were Orthodox believers, Old Believers and Baptists.⁹⁴ These numbers indicate the relative stability of the Catholic Church and the rather dramatic decrease for the Lutheran Church in membership and participation. Statistics, along with other indicators of church life, showed that Catholicism could be considered the dominant Christian group in Soviet Latvia.⁹⁵

Need for Education and Clergy

The need for young and educated clergy was an acute problem for all the denominations in Latvia.⁹⁶ The number of Lutheran pastors had decreased from 224 in 1937, to 122 in 1948 and to eighty in 1983.⁹⁷ Of these eighty pastors, about fifty were ordained before 1945.⁹⁸ One of the reasons for the shortage of clergy was the sporadic character of education. In 1956, the authorities allowed the Latvian Lutheran Church to open theological courses for the training of clergy. In 1960, twenty people attended these courses, but in 1955-66 only ten were graduated. In 1985, there were some forty students, with five graduates that year.⁹⁹ Since 1971 the Theological College operated through correspondence courses that included all theological disciplines, but was short of theological literature. There were some thirty to fifty

⁹⁴Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 72-73.

⁹⁵Vardys, "The Role of the Churches," 292.

⁹⁶Kung, *A Dream of Freedom*, 97.

⁹⁷Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 11.

⁹⁸Ibid., 16; Moss, "Recent Developments in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 8.

⁹⁹Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 16.

participants of which approximately five or six were ordained every year.¹⁰⁰

The only two Catholic seminaries in the USSR were located in Kaunas (Lithuania) and Riga. They provided Catholic clergy for the whole Soviet Union.¹⁰¹ There were fifty-nine students at the Riga seminary in 1985, thirty-one from Latvia, twelve from Byelorussia, eight from Ukraine, four from Kazakhstan and one each from Estonia, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan and the RSFSR.¹⁰² In 1980, the authorities permitted the construction of a new building for a seminary in Riga, which was finished in 1982.¹⁰³ In Latvia, the priests gathered annually for a retreat since 1952 to foster the spiritual life of the clergy.¹⁰⁴

Although Baptist Sunday schools were prohibited, the religious education of children and youth was continued in illegal forms and in such places as pastors' apartments or basements.¹⁰⁵ The religious education of adults was carried out in Bible courses (1947-1948, then only in 1984, 1986 and 1988). In 1968, the AUCECB started a correspondence Bible course that was completed by twenty Latvian Baptists. A three-year course of preaching classes was started in Latvia in 1980 to provide theological education for adults.¹⁰⁶

Shortage of Religious Literature

There were two reasons for the shortage of religious literature. First, the kinds

¹⁰⁰Veinbergs, "Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics," 416; Krueger, *Lutheranism in Latvia and Estonia*, 16-17; Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 91; *Religion and the Soviet State*, 38.

¹⁰¹Bourdeaux, *Opium of People*, 180; Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 161-162.

¹⁰²Sorokowski, "Church and State 1917-1964," 56.

¹⁰³Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 73.

¹⁰⁴Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 156-157.

¹⁰⁵Tervits, "Nemeji un deveji," 127.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 129.

of publications and the amount of each publication were strictly limited by the authorities. Secondly, sending religious literature to Latvia from abroad was prohibited by law. This situation led one of the Western observers to conclude, "Bibles are treasures in the Baltic Republics today."¹⁰⁷ Since 1948 the Lutheran Church was permitted to publish a church calendar. In the 1980s, 15,000 calendars were printed annually.¹⁰⁸ In 1954, permission was given by the authorities to publish 5,000 copies of a hymnbook, but only after passages that hinted at defiance of worldly enemies were removed. The New Testament in Latvian was reprinted in 1960 in an insufficiently small amount--only 5,000 copies.¹⁰⁹ Permission was granted to the Catholics to publish a limited number a church calendar only during 1947. In the 1970s, a prayer book and liturgy was issued, as well as other liturgical books imported from abroad that reflected the liturgical changes of Vatican II.¹¹⁰ A catechism was published in Latvian (1978) and Latgallian dialect (1981), and a five volume lectionary issued in the 1980s.¹¹¹

Ecumenical Activities

The ecumenical activities of the denominations were severely limited. Personal contacts with churches abroad were maintained for the most of the Soviet period. According to a document issued by the state in 1963, the Latvian Lutheran Church and the Baptists were members of the World Council of Churches. Lutherans, Old Believers and Baptists participated in the International Association of Christian

¹⁰⁷Kung, *A Dream of Freedom*, 99.

¹⁰⁸Moss, "Recent Developments in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 8.

¹⁰⁹Wohlrabe, "Lutheranism in Latvia: A Struggle Between 'Kultur' and Faith," 91; Bourdeaux, *Opium of People*, 184.

¹¹⁰Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 149-151.

¹¹¹Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 73.

Churches (Prague Christian Movement for Peace). The AUCECB was a member of the World Union of Baptists and the European Baptist Federation. The Catholic Church, including Latvian bishop J. Vaivods, participated in several sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Lutheran bishops were given more freedom than Catholics to travel abroad for international conferences and invite foreign guests. Still both Catholics and Lutherans did not enjoy the privileges of the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow.¹¹²

The Latvian Lutheran Church supported individual Lutheran congregations in the USSR since 1976, providing a pastor for German Lutherans in Kazakhstan and Kirgiziya, and establishing contacts with congregations in Siberia.¹¹³ The uneven treatment of denominations created some degree of mistrust among them, though in general the relations among the Latvian Christian denominations remained positive. In Latvia, the Lutheran Church organized an ecumenical service on May 8, to celebrate the end of World War II, where representatives from Catholics, Orthodox, Old Believers and Baptists were invited to participate. Also, the leaders of the Churches met at important celebrations, like Luther's 500th anniversary and the 800th anniversary of the Christianization of Latvia, and at the bishops' birthday and other appointment celebrations.¹¹⁴

Other Denominations in Soviet Latvia

The fate of other Christian groups in Latvia is less clear. Also the available information on other Christian denominations in Latvia is less comprehensive.

The Methodist Church ceased to exist as an organized group in Latvia after

¹¹²Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 171-172.

¹¹³Kahle, "Baltic Protestantism," 224; Bourdeaux, *Opium of People*, 185.

¹¹⁴Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca*, 172.

World War II.¹¹⁵ Foreign missionaries and local pastors left the country; most of them emigrated to the United States.¹¹⁶ When the Methodist congregations were not accepted as independent communities by the Council for Affairs of Religious Cults in 1948, the Latvian Methodists had an option to join an acceptable religious community. Most of the Methodists' 3,150 members and eighteen ministers joined the Latvian Lutheran Church and consequently were absorbed, thereby losing their unique faith emphasis.¹¹⁷ A similar choice was faced by the Courland Brethren Congregation. They preferred to join the Lutherans instead of the Baptists. As a result of this merger, a number of the Brethren members ceased to participate in the work of their congregations.¹¹⁸

During Soviet rule, the Seventh Day Adventists in Latvia, despite persecution and repression, continued to exist and were somewhat tolerated. Most of the congregations survived as well as their Sunday schools.¹¹⁹ Since Seventh Day Adventists, according to their convictions, neither work nor let children attend school on Saturdays, they were fired for missing work days and fined for keeping their children away from school. Seeking to preserve their faith, many Adventists did not pursue education, and thus were usually relegated to lower paying jobs. Adventist soldiers were forced to do military service, but they refused to use guns. For such disobedience they were tried, imprisoned and even executed.¹²⁰ The Adventists were threatened with having their children removed from their families. The threat was

¹¹⁵Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 98-99.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 128.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 123, 128; Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 234-238.

¹¹⁸Talonen, *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism*, 238-242.

¹¹⁹Cernevskis and Kleimanis, "Septitas Dienas Adventisti Latvija," 110.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 116-117.

carried out on one occasion in Latvia.¹²¹ The involvement of the Latvian Seventh Day Adventists in running an underground printing press was discovered by the authorities in 1970. The arrested people were imprisoned and sent to prison camps in Siberia.¹²²

Like other believers, many Old Believers suffered from repression and deportations. Their property was nationalized. The traditions of the Old Believers were maintained at homes and within churches. The only publication issued in limited numbers was the Church Calendar.¹²³ One community in Riga and some in Latgale existed in the early 1970s.¹²⁴ Only in 1989 the Central Council of Old Believers, Pomortsy Church in Latvia, was established and the leader of the Grebenshcikov community in Riga, Father Ioann Miroljubov was elected its president. Grebenshcikov school was reopened and the Society of the Old Believers' Culture established during the same year.¹²⁵

The Russian Orthodox Church lost its autocephalous status, and it was subordinate to the Moscow Patriarch before World War II.¹²⁶ Though the Orthodox were less persecuted than other religious groups, the number of both members and parishes decreased in the Soviet years. In 1962, it is estimated that there were about 44,560 Orthodox believers in Latvia.¹²⁷ In 1986, there were 87 communities in Latvia,

¹²¹Ibid., 117.

¹²²Bourdeaux, Matchett and Gerstenmaier, *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union (1960-70)*, 33.

¹²³Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 83; Pashin, "Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 183.

¹²⁴Veinbergs, "Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Republics," 417.

¹²⁵Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 84.

¹²⁶Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 16; Kung, *A Dream of Freedom*, 96-97.

¹²⁷I. Suvorova, "Otnosheniya mezhdru Pravoslavnoi Tserkvyu Latvii i gosudarstvom v 50-60-ye godi XX veka," in *Pravoslaviye v Latvii: Istoritsheskiye ocherki., b 2-x momax*, vol.1, ed. A. V.

compared to 123 in 1958.¹²⁸

Thus, the Christian denominations in Soviet Latvia suffered harsh treatment by the state, severe losses in terms of organization, numbers of believers, and access to their fellow believers abroad. Some denominations disappeared while others continued to exist under great pressure from the state.

Changes in the 1980s

The late 1980s became known as the “awakening” of the Latvian nation. Parallel to the awakening in the cultural and political spheres, religious freedom became a central issue in Latvia. The most impressive story of success is that of the movement among the Latvian Lutheran clergy. Pastors Modris Plate, Roberts Akmentins, Juris Rubenis, Janis Vanags (elected Archbishop in 1993), Artus Kaminskis, Andrejs Kavacs and many others came to be associated with the *Rebirth and Renewal* movement. It started as a dissident movement within the denomination and became part of the national awakening which took place in Latvia in the second half of the 1980s.

The *Rebirth and Renewal* Group in the Lutheran Church

The desire to renew the life of the Lutheran Church was expressed by students and some lecturers at Riga Theological Seminary beginning in 1983.¹²⁹ The chain of events that led to the organization of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group, started in 1986, after the death of Archbishop Janis Matulis and before his successor Eriks Mesters

Gavriljin (Riga: Balto-Slavyanskoye Obshchestvo kulturnovo razvitiya i sotrudnichestva, 1993), 90.

¹²⁸Davis, *A Long Walk to Church*, 54, 33.

¹²⁹Marite Sapiets, “‘Rebirth and Renewal’ in the Latvian Lutheran Church,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 16 (autumn 1988): 237.

had been consecrated. A Latvian theology student, Maris Ludviks, had problems obtaining permission for ordination from the Council for Religious Affairs because of his religious activism among young people. In the absence of a Latvian bishop, Ludviks asked the Lithuanian Lutheran bishop Kalvanas to ordain him.

Soon Ludviks was attacked in the local press, which called him a black-marketeer and former juvenile delinquent.¹³⁰ A pastor of Kuldiga and Edole (Kurzeme region) and a dean at the Riga theological seminary, Modris Plate and five other clergymen submitted a letter of protest to the newspaper. In it they argued that the attack on Ludviks was not in keeping with the new thinking and openness advocated by Gorbachev. The Council for Religious Affairs responded to this letter by pressuring Archbishop Mesters and the consistory to dismiss pastor Plate.¹³¹

Plate's ministry in his congregation had been successful. In four years the number of church members had risen from 300 to 450 and the number of communicants from 400 to 1,200.¹³² He had also started Bible courses for the laity, introduced some liturgical reforms, and held 223 services during a year, more than in any other Lutheran congregation. He had renovated the church building and installed central heating. Pastor Plate was also popular among other clergymen. His successful ministry was not appreciated by the state authorities. Thus, his support for Ludviks only provided a pretext the authorities needed to dismiss him.¹³³

The Council for Religious Affairs did not need the approval of the Lutheran consistory to dismiss Plate. If his license were revoked by the state, his activities as a pastor would become illegal. The consistory insisted that there was no reason for his

¹³⁰Ibid., 238.

¹³¹Ibid.; Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 152-153.

¹³²Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 239.

¹³³Ibid.; Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 152-153.

dismissal, but eventually it gave in to pressure from the authorities, thereby continuing its politics of submission to the state. Pastor Plate was suspended from his duties as pastor of Kuldiga and Edole on March 18, 1987.¹³⁴

After the dismissal of Plate by the consistory, open letters supporting Plate were sent to the Archbishop. One was signed by nineteen, another by five Lutheran clergymen, among them the seminary rector, four lecturers and three deans. Both letters praised Plate's qualities as pastor and teacher. In their letter, the nineteen pastors said,

Try to imagine how we feel when, before our eyes, we see one of the best clergymen in Latvia being punished and transferred elsewhere, so that all the activities which he initiated in the parish of Kuldiga are disrupted. His only fault is consistent and uncompromising service rendered to God and dedicated to the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia . . . Which of us will be the next victim?¹³⁵

Despite the support of fellow clergy and 350 members of Modris Plate's congregation, his dismissal as both dean and pastor was confirmed by the consistory. The Archbishop, though expressing support to Plate in personal conversation with Janis Rozkalns, did not repeat it in public.¹³⁶ Plate was supported by a more secular Latvian human rights group, *Helsinki '86*,¹³⁷ that issued an appeal to the signatories of the Helsinki Agreement drawing attention to the unjust treatment of Plate and Ludviks by the Soviet state.¹³⁸

Under pressure from within the denomination (pastors) and from outside (the

¹³⁴Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 239.

¹³⁵Quoted in: Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 239-240.

¹³⁶Ibid., 240; Janis Rozkalns, "Latvians Defend Dismissed Pastor," *Religion in Communist Lands* 15 (winter 1987): 345; Moss, "Recent Developments in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 9.

¹³⁷On the *Helsinki '86* group, see Rasma Karklins, *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy: The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia*, (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1994), 69-70; Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 241.

¹³⁸Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 241.

Council for Religious Affairs), the consistory proposed a compromise that would allow Plate to stay in Kuldiga if he would slow down the activity of his congregation, stop defending Ludviks, and obey the Archbishop.¹³⁹

In response to this overture from the Lutheran consistory on June 14, 1987, pastor Plate and 14 other pastors (including seminary rector Dr. R. Akmentins and two deans) formed a group called *Rebirth and Renewal* with the aim to “defend openly the right of Latvians to lead a Christian life,” as well as to end the decline of their church and renew its appeal to Latvians. In a declaration to the consistory they said that they wanted to engage in discussion about such issues as alternatives to the military service for religious believers, religious instruction for children, legal rights for the church, the possibility of religious radio and television programs, publication of more religious literature, and the authorization of religious activities in hospitals and old people’s homes.¹⁴⁰

The consistory reacted to this document by dismissing Plate as pastor and lecturer at the seminary, Dr. R. Akmentins as rector and, Reverend A. Beimanis as dean. Forty five students and lecturers at the seminary protested this action, which led to the suspension of all teaching at the seminary. Plate continued to work in Kuldiga, and when the new pastor arrived, the congregation made it clear that he was not acceptable to them. Maris Ludviks emigrated at the end of 1987, after he was continuously refused a license and was encouraged by the authorities to leave the country.¹⁴¹

By now the movement had become known through illegal publications in the West. The consistory came under the pressure of Lutherans abroad, including a visit

¹³⁹Ibid., 242; Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 153-154, 335; Rozkalns, “Latvians Defend Dismissed Pastor,” 344.

¹⁴⁰Sapiets, “‘Rebirth and Renewal’ in the Latvian Lutheran Church,” 242-243.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 242-244; Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 154; Moss, “Recent Developments in the Latvian Lutheran Church,” 8.

of the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr. Gunnar Staalstett. Also the Archbishop Mesters was questioned during his visits to the United States and West Germany.¹⁴² Under pressure, the consistory reinstated Plate on January 26, 1988. Dr. Akmentins was allowed to lecture at the seminary, though he was not reinstated as rector. The consistory also appointed Reverend Uldis Saveljevs as youth pastor--a position that was still illegal in Latvia even though he was a supporter of the *Rebirth and Renewal* movement.¹⁴³

In April 1989 the General Synod of the Latvian Lutheran Church voted the entire consistory and Archbishop Mesters out of office. They were replaced by Karlis Gailitis, who was supportive of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group, as new Archbishop and a new consistory of eight persons, all from the *Rebirth and Renewal* movement. Among the new members of the consistory were Plate and Dr. Akmentins. The Synod also re-adopted the church constitution of 1928 and passed a resolution on "Justice and Freedom" which supported the self-determination and independence of Latvia.¹⁴⁴ The consecration of Archbishop Karlis Gailitis took place on September 3, 1989, in the Dome Church, the Lutheran cathedral in Riga, in the presence of foreign guests. The ceremony was conducted by Archbishop Wekstrom of Sweden and the Bishop of Gibraltar, John Satterthwaite, who represented of the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁴⁵

The *Rebirth and Renewal* and National Awakening

The *Rebirth and Renewal* group in the Lutheran Church was actively involved in the national awakening in Latvia together with many other political and religious

¹⁴²Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 244-247.

¹⁴³Ibid., 248; Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 154-155.

¹⁴⁴Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 156-157; Marite Sapiets, "The Baltic Churches and the National Revival," *Religion in Communist Lands* 18 (summer 1990): 156.

¹⁴⁵Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnostj & the Gospel*, 158.

groups. Gorbachev's politics of *glasnostj* and *perestroika* led to an unprecedented expression of dissent and discussion of national issues in Latvia where the native population feared the suppression of its language and culture. All kinds of unofficial groups appeared--not only the human rights group, *Helsinki '86*, but also groups for defense of the environment and national-religious groups. Most of the groups were interested in greater national autonomy (later independence) of Latvia and a more truthful portrayal of history.¹⁴⁶

These groups organized mass meetings to commemorate the important events of recent Latvian history that had not been recognized by the Soviet authorities. Thousands of people took part in demonstrations organized by *Helsinki '86* on June 14, 1987, to commemorate the deportation of June 13-14, 1941, and again on August 23, to protest the annexation of Latvia by the USSR in 1940. Members of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group took part in these demonstrations. Reverend Juris Rubenis, one of the founders of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group, was among the speakers at the demonstrations in June, 1987.¹⁴⁷ Though *Rebirth and Renewal* was a religious, not a political group, it identified with the concerns of Latvian society and had close links with the *Helsinki '86* group. At the same time, the *Helsinki '86* group and their illegally published journal "Auseklis" (Morning Star) included religious freedom in their national and political aims. Some of the *Rebirth and Renewal* documents were published in "Auseklis."¹⁴⁸

In June 1988, Lutheran pastors Juris Rubenis and Modris Plate united with the members of the *Helsinki '86* group, reformists and ex-members of the Latvian Communist Party, journalists and the Defense of the Environment Club (the Latvian 'Greens') to form the Latvian Popular Front (LPF) that led the national awakening

¹⁴⁶Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 243.

¹⁴⁷Sapiets, "The Baltic Churches and the National Revival," 157.

¹⁴⁸Sapiets, "'Rebirth and Renewal' in the Latvian Lutheran Church," 243-244.

movement in Latvia in the following years.¹⁴⁹

The political program of the Latvian Popular Front, created at its founding congress in October, 1988, included a substantial section on the democratization of religious life in Latvia. In this program, freedom of conscience was declared an essential part of democratization. They demanded changes in legislation regarding religion as well as the creation of a revised Council for Religious Affairs that would represent the religious bodies of Latvia. The rights enjoyed by public organizations were demanded for churches in Latvia.¹⁵⁰

The Latvian Popular Front (LPF) rapidly increased in size, and by 1990 it had over 200,000 members.¹⁵¹ The authorities, in the spirit of *glasnostj* and *perestroika*, would not intervene with the activities of the LPF or other groups calling for the independence of Latvia. The LPF became an umbrella organization that united members of different groups and parties that ranged from ex-Communists to radical nationalists, such as the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNIM), and also included some religious and ecological groups. The uniting principle for these groups was the call for democracy, human rights, and national independence. They were not united over how soon and by what means independence should be declared.¹⁵²

The Latvian Lutheran Synod that met in 1989 and elected the new Lutheran consistory consisting of members of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group, also issued a statement that included both religious and political demands. The statement called for the return of confiscated churches, and the provision of alternative service for people whose beliefs kept them from serving in the military. The statement also called for the establishment of a free society and the self-determination and independence of

¹⁴⁹Sapiets, "The Baltic Churches and the National Revival," 157.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 158.

¹⁵²Ibid.

Latvia.¹⁵³ The Synod expressed its support for the Latvian National Front and the Latvian Independence Movement (a more radical movement demanding immediate independence of Latvia) because of their aims regarding freedom of conscience and rights for religious organizations. A few months later the Lutheran consistory expressed its support for the goals of the Latvian Popular Front which included national independence of Latvia. The statement of support was published in the local press stating that “only in an independent Latvian state, free from dictates of any imperial centre, will our people be able to realise fully either its national values or the universal values given to us by the Christian faith.”¹⁵⁴

Clergy and laity of various Christian churches were actively involved in almost all the national and political parties. Juris Rubenis and Modris Plate were elected the members of the central council of the Latvian Popular Front; J. Rubenis spoke at many meetings of the LPF. As a representative of both the Latvian Lutheran Church and the LPF, he visited Latvian communities abroad to explain the situation in Latvia. He was also on the editorial board of the LPF’s newspaper, “Atmoda” (Awakening), and wrote articles in other Latvian publications, like the newspaper, “Latvijas Jaunatne” (Latvian Youth), formerly “Padomju Jaunatne” (Soviet Youth).¹⁵⁵

The Latvian Popular Front held a religious service at the beginning of its founding congress on October 9, 1988, in the Doma Church in Riga. The service was conducted by Plate and Rubenis and was the first service held in the national Lutheran cathedral since its confiscation and conversion to a concert hall in 1959.¹⁵⁶ It had been Rubenis’ idea to apply to the authorities for permission for the service. The granting of the permission came as a great surprise to everyone, including Juris

¹⁵³Ibid., 156.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 159.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

Rubenis himself. In an interview he said that it “could even be described as a miracle . . . I had no way of pulling strings in order to influence the higher officials.”¹⁵⁷

The service was a great success. It was very well attended as well as broadcast on Latvian television. Rubenis felt that the service “had the effect of an earthquake. . . . It marked a completely new era in the evolution of our society, a break with the past. A lot of people revised their values that day, as well as their attitude towards faith in God.”¹⁵⁸

The Lutheran Archbishop, Karlis Gailitis, was an active supporter of the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNIK) that demanded an immediate independence of Latvia. Archbishop Gailitis opened the LNIK congress in May 1989 with prayer. He had expressed his desire to establish justice in Latvian society by regaining the freedom it lost as a result of the Soviet occupation in 1940.¹⁵⁹

The Lutheran Church also cooperated with the groups involved in the national awakening movement over publication of religious periodicals. The Lutheran newspaper, “Svetdienas Rits” (Sunday Morning), began as a supplement to “Atmoda,” a newspaper of the Latvian Popular Front. The religious children’s magazine, “Zvaigznite” (Little Star), was produced in cooperation with the Latvian Independence Movement.¹⁶⁰

The Latvian Catholic Church

In comparison with the vast and successful revival of the Latvian Lutheran

¹⁵⁷Juris Rubenis, “Which Way To the Church?” *Religion in Communist Lands* 17 (spring 1989): 82.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 83; Sapiets, “The Baltic Churches and the National Revival,” 159.

¹⁵⁹Sapiets, “The Baltic Churches and the National Revival,” 159.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 163.

Church and its involvement in the national awakening, Roman Catholicism in Latvia experienced more modest changes.

In 1986 Latvian Catholics celebrated the 800th anniversary of the Christianization of Latvia. About 150,000 Catholics participated in the various celebrations that culminated in a service at the Marian shrine in the village of Aglona on August 15. The service took place at the annual pilgrimage during the Feast of Assumption in which an estimated 50,000 - 60,000 people participated, many more than in past years.¹⁶¹ During the same year, the Latvian Catholic Church was visited by many Catholic leaders from abroad, among them Jean Marie Lustiger, the Cardinal of Paris.¹⁶²

At the end of 1987 the Pope named a new Latvian bishop, Vilhelms Nukss to assist Cardinal Vaivods. Another bishop, Kazimirs Dulbinskis, who for decades was prevented from carrying out his priestly duties, received special permission from the state authorities to assist in the consecration. In January 1989, the restrictions on bishop Dulbinskis were officially lifted.¹⁶³

At the beginning of 1989, there were four bishops and 105 Catholic priests serving 178 congregations in Latvia. The number of seminarians almost doubled, from 62 to 100 during the time from 1986-1990.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 74; Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca komunisma gados*, 137.

¹⁶²Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca komunisma gados*, 136.

¹⁶³Ibid., 138.

¹⁶⁴U.S. Commission on Security, *Renewal and Challenge: The Baltic States 1988-1989*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 33; Solchanyk and Hvat, "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," 91.

Other Changes in the Life of the Latvian Churches

The churches in Latvia were not only actively involved in fostering political changes, but also benefited from greater freedom and democracy demanded by society. It allowed them to start official charitable and social work, publish their periodicals, and legalize religious education. Representatives of Christian churches were encouraged to express their views on public television and radio.

The changes in society fostered the development of charitable and social work among the churches. Since in 1987, a charitable organization, *Miloserdiye*, emerged in the USSR, and its cause was also taken up by the Latvian people, both religious and non-religious. The Protestant denominations, including Baptists, Lutherans and Orthodox, founded the Latvian Christian Mission (LCM) as an ecumenical service agency in December, 1988. The LCM volunteers were soon working in hospitals and prisons as visiting chaplains and distributing religious literature. In 1990, the Latvian Christian Mission was sending volunteers to seven hospitals and three children's homes, providing meals on wheels for 200 people daily, visiting six prisons, and had obtained land for building a Christian center.¹⁶⁵

The charitable activities of the Latvian Catholic Church were carried out by the *Caritas* movement. Although it was established in Lithuania as a Catholic women's movement in 1989, its activities found support among many Catholics in Latvia.¹⁶⁶

The charitable and social work activities of churches received approval from the state authorities because, as Lutheran Archbishop Gailitis suggested, the state could not "meet its own needs in hospitals and old people's homes" and it could not "get enough selfless staff because of the low pay offered," therefore volunteers were

¹⁶⁵Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," 337, 344.

¹⁶⁶Sapiets, "The Baltic Churches and the National Revival," 166.

welcome.¹⁶⁷

Christian denominations started to publish their periodicals. A Catholic monthly journal, “Katolu Dzeive” (Catholic Life), was founded in January 1989, and had a circulation of 50,000 copies.¹⁶⁸ The publishing of a Catholic calendar was renewed in 1990.¹⁶⁹ The Russian Orthodox publication, “Vestnik” (Messenger), an evangelical publication, “Pakapieni” (Little Steps), edited by former prisoner of conscience Lidiya Doronina-Lasmane, and a Lutheran theological journal, “Cels” (The Way), were among the most popular religious publications.¹⁷⁰

Both religious and national holidays were officially reinstated, largely because they had existed during the period of Latvia’s independence (1918-1940). The church festivals of Christmas and Easter became public holidays in 1989, before Latvian independence. The official legalization of Christmas described it as the “feast of sun-return,” giving it the flavor of a pagan celebration.¹⁷¹

Support for the revival of Sunday schools was continually expressed in the local press. On June 15, 1989, the newspaper, “Latvijas Jaunatne,” published an article by Vera Volgamate, a Sunday school teacher and director of a Lutheran Sunday school in the city of Liepaja. She called for legalization of religious instruction claiming that it would provide the ethical and religious values that Latvian society needed.¹⁷² Volgamate’s school had some 80 children, and a Catholic school in

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 166.

¹⁶⁸*Renewal and Challenge*, 33; Solchanyk and Hvat, “The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union,” 87.

¹⁶⁹Trups-Trops, *Latvijas Katolu Baznīca komunisma gados*, 151.

¹⁷⁰Sapiets, “The Baltic Churches and the National Revival,” 166.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 164.

¹⁷²Ibid.

Varaklani, Latgale region, had 117 children taught by a nun.¹⁷³ In preparation for the local election in the fall of 1989, the Latvian Popular Front took up the cause of Sunday schools upholding the right to religious instruction.

Clergymen were being regularly asked to officiate at many different kinds of official events and national celebrations, ranging from the remembrance of those who died in wars to the beginning of a new school year. They were also invited to participate in radio and television programs. Beginning in November 1989, the churches were permitted to broadcast religious programs on Latvian television and radio.¹⁷⁴

The churches in Latvia contributed to the national revival and benefited from legislation and political changes. It is important to note, however, that though the religious causes were supported by those who demanded democracy and freedom in society, it did not necessarily imply that they had accepted Christianity as their way of life. Many of those striving for the independence of Latvia were ignorant of the Christian faith. The Christian values that had long been denied and neglected time, came to be recognized as national values that needed to be revived.

¹⁷³Ibid., 165.

¹⁷⁴Sabrina Petra Ramet, "Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev," in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. S. P. Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES FOR CHRISTIANITY IN INDEPENDENT LATVIA (1991-1999)

Since independence in 1991, the churches in independent Latvia have been less threatened from outside and thus able to focus on overcoming the consequences of fifty years of Soviet rule. They have focused their efforts on rebuilding their buildings, organizing their institutions, and accommodating to the increase in church adherence. The relations between the State and the Church have changed under the provisions of the Law of Religious Organizations. State legislation has also provided conditions for the growth of missionary organizations in Latvia.

Church and State Relations: The Law of Religious Organizations

In September, 1990, the government of the Republic of Latvia accepted the Law of Religious Organizations that has continued to define the relations between the State and the Church over the last ten years. The Law was based on the recognition of the freedom of conscience and the religious freedom of the individual. The first article of the Law states that all the inhabitants of Latvia have equal rights regardless of their religious association. The rights of religious organizations are protected by the state. The state does not favor any religious organization and it has no right to intervene into the affairs of religious organizations. The relations between the state and religious organizations are maintained by the Department of Religious Affairs, which provides assistance for religious organizations in organizational, legal, social, economical and other matters. Religious organizations can establish and use mass media and maintain international relations (Art. 2).

The state recognizes the right of the religious instruction for children. Such education can be obtained privately or together with others at the schools, Sunday schools, summer camps, and meetings of religious organizations. In public and private educational institutions, religious education can be obtained by choice outside the curriculum. The curriculum of public and private schools must include opportunities for students to become acquainted with different religions, their teachings and history (Art. 3).

Article 4 defines religious organizations. They are voluntary associations of the permanent inhabitants of Latvia that are based on religious convictions in order to meet the religious needs and interests of their members. The Law distinguishes between non-traditional and traditional religious organizations, though particular groups are not listed. Religious congregations can be established by at least ten permanent inhabitants of Latvia. Religious organizations have the right to establish monasteries, educational institutions, missions, societies or other religious entities. All religious organizations that have been registered with the Department of Religious Affairs have the rights of a legal entity (Art.5).

The activities of religious organizations are described in Article 6. Religious organizations have the right to establish and maintain places of worship and assembly. Religious rites and ceremonies can be held in worship and meeting places, in people's homes and apartments, and, with the permission of local authorities, in cemeteries and chapels. Religious meetings can be held at hospitals, old people's homes and prisons upon request of persons located there and with agreement of the administration of these facilities.

Religious organizations can own property--buildings, worship objects, money, and land (Art.7). They can publish, obtain, import, and distribute religious literature, worship objects, and other materials. They have a right to publish religious literature (Art. 8).

The people hired by religious organizations are taxed like employees of other institutions (Art.9). They receive the benefit of social insurance and provision (retirement money) (Art.10). Articles 11 and 12 deal with the termination of the activity of religious organizations and the liquidation of their property. Article 13 states that violation of this Law is punishable.¹

The Law of Religious Organizations has been amended and supplemented by provisions of other laws. The Law on Property Tax states that tax does not apply to the property of religious organizations. Religious organizations are also granted permission to collect donations.² Donations are not subject to the value-added tax. Religious organizations are also entitled to receive humanitarian aid, which is not subject to taxes or duties.³

Religious organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice. According to the changes in the 1995 Law of Religious Organization, those groups that are not registered may carry out their activities as an interest group, a status which does not entail the rights of a legal entity. Religious organizations must submit reports on their activities to the Ministry of Justice each year no later than March 2.⁴

In January, 1998, a new religion consultative council was established by the Latvian government. The council's members have been doctors, academics, and independent human rights defenders. The council has met monthly. Its members research and write on specific issues, but the council has no decision making

¹"Latvijas Republikas likums par religiskajām organizācijām," in *Religija. Vesture, Dzīve: Reliģiska dzīve Latvijā*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga: Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Socioloģijas Instituts, 1993), 217-224.

²M. L. Ringolds Balodis, "A Religious Organization in the Latvian State: Its Rights and Obligations," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 19, no. 4 (August 1999): 4.

³*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴*Ibid.*, 8; The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia," available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16 October 1999.

authority. There also has been a traditional religion council that has met monthly. Its aim has been to facilitate greater ecumenical communication, to discuss matters of common concern and to improve dialog between the traditional faiths (Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptist, and Jewish) and the state.⁵

Changes in the delivery of religious education were made in October, 1999. Teachers of Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer, and Baptist faith may teach Christian dogma in schools. Teachers have been proposed by church administrations and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. Religious dogma may be taught at schools when the number of students of the relevant religion is not less than ten. Ethics courses can be proposed as an alternative to teaching Christian dogma at schools. In schools for minorities the religious dogmas characteristic to each particular national minority may be taught.⁶

Statistics on Christian Denominations

The statistics on Christian denominations show two characteristics of the changes in the 1990s. Those characteristics were rapid growth, and increasing diversity among religious groups.

In 1992, there were 799 congregations registered by the Department of Religious Affairs: 280 Lutheran, 186 Roman Catholic, 89 Orthodox, 54 Old Believers, 67 Baptist, 33 Seventh Day Adventist, 26 Pentecostal, 2 Methodist and 19

⁵The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia," available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16 October 1999.

⁶Ibid.; Balodis, "A Religious Organization in the Latvian State," 7.

other religious groups.⁷ In 1993, there were 290 Lutheran, 191 Catholic, 100 Orthodox, 56 Old Believers, 69 Baptist, 33 Adventist, 44 Pentecostal, 3 Methodist, 2 Reformed congregations and 23 other religious groups.⁸

By April, 1999, the Ministry of Justice had registered over 1,000 congregations, among them Lutheran (301), Roman Catholic (241), Orthodox (110), Baptist (81), Old Believers (65), Pentecostal (53), Seventh Day Adventist (44), Methodist (10), Jehovah Witnesses (6), Armenian Apostolic (1) and independent congregations (25) which included the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and various Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations.⁹ The churches still awaiting their registration include the Latvian Free Orthodox Church, the Church of Christ Scientist, and the Rock of Salvation Church.¹⁰ The Christian denominations have continued to constitute the majority of religious groups in Latvia.

Important Denominational Developments

The Lutheran Church

For the Latvian Lutheran Church the independence years have been a time of re-establishing its organization. The cooperation between the Lutheran Church in Latvia and the Lutheran Church Abroad was formalized by the establishment of a

⁷Nikards Gills, "Ievads," in *Religija. Vesture, Dzive: Religiska dzive Latvija*, ed. Nikards Gills (Riga: Latvijas ZA Filozofijas un Sociologijas Instituts, 1993), 9.

⁸Robert F. Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, (Armonk, New York and London, England: M. E. Sharpe, c1995), 204.

⁹The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia," available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16 October 1999.

¹⁰Ibid.

Coordinator Commission that met for the first time from February 12-14, 1990. Its chairman has been the Archbishop of the Church Abroad, Elmars Ernsts Rozitis. An agreement has been reached that in principle the two churches are to be one, but the administrative groundwork has not been completed.¹¹ One of the reasons for hesitance to merge has been the differences in doctrine. The Lutheran Church Abroad has been more liberal than the Church in Latvia and has permitted the ordination of women, a practice that has not been acceptable to the Lutheran Church in Latvia.¹²

With the financial support of the state, the Theological Faculty at the University of Latvia was re-established in January, 1990, with Dr. Roberts Akmentins as its dean. He was succeeded by pastor Vilis Varsbergs, the president of the Latvian Evangelical-Lutheran Church in America.¹³ In 1997, forty-eight students entered the undergraduate program of the Theological Faculty and eighteen more started graduate and professional programs there.¹⁴ Due to the shortage of faculty members, Latvian theologians living in the West continued to offer their services. Among them, there have been Dr. Juris Calitis from Toronto, Canada, Dr. V. V. Klive from the Union Theological Seminary in New York, the United States of America, and Dr. E. Grislis from Winnipeg, Canada. The Faculty library of more than 12,000 volumes was gathered through the efforts of donors, both local and foreign. In the last two years the Faculty of Theology has become a nondenominational educational institution, possibly under the pressure of the state.¹⁵ After the Faculty of Theology became

¹¹Egil Grislis, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia and the Fall of the Soviet Union," *Consensus* 22, no. 2 (1996): 70.

¹²Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," 214.

¹³Grislis, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia," 69.

¹⁴University of Latvia, "Faculty of Theology," available from www.lu.lv/strukt/fakult/theo/info; Internet; accessed 22 October 1999.

¹⁵The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia," available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16

nondenominational, the Latvian Lutheran Church established an education center for its clergy, the Luther Academy in Riga, in 1998.¹⁶

The Lutheran Church in collaboration with Latvian Television, has produced the program “Dvesele Ikdiēna” (Soul in Daily Life). It is usually set as a talk show on current problems discussed by a Christian pastor and a person who has been popular in society in Latvia. The viewers are invited to call in with their questions and comments. In 1997, this program was nominated as the best educational program in Latvia during that year.¹⁷

The Lutheran Church has continued its involvement in the politics of Latvia. It has expressed its official opinion on various current issues. It has sought to moderate anti-Russian attitudes that continue to be widespread in the non-Russian population of Latvia, by supporting the protection of the human rights of Russians. But the Lutheran Church has opposed citizenship for retired Soviet military personnel and has avoided commitment to the controversial proposals of citizenship.¹⁸ No Lutheran pastors have been elected to the Latvian parliament during the independence period.¹⁹ At the time of writing this paper, the Ministry of Education and Science is led by Māris Vītols, a Latvian Lutheran.

The Catholic Church

Unlike the Lutheran Church, the hierarchy of the Latvian Catholic Church that had remained under the strong control of the Vatican during the Soviet period, was

October 1999.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷“Dvesele Ikdiēna,” available from www.lhm.lv/tv.htm; Internet; accessed 17 February 2000.

Dvesele Ikdiēna, Website, available on-line.

¹⁸Goeckel, “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process,” 214.

¹⁹Ibid., 215.

not in need of rebuilding. Instead, it has faced a problem of major changes in the geography of the denomination. Before World War II, 70 percent of Catholics lived in the Latgale region, but in 1990, only 42 percent of them lived in that region. Thus, many Catholics have dispersed throughout Latvia where often no churches of their creed exist. The Latvian Lutheran Church has allowed Catholic congregations to use its churches.²⁰

The most significant event for the Latvian Catholic Church since Latvia gained its independence has been the visit of Pope John Paul II in September, 1993. In preparation for his visit, the reconstruction of the basilica of Aglona and its surroundings in the Latgale region was carried out. On September 9, 1993, Pope John Paul II paid a visit to Aglona, the ancient center of Latvian Catholicism, and held a Mass at the newly reconstructed sacred square in front of the basilica, where 380,000 pilgrims were present.²¹

The Latvian Catholic Church has organized the Riga Catholic Gymnasium and maintained the Riga Catholic Seminary.²² Most of the Catholic seminarians from other areas of the USSR that came to study in Riga during the Soviet years have transferred to their local seminaries. The Seminary has had problems recruiting able scholars, teachers and students.²³

The Russian Orthodox Church

The fate of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latvia during the 1990s shows that it has been treated with suspicion by both the authorities and the majority of

²⁰Iwaskiw, ed., *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, 126.

²¹"Aglonas bazilika," available from www.vide.lv/bazilika; Internet; accessed 17 February 2000.

²²Gills, "Ievads," 10.

²³Iwaskiw, ed., *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, 128.

society. This suspicion was related to the ethnic concern of Latvians who were concerned over perceived attempts of Russians to dominate Latvia during the Soviet years.²⁴

During the summer of 1992, the Latvian government expressed strong reservations about granting Orthodox churches and other properties in Latvia to the Moscow Patriarchate to which the Latvian Orthodox Church was subject. This position prompted several visits of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church from Moscow.

Meanwhile, the Latvian Orthodox Church split into four groups: congregations that maintained loyalty to the Moscow Patriarchate, those recognizing the Russian Orthodox Church abroad, an Autocephalus Latvian Orthodox Church and a Latvian Church in Exile, subject directly to the patriarch of Constantinople.²⁵ In 1992, the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church granted autonomy to the Latvian Orthodox Church in non-theological matters.²⁶ In 1993, the Orthodox Church was maintaining one of the two nunneries in Latvia--the Saint Sergii Orthodox nunnery in Riga.²⁷

Old Believers

In 1997 it was estimated that there were some 80,000 Old Believers in Latvia, most of them living in Daugavpils (six communities). The Grebenschikov community in Riga has remained among the largest Old Believers groups in the world.²⁸

²⁴Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," 215.

²⁵John B. Dunlop, "The Russian Orthodox Church as an "Empire - Saving" Institution," in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 27.

²⁶Gills, "Ievads," 10; Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," 216.

²⁷Gills, "Ievads," 10.

²⁸Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 84; Pashin,

The Old Believers' community split in 1995. The reason for the tensions in the Grebenschikov community was over the issue of property that had been returned to the community by the state, and the preoccupation of some of its members with secular, instead of spiritual, matters. To resolve the situation, an ecclesiastical committee was organized that removed Ioann Miroljobov, the leader of the Grebenschikov community, from his position and dismissed him from his duties as a pastor. Miroljobov disagreed with the decision of the committee and established an independent Old Believers' community that was registered by the Ministry of Justice on February 26, 1995.

The Synod of the Latvian Old Believers Pomortsy Church that took place in the summer of 1995, affirmed the dismissal of Moriljobov. The Synod also elected the Central Council of the Church, and Aleksandrs Zilko was elected the chairman of the Central Council. The new statutes of the Old Believers Church were accepted by the Synod. When the Ministry of Justice did not approve the new statutes of the Old Believers, the Synod reconvened in the summer of 1996 to make the necessary corrections.²⁹

The Old Believers' community in Latvia has established and maintained close ties with the Old Believers in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. The delegations from all these countries met for a synod in Vilnius, Lithuania, in July 1996.³⁰

The Latvian Baptist Union

The Baptist churches in Latvia have been united in the Union of Baptist Churches. The Union carried out its work in eight departments: the Baptist Seminary, the publishing department, the bookstore, the women's department, the music

"Staroobradechestvo i porsvescheniye v Latvii," 183.

²⁹Zilko and Mekss, "Staroobryadchestvo v Latvii: Vchera i Sevodnya," 86-87.

³⁰Ibid., 87.

department, the Sunday school department, the medical services, and the 'British-American Mission.' The Latvian Baptist Bishop has been pastor Andris Sterns; the General Secretary has been pastor Ilmars Hirss, and the Vice-bishop has been pastor Ainars Bastiks.³¹

On January 31, 1991, the Baptist Theological seminary in Riga was opened under the leadership of Ilmars Hirss. In 1993 it had ten resident students and fifteen students studying by correspondence.³²

George Barbins Christian School grew out of the Sunday school ministry at the Agensakalns Baptist Church in Riga. The first classes were offered for grades 1-3, and twenty-seven students enrolled the first year. In 1995 the Christian School moved to new facilities and a high school was added. One of the goals of the school has been to help the new generation of Latvian people grow up "with the Word of God at their side and the values of Christ in their hearts."³³

Seventh Day Adventists

The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) have become well organized during the independence years in Latvia. The churches in Latvia formed the Latvian Conference of the SDA Church. The Latvian Conference has been a part of the Baltic Union Conference that in turn has been part of the Trans-European Division of SDA Churches.

The Latvian Conference was renewed in 1994. By 1999, it included forty-four churches with twenty-two ordained ministers and 3,893 members. The Latvian Conference also has had fifteen credential missionaries. The president of the Latvian

³¹"The Baptist Union of Latvia," available from www.iclub.lv/pages/fdavis/baptist.html; Internet; accessed 16 February 2000.

³²Tervits, "Nemeji un deveji," 131.

³³*Bridges to Latvia: Introducing Six of Latvia's Dynamic Ministries. Quarterly Publication of Bridge Builders International.* 1, no. 1 (1998), 2.

Conference has been Viktors Geide. The Conference has six departments: the youth ministry, the women's ministries, the prison ministry, the educational department, the personal ministries and Sabbath school department, and the communications and religious liberty department.

During 1998, the Seventh Day Adventists established two new churches and conducted eleven Bible seminars in Latvia. The Church's website was started. Evangelical camps for youth and adults were organized as well as a ministry to the deaf carried out through various activities. They broadcast three programs weekly on Latvian Christian Radio: "Kristus muzika" (Christ in Music), "Ticibas varaviksne" (Rainbow of Faith), and "Daniela pravietojsni sodien" (Prophecies of Daniel for Today).

The great problem for the Seventh Day Adventists in Latvia has been the inconsistent legislation of the state regarding their status. Though their denomination was registered with the Ministry of Justice in 1997, the Adventists were not recognized as a traditional religion in the Law on Education. The lack of the status of a recognized religion has prevented the Seventh Day Adventists from having the right to teach Christian dogma in public or private schools.³⁴

The Methodist Church

The Methodist Church in Latvia was destroyed as a result of World War II and the Soviet occupation of Latvia. In independent Latvia, the Methodist ministry has been renewed.

At the July 8, 1990, meeting of the annual conference in Tallinn, Estonia, the Latvian United Methodist Church was officially reconstituted with two pastors, the Rev. James Sturitis, a former pastor of an underground Pentecostal church, and the

³⁴"Latvian Conference of SDA Church," available from www.tagnet.org/latvia/en/contact-lc_en.htm; Internet; accessed 17 February 2000. "Baltic Union Conference News," available from www.bauc.apollo.lv/news/1998-04_en.htm; Internet; accessed 17 February 2000.

Rev. Arijs Viksna, and representatives of two congregations as the founding members.³⁵ The government of Latvia has returned to the Methodists some of the property their Church owned before World War II.³⁶ Along with the local pastors, some Methodist missionaries from the United States have been working in Latvia.³⁷

Missionary Activity

Missionary activity has mushroomed in Latvia in the last decade.³⁸ In 1993 there were fifteen registered missions active in Latvia, both local and foreign. Among them, the most active were the Latvian Christian Mission, the Latgale Christian Mission, and the Latvian Christian Charity Association “Jauna dzīve” (New Life).³⁹

The mission, “Pakapieni” (Little Steps), founded in 1990, provides foster care for needy children.⁴⁰ Latvian Christian Radio started its work on December 22, 1993, for the first time freely proclaiming the Gospel over the radio. It is a interdenominational effort of Latvian Christians. The Christian Radio broadcasts consist of sixty different programs that include Bible teaching, recorded services, prayer requests, and Christian music. Over forty pastors and volunteers from different denominations participate in the work of the station.⁴¹ Tilza Evangelistic Training

³⁵Kimbrough, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States*, 191.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 192.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 191-193.

³⁸Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 368.

³⁹Gills, “Ievads,” 10-11.

⁴⁰*Bridges to Latvia*, 5.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 3; “Latvijas Kristīgais Radio,” available from www.iclub.lv/pages/LKR; Internet; accessed 16 February 2000.

Center was opened in the Latgale region in June 1996 to train evangelists, missionaries and church planters.⁴²

During the last ten years, Latvia has experienced a great influx of foreign missionaries, predominately from North America, but also from Western Europe. Among the foreign missions, Campus Crusade for Christ, Gideon Bible Society, Youth with a Mission, the Greater Europe Mission and the Bridge Builders have continued to be actively involved in charity and social work, in distributing Bibles, training local laity and starting new congregations. Foreign evangelists and missionaries have been permitted to hold meetings and proselytize, but according the laws, they must be given an invitation by a registered religious organization in Latvia.⁴³

New Bible Translation

The Latvian Bible Society was founded in 1990 as interdenominational group for the translation of Christian Scripture. It started its work on a new translation of the Bible in January, 1995. This new translation has not been just an improved version of previous translations, but an original work that has aimed at being relevant to society in the twenty-first century. The translation group has consisted of prominent linguists, experts in ancient languages, and translators who have not necessarily professed Christian faith. In 1996, Karl Gustav XVI, the king of Sweden expressed his support for the translation process, continuing the tradition of his predecessor, Karl XI, who sponsored the translation of the Bible into Latvian in the seventeenth century.

⁴²*Bridges to Latvia*, 7.

⁴³The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia," available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16 October 1999.

Donations from Sweden for the support of the translation, including a gift from the king, constituted 750,000 Swedish kronas. The first part of this new translation, “Evangēliji un Apustulu darbi” (Gospels and Acts), was published in 1999. The publication was celebrated in a special ecumenical service in Riga New Gertrude Lutheran Church on December 12, 1999.⁴⁴

Popular Interest in Christianity

Since independence, public interest in religion, and in the Christian faith in particular, has fluctuated. The first half of the 1990s was characterized by increased attendance at church services, continuing the trend of the late 1980s. An observer has commented that there is great interest among Latvians in spiritual matters but “it is difficult to know how much of it is genuine and how much reflects the ebb and flow of fashion.”⁴⁵ As time passed by and people experienced stabilization in many areas of life, the religious fever appeared to have calmed down.

According to some reports, in the second half of the 1990s, a large percentage of religious adherents did not regularly practice their faith. Some sources estimated that only about two percent of the population regularly attended church services and that regular worshipers have been predominantly women.⁴⁶ A study published by the University of Michigan, in 1997, estimated that only five percent of the adult

⁴⁴“Latvijas Bībeles Biedrība,” available from vip.latnet.lv/bibele/; Internet; accessed 17 February 2000.

⁴⁵Iwaskiw, ed., *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, 129.

⁴⁶The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999; Latvia,” available from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_latvia99.html; Internet; accessed 16 October 1999.

population in Latvia attended church at least once a week.⁴⁷

One commentator's assessment might be right when he states that the "marginal members" of the Churches have "returned to the fold, attracted on the basis of tradition rather than conviction,"⁴⁸ while others continue to leave the Christian churches, or turn to other religions. At the same time, a study conducted by the Theological Faculty of the University of Latvia in 1996 showed that 64 percent of high school students believe in a personal God, 30 percent of students living in Riga and 42 percent of those from Latgale stated that they belong to a Christian group.⁴⁹ Thus, it appears that there has been an interest in religious and spiritual matters in the society, at least among young people.

⁴⁷The University of Michigan News and Information Services, "News Release. December 10, 1997," available from www.umich.edu/newsinfo/Releases/1997/Dec97/r121097a.html; Internet; accessed 14 June 1999.

⁴⁸Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," 219.

⁴⁹Leons G. Taivans, "Reflections on the "Invisible" Religion of Youth: the Case of Latvia," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 17, no. 6 (December 1997): 43.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This paper is the story of Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century. Although it does not present a complete picture of the life of the Church or particular denominations, the paper provides insight into areas that are crucial for understanding the Christian Church in Latvia.

There are several important trends in the life of the Church in Latvia that this research has revealed. One is the importance of Church and State relations. Throughout the history of Christianity in Latvia, Church and State relations have changed often and to a great degree.

During some historical periods, the Church and the State have worked for common goals. The Church has also been used for the political and military purposes of the State. During other times, the Church has been tolerated by the State. The separation of Church and State was established in Latvia in the twentieth century. Under the democratic government of the Republic of Latvia from 1918-1940 and from 1990-1999, the Church has enjoyed both freedom from the State's direct intervention in its matters, and its legal protection and support. It appears that during these two periods of time, the Lutheran Church was favored by the state more than other denominations.

During Soviet rule in Latvia, the Christians were subject to physical, emotional and social repression. Also the legislation and propaganda of atheism expressed the anti-religious character of the Soviet state. In these circumstances, the hierarchies of Christian denominations employed the politics of accommodation in order to preserve the existence of the Church. The Christian faith was expressed in many ways that at times attempted to undermine the state's control of the Church.

Another trend running through the history of the Church in Latvia in the twentieth century is the development within denominations. Some of the developments within denominations in Latvia have been common to all of them. All the denominations have had similar problems, such as a shortage of clergy, the need for religious education and literature, and the fluctuation of numbers of followers. These problems were particularly severe during Soviet rule in Latvia. The denominations attempted to deal with their problems by establishing educational institutions for the training of clergy, and publishing periodicals. The problem of the changing number of adherents to Christianity has not been addressed sufficiently in the Church in Latvia.

Some denominations, such as the Lutherans, the Catholics, and the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the Old Believers, had established their presence in Latvia before the beginning of the twentieth century. During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, they were joined by several Protestant denominations (the Baptists, the Methodists, the Adventists, and the Evangelical Church). Though the existence of some of the denominations was threatened during Soviet times, they have enjoyed renewal in the 1990s.

Other developments have varied from denomination to denomination. Some of these developments affected both the individual denominations and the society of Latvia. A split among the Baptists in the 1920s over issues of the Pentecostal expression of faith led to the emigration of many Baptists to Brazil. Similarly, the Old Believers split in the 1990s over what was perceived by part of them as secularization within their community. Julians Vaivods, the Archbishop of the Latvian Catholic Church, was elevated to the dignity of Cardinal by Pope John II in 1983. The *Rebirth and Renewal* movement that started within the Latvian Lutheran Church in 1987 played an important role in the national awakening in Latvia during the second half of the 1980s.

Another development within the Church has been the ecumenical relationships among different Christian groups in Latvia. These relationships have ranged from hostility often brought about by unfair treatment by the government, to calls for peaceful co-existence. There have been few formal contacts of the denominational leaders and few interdenominational mission projects. Ecumenical efforts of the Church in Latvia have been minimal. Diversity and minimal ecumenical cooperation among the Christian denominations have come to characterize the indigenous Church in Latvia.

The third trend considered in this paper is the role and involvement of the indigenous people in the life of the Church in the twentieth century. The role of the people of Latvia in the Church has increased in the twentieth century, compared to previous centuries. Only in the twentieth century is it possible to talk about the indigenous Church in Latvia. The position of people of Latvia has changed from being passive receivers of a foreign Christian message and faith to sharing that faith with other people of their country. Latvians have received education as clergy and have provided denominational leadership. Although there are people in Latvia who have been trained for ministry in the Church, there are many more whose participation in the Church is limited to attending services on Christian holidays. There are also many people in Latvia who have not responded to the message of Christianity and remain indifferent or even hostile toward the Church.

Thus, the story of Christianity in Latvia in the twentieth century is full of suffering and seemingly insurmountable problems for the Church. Physical, emotional, social and legal persecution of believers by the State has brought into their lives much uncertainty, pain, suffering and death. The willingness of the Latvian Christians to suffer and even die for their faith is very different from the rather hostile attitude to Christianity by Latvians in previous centuries. The hostility of the State, as well as competition among denominations and schisms within them, have shattered

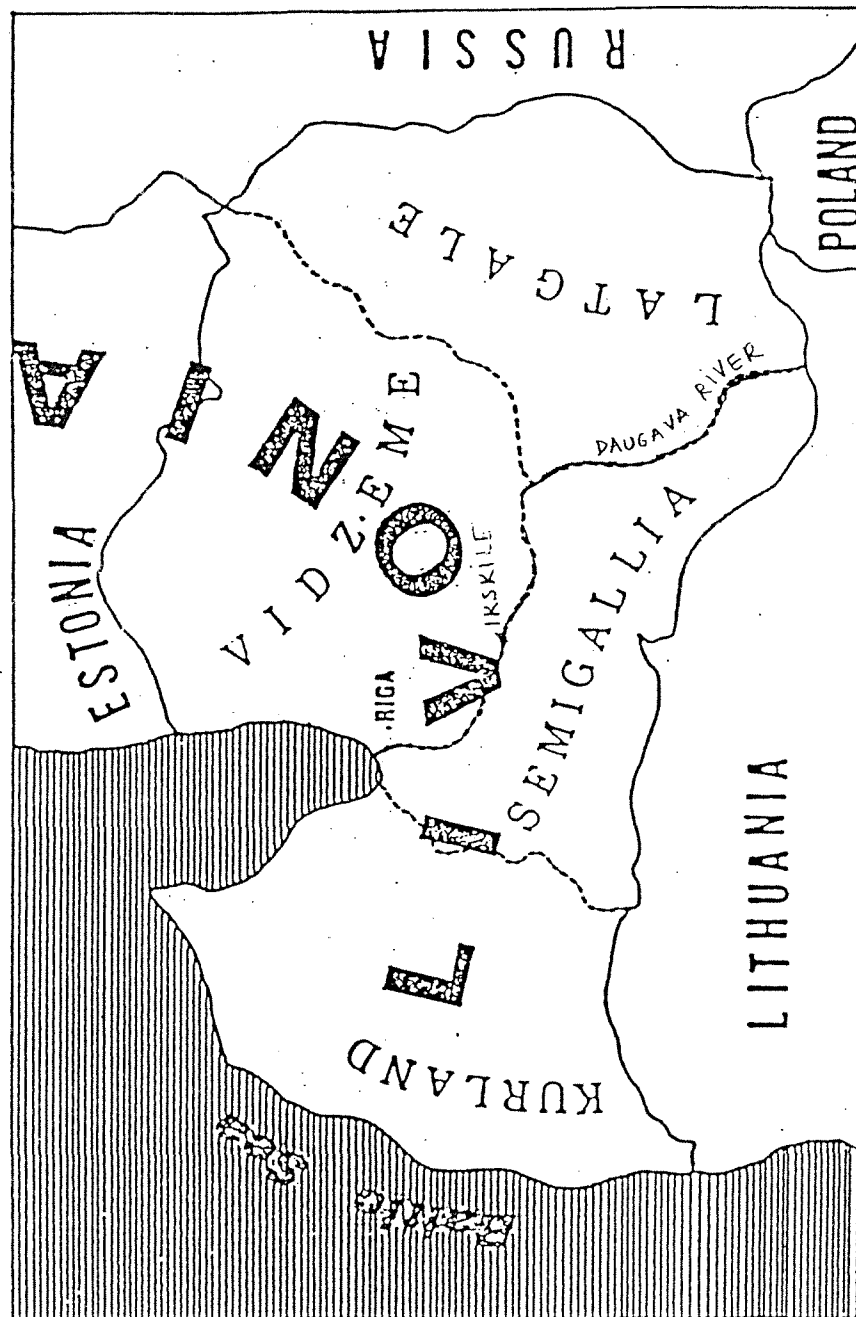
the institutional organization of the Church. The shortage of clergy and religious literature has prevented a more effective ministry of the Church to people in Latvia, both Christian and non-Christian. But a closer look at Christianity in Latvia allows one to see that it is also a story of the continuity and perseverance of the Church regardless of the changing circumstances. In spite of all the suffering of people and disorganization of institutions, the Christian faith has not been extinguished. It has only been made stronger as a result of its hardships.

The history of Christianity in Latvia provides many lessons that can be of great value for the Church in the twenty first century. The consideration of the Church's past can foster the believers' understanding of the identity of the Church in a new political context. It can also help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future. It can help observers, both new Christians and Church members, to understand certain denominational fears about new state regulations, religious education in schools, and the seeming favoritism of the State toward one denomination or another.

This paper reveals that there is still much work to be done in the field of the Church history of Latvia. The history of many Protestant denominations such as the Pentecostals, the Salvation Army, the Reformed Church and others, remains rather unclear. The fate of the Latvian Orthodox Church during Soviet rule in Latvia is another area that is in need of thorough research. Many of the primary sources that are available in Latvia can help shed light on these areas in Church history. Thus, the unresearched areas in the stories of different denominations, as well as information from the primary sources, can provide great opportunities for further research into the history of the Christian Church in Latvia.

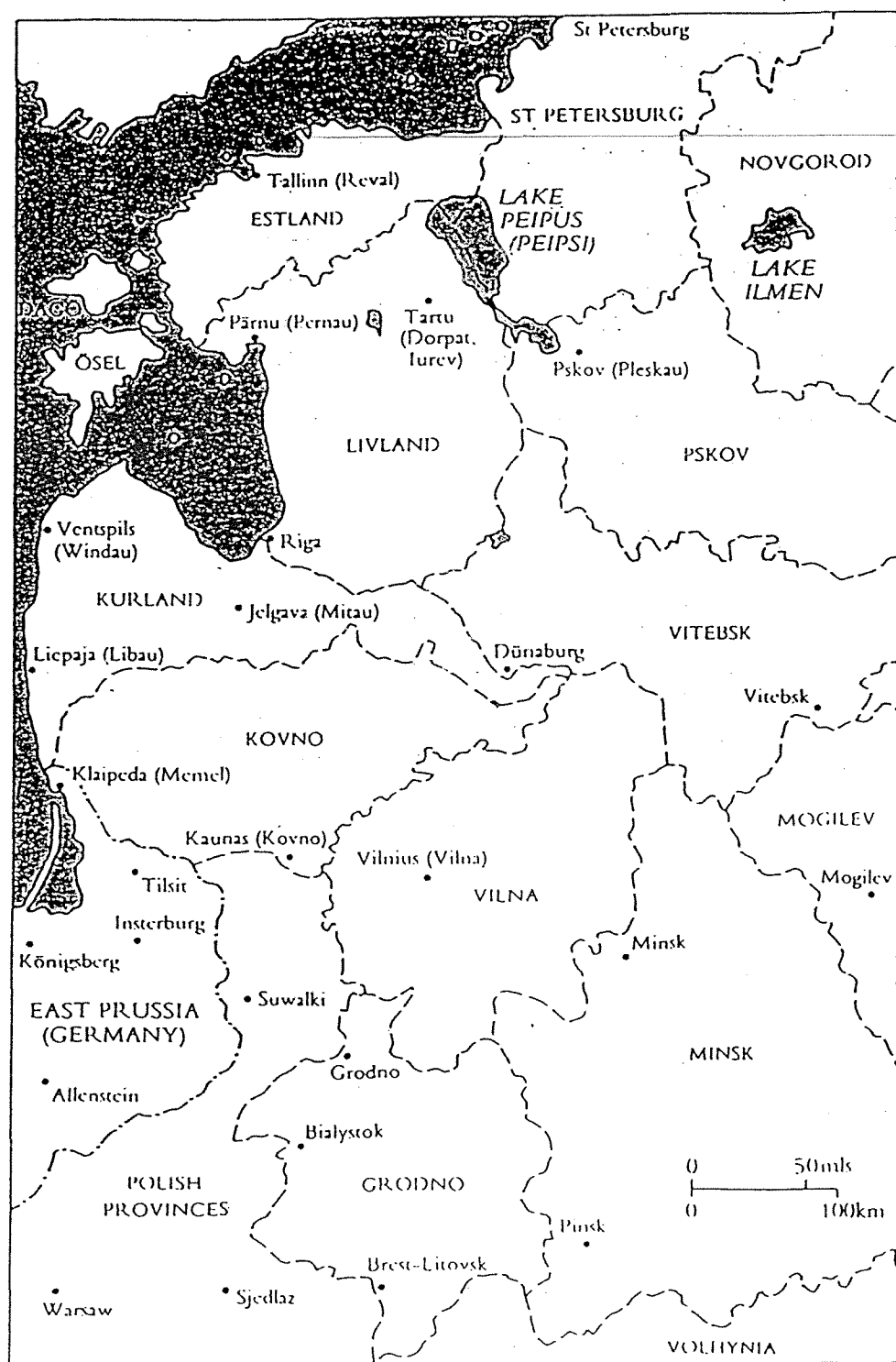
Appendix 1. Provinces of Latvia (Livonia).

From Bruvers, O. "The Revival in Latvia During the 1920s..." D. Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991, 13.



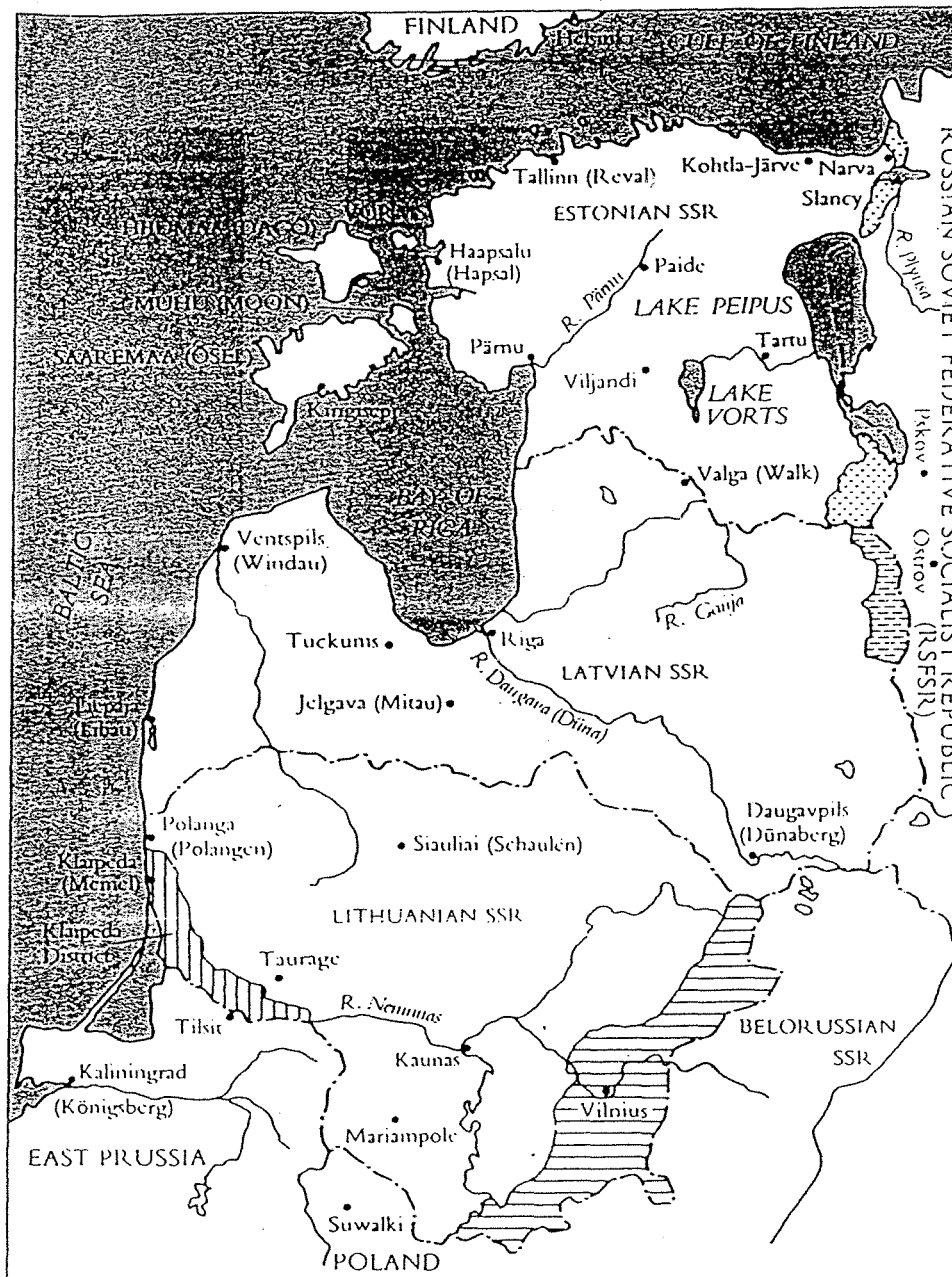
Appendix 2. Provinces of the Russian Empire in 1914

From Hiden J. and P. Salmon. *The Baltic Nations and Europe: ...* London: Longman, 1991, 203.



Appendix 4. The Baltic Republics after the Second World War

From Hiden J. and P. Salmon. *The Baltic Nations and Europe: ...* London: Longman, 1991, 205.



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