

JOUKO TALONEN

Helsinki University

THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH HISTORY OF
LATVIA IN 1918–1991

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In many respects, the research of Latvian church history means stepping onto *terra incognita*, for earlier research in the field is almost non-existent. Admittedly, one does obtain a valuable general insight into the subject from *Geschichte der deutschbaltischen geschichtsschreibung* (1986) edited by Georg von Rauch, even though the book offers hardly any research links to church history proper. Another general view can be obtained from J. Steimans' work called *Latvijas vēstures pētnieki* (Latvian researchers of history) (1997), which unfortunately does not include researchers of church history. In contrast, an insight into Latvian church history is offered by Professor Egils Grislis' (Manitoba, Canada) article *Recent trends in the Study of the Reformation in the City of Riga Livonia* (Journal of Baltic Studies 2/1976). Guidelines for my research can also be found in a couple of short articles on the history of theology written by Professor Ludvigs Adamovičs (1933, 1938). As a researcher, the fact that earlier research is almost totally non-existent does offer me the joy of discovery, instead of the tediousness of having to 'gnaw at some old bones', so to say. The hopefully successful completion of this research plan is, thus, a challenge instead of a problem, and a well founded reason for carrying out the work.

THE BALTIC GERMAN BACKGROUND

Until the early 20th century, the study of church history in the Latvian region of the Baltics was in the hands of German Baltic researchers. The first significant research paper in the field was written by C.L. Tetsch in 1767–1769. Tetsch's paper, which dealt with the religious development in Courland from various points of view and also included lists of the clergy and parishes, remained useful for quite a while. Another signifi-

cant source of information are the four volumes of the register of parishes in Livland published in 1843–1852 by C.E. Napiersky, called *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Kirchen und Prediker in Livland*. Napiersky's work was complemented by Theodor Kallmeyer's *Die evangelischen Kirchen und Prediker Kurlands* published in 1849 (the 2nd edition was edited by G.Otto in 1910). C.A. Berkholz, with his profound knowledge of the history of the City of Riga, published a work called *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Kirchen und Prediger Riga's* in 1867. Besides the works mentioned, certain significant papers on the church history of Courland, Livland, and Riga were also published in the 19th century. Besides his other works, Berkholz published the biographies of two Livland superintendents, of Jakob Lange (1884) and of Hermann Samson (1856).

The Reformation in Livland aroused the interest of the researchers, so that Theodor Haller wrote the history of the Baltic Reformation in 1856, whereas D.F. Hoerschellmann, a Professor of Tartu, published the biography of Andreas Knopken, the Reformer of Riga, in 1896, and J.T. Helmsing's *Die Reformationsgeschichte Livlands* came out in Riga in 1868. The *opus magnum* of the history of the Livland Reformation is, however, the profound work by Leonid Arbusow (Junior) called *Die Einfuhrung der Reformation in Liv-, Est- und Kurland*, which was based on extensive archive research and was published in 1921. The heavy dispute around Herrnhutism in the 1840–1860's also resulted in plenty of research and letters to the editors concerning this expansive revival movement rejected by the representatives of Orthodox Lutheranism. Professor Theodosius Harnack in Tartu wrote polemic, but historically sound work called *Die Lutherische Kirche Livlands und die Herrnhutische Brüdergemeinde* (1860), the most significant book in its field.

THE FIRST STEPS OF WRITING LATVIAN NATIONAL CHURCH HISTORY

The national awakening in the late 19th century resulted in the birth of Latvian identity within the social and cultural life of Courland and Livland. The short period of Latvian independency (1918–1940) was a time of immense political, social, and economical progress, of advancement of the national culture and of birth of the national Latvian church. An important section of the academic and cultural development of the period was the emergence of national theology, part of which formed the rise of Latvian study of church history and the national interpretation of the country's own church history. Up and until the beginning of the 20th century, the Baltic Germans had been the ones to write the church histo-

ryy of the region from their German point of view. Courland, Livland, and Estland had been seen as separate entities, and they had lived under different rulers each and followed different patterns in the course of history and church history. Now they were seen as parts of a whole.

In 1802–1918 the number of theology students in the theological faculty in Tartu was 219, and 160 of them graduated. Out of all the Latvian students in the university during the period, 16 % were theologians. The first of them to study church history was Rev. Friedrich Dzirne (1835–1872), who wrote a paper on the Reformation in Riga, though not in Latvian, one must admit, but in German. More significantly, Kārlis Kundziņš, Vicar of Smiltene, wrote on some eminent historical figures in Latvia. Kundziņš, who had been influenced by Ritschl, was a prominent personality in the national awakening of the country. Besides these, a well-known writer Reiniss Kaudzitis published a book on the Livland (Vidzeme) Herrnhutism in 1878, and Vicar P.P. Pauksens's book on general church history in Latvian came out in 1894.

LUDVIGS ADAMOVIČS – A CREATOR OF LATVIAN NATIONAL CHURCH HISTORY

The life and work of Adamovičs

Professor Ludvigs Adamovičs (1884–1942) was one of the most prominent figures in independent Latvia (1918–1940), both as a theologian and as an influential personality in the social and cultural life of his country. Adamovičs was born in Dundaga, Courland (present day Latvia), on September 23, 1884, the son of an assistant Primary School teacher. He studied theology in Tartu from 1904–1909, and after his ordination in 1915, this promising young theologian worked first in the service of the Latvian school system and then in the Latvian University, first as Docent of Church History from 1920–1929 and then as Professor from 1929–1940. Adamovičs served as Dean of the Theological Faculty (1927–1929 and 1937–1939) and also as Vice-Chancellor of the University (1929–1931 and in 1933–1936).

Besides this, he worked as a teacher of religion in various educational institutions, and served his country as Minister of Education in 1934–1935. Adamovičs was also a member of several social and cultural organisations, taking an active part in various conferences and events throughout Europe. In the Latvian theological circles Adamovičs as a represen-

tative of a „theology of mediation“, and while he saw the necessity of theological education of the clergy, his research of revival movements had also made him understand the special nature of the religious reality.

The life of this active, multifaceted and culturally influential figure came to tragic end. In the summers on 1940, following the Soviet occupation of Latvia, The Communists rose to power, and it was not long before the Theological Faculty was abolished in August 1940 and Professor Adamovičs lost his position. During the Night of Terror on June 14, 1941, he and his family was arrested and transported to Siberia with 14,000 other Latvians. In the summer of 1942, he was sentenced to death in the concentration camp of Solikamsk as an enemy of the people and executed by firing squad on June 17, 1942.

Ludvigs Adamovičs created a national interpretation of Latvian church history. The scope of his writings is exceptionally wide, ranging from academic monographs and minor treatises to textbooks on religion, from newspaper and journal articles to studies, reports and speeches. Besides, appearing in Latvian, his works have been published in German, English, French, Estonian, Swedish, and Slovak. Adamovičs' bibliography numbers as many as 1007 items, including the Acts and Statutes he signed as the Latvian Minister of Education in 1934–1945.

Adamovičs as a creator of Latvian church history

When we regard Ludvigs Adamovičs, it is reasonable to remember that he had become the leading Latvian church history researcher by the end of the 1920's. He has published general surveys of the church history of Latvia, and a general church history in 1927. Namely, Adamovičs mentioned them to be used as schoolbooks. His book *Dzimtenis baznīcas vēsture* (The Church History of Our Country) was the first general work on Latvian church history, still useful today. Adamovičs' extensive doctorate thesis (1929, printed in 1933) on the Livland peasants and the church in 1710–1740 is also a classic.

Adamovičs published a survey on G.F. Stender's „Small Bible“ (*Maza Bibēle*) in 1929, which had played an important part in the Latvian culture, and in a history of book earlier. The work had appeared for the first time in 1756. The collection of Bible stories was a popular reading among the reading public which particularly were out in students' hands. The book was so popular that many prints were taken on it up to the end of the 19th century.

One year later, in 1930, Adamovičs created in his articles a new national interpretation on the Latvian church history. They were published both in Latvian and in German. The first article entitled, the Latvians and the Catholic Church (*Latvieši un katolu baznīca*), and the next on dealt with the topic of the Latvians and the Evangelical Church (*Latvieši un evaņģēliskā baznīca*). The previous research concerning the Latvian church history had dealt with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Livland, and in Courland. The research had of course taken in attention to a non-German element. Now Adamovičs took his observations' starting point the Latvians. He interpreted church history from a national viewpoint.

However, the breakthrough in Latvian church history writing, and in the national interpretation occurred in 1933, when Adamovičs' accepted, printed and completed dissertation came into public. Adamovičs' work, the church of Livland and the Latvian peasant (*Vidzemes baznīca un latviešu zemnieks 1710–1740*) was a massive monograph, which covered 659 pages. His work mainly based onto Archive of Historical collections of the State of Latvia, and material situating in Germany (Herrnhut, Archiv der Brüder-Unitat).

In this long monograph, Adamovičs clarified at first the „old Livland“ administration of the Swedish church. Then, he exactly tackled into the subject Livland after the Great Northern War, and clarified its developmental stage in a severely destroyed area. He thought that the war caused destruction and killed people in Livland's area. After that, Adamovičs clarified economical-social position of the clergy, schools, religious literature, and development of the parish life on a „grass root level“. Then he described the influence of Lutheran custom culture into the home lives in an same area. The monograph ends into a larger chapter, and in this Adamovičs clarifies an arrival of Herrnhutian movement to Livland.

On one hand, we can notice one weakness in the researching work of Adamovičs. His writings did not acquire the international forum, because he published them mostly in Latvian. On the other hand, Adamovičs' work in the field of research promoted both Latvian national interpretations on church history, and a critical history writing, in spite of language problems.

Studies on Livland Herrnhutism and other works

Adamovičs continued studies on the Herrnhutian movement of Livland at he turn of the 1920's and 1930's, which he already had started during his student times in Tartu. He made also research work in der Brüder Unitat-archive (Herrnhut) in 1928 and also in 1939. He published

five scientific researches altogether on Herrnhutism in Livland and some newspaper articles.

Finally, Adamovičs' researches on Herrnhutism were rising him into international consciousness. In 1927, was arranged the international church historians' meeting in Paris. In this occasion, Adamovičs held a presentation on Herrnhutism, and its religious, cultural,- and a social role in Livland. At the same year, his presentation was published in French in the collective publication of this meeting. He wrote also other works, such as, one minatory survey, which dealt with missionare Christian David's (1691-1751) connection to Livland. David was a powerful figure of the early Herrnhutian awakening movement. The minatory survey of Adamovičs appeared in Professor Jan Kvačala's Festivity book in 1933, who had been Adamovičs' teacher in church history during „the old Tartu times“.

In conclusion, Adamovičs' contribution in Latvian church history was important. His surveys, that focused on Herrnhutism were increasing knowledge on the awakening movement itself. The surveys also showed appreciation the movement enjoyed in Latvia. Similarly they were strengthening an interpretation of the Latvian People's Church, and Latvian church history in general, which Adamovičs emphasised.

Adamovičs wrote also a couple of short articles on the history of Latvian theology (in 1933 and in 1938) as well the history of the Department of Theology in the University of Latvia (1939). He wrote texts also on the history of Latvian University, short biographies of some important persons in Latvia (Teodors Grünbergs, Kārlis Kundziņš (Sr), Kārlis Mülenbach, etc.), on the history of Latvian ancient religion etc. A very interesting floor is also his book *Latviskums mūsu dievkapojumos* (The Latvian identity in our Services) in 1939. He deals national elements in the history and inside life of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

OTHER LATVIAN CHURCH-HISTORIANS

Research of church history was also carried out in Latvia in the 1920's and 1930's by other Latvian theologians, such as Gustavs Šaurums, Kārlis Freidenfelds, Vilhelms Rozenieks, and Pavils Ozoliņš. Besides them, one needs to mention a historian knowledgeable in church history (Lauma Sloka) and an expert of the ecclesiastical architectural history (Pauls Kampe). The Baltic German tradition of research was also continued in the University of Latvia and in the Herder Institute (Erich von Schrenk, Reinhard Wittram, Johannes Kirsfeldt, Otto Pohrt, Paul Baerent, Leonid Arbusow).

In the post-WW II era, Z. Balevics, A Marxist researcher, followed the line accepted by the Soviet Latvia by writing works on Latvian church history, which offered the State a weapon in the battle against religion. The teachers working in the seminars of the religious communities and cults were, in contrast, not allowed any publicity. This meant that Professor Roberts Feldmanis (1910–2002), the most prominent church historian in the post-war Soviet Latvia, promoted the tradition of the field mostly by working in the Lutheran seminary and, from 1990 onwards, by lecturing in the University of Latvia and by maintaining his personal contacts.

Professor Feldmanis had to serve in the so-called „theological Ghetto“. His possibilities to write church history were limited even he was an intellect academic theologian. He worked in the Historical Archives of Soviet-Latvia in 1956–1958 with the aim to write a dissertation on the Latvian missionary history. In this purpose he did not succeed. However some Feldmanis manuscripts on the other matters are available in the Library of Riga Luther Academy. In the international I can mention only one Feldmanis' scientific article *Die Lutherischen Kirchen im Baltikum des 19. Jahrhunderts* in book *Kirche in Staat und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Neustadt an der Aisch 1992).

Except Prof. Feldmanis I can mention from Soviet-Latvia Bishop, Cardinal Jūlijs Vaivods and Prof. Heinrihs Trūps-Trops as a Catholic church-historians. A young historian Gvido Straube wrote his dissertation on Livland Herrnhutism in the Faculty of the History of The University of Latvia in 1989. Later 1990's Prof Straube has continued his research activities on Livland Herrnhutian matters.

CHURCH HISTORY IN EXILE

There were some Latvian Lutheran theologians who wrote on Latvian church history in exile after WW II. Dr. Valdis Mezezers wrote his dissertation on Baltic Herrnhutism in North America in 1975. The pastor of New York Latvian Parish Richards Zariņš has been very active to collect material on Latvian church history as well to write reports, articles etc. in newspapers and periodicals. Prof. Harald Biezais, the famous religion historian, wrote as well some church historical articles. Prof. Edgārs Dunsdorfs, who served in Australia, was a very energetic and active historian, dealing as well interest on the matters of Latvian church history. However, the most famous exile Latvian church historian was Dr. of history hc. Pastor Edgārs Ķiploks (1907–1999), whose active work in the research field of Latvian church history longed as much as nearly 70 years,

from his student times in the beginning of 1930's untill his death in 1999. Kiploks lived in Latvia untill 1944, later in Germany and in America.

NACIONALINĒS BAŽNYČIOS ISTORIJOS FORMAVIMASIS LATVIJOJE 1918–1991 m.

Jouko Talonen

Santrauka

Pranešime pateikta Bažnyčios istorijos istoriografijos Latvijoje apžvalga. Pagrindinis dėmesys skiriamas tautinės latvių Evangelikų Bažnyčios istorijos interpretacijos susiformavimui. Tokios interpretacijos atsiradimas siejamas su žymaus latvių teologo, kultūros ir visuomenės veikėjo Liudvigo Adamovičiaus (1884–1942) vardu. Žymiausias jo veikalas, pasirodęs 1933 m., – „Bažnyčia ir latvių valstiečiai Vidžemėje 1710–1740 m.“ Šiame darbe pirmą kartą Bažnyčios veikla Vidžemėje nagrinėjama kaip specifinis istorijos objektas, atkurta ne tik dvasininkijos ekonominės-socialinės padėties, mokyklų ir religinės literatūros raidos, bet ir vidinio parapijos gyvenimo raida. L.Adamovičius taip pat daug dėmesio skyrė hernhutenizmo istorijai Latvijoje. Sovietinės istoriografijos požiūrį į Bažnyčios istoriją Latvijoje reprezentavo Z.Balevičius. Bažnyčios istoriją tyrinėjo ir sovietmečiu Rygoje veikusio Evangelikų teologijos instituto profesorius Robertas Feldmanis, tačiau jo darbai nebuvo publikuojami. Tarp latvių išeivių žymiausias Bažnyčios istorikas – pastorius Edgaras Kiplokas.