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A model for chivalry or the abode of heresy?
The Teutonic Order in the writings
of Philippe de Mézières
and Paweł Włodkovic*

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Since the early fourteenth century, many knights from Western Europe traveled to Prussia and Livonia, in order to join the Teutonic Knights on their biannual *Reisen*.¹ As the Western guests of the Teutonic Knights liked having their deeds celebrated, one finds substantial accounts of the Baltic crusades in French late medieval literature. Most of these accounts are praises for the lay knights who went through the Prussian forests to harm the pagan

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¹ W. Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des Europäischen Adels*, Sigmaringen 1989–1995, 2 Bd.; *idem*, *Adlig leben im 14. Jahrhundert. Weshabl die fuhren: Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adel*, Göttingen 2020; N. Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580: from Lyon to Alcazar*, Oxford 1992; L. Chollet, *Les “Voyages en Prusse” vus de France: la perception de la croisade contre la Lituanie dans quelques sources francophones (1384–1414)*, “Studia z Dziejów Średniowiecza” 2015, t. 19, pp. 51–80; *idem*, *Dernières croisades. Le voyage chevaleresque en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Paris 2021.

Lithuanians; when they are mentioned, the Teutonic Knights only play a secondary role. Good examples can be found in Guillaume de Machaut's poem *Le Confort d'ami* (1357) as well as in the heroic biography of the famous marshal Boucicaut, called *Le Livre des Fais* (1409).²

The writings of Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405), one of the most active French writers in the field of crusading, show a very different tone. On the one hand, Philippe de Mézières uses the Teutonic Knights as models for the military-religious order that he wanted to create, the Order of the Passion of Jesus-Christ; on the other hand, the same writer did not spare words to shame the lay knights who took part in the Prussian crusade and other “worldly” expeditions against unbelievers far away.³

Criticism of the Baltic crusades was also strong in the Kingdom of Poland after the conversion of Lithuania and its alliance with Poland. In this paper, I would like to compare the criticism of the Prussian *Reisen* by Philippe de Mézières with that by the Polish jurist Paweł Włodkowic (also known as Paulus Vladimiri,

² *Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, vol. 3, ed. E. Hoepffner, Paris 1921, pp. 107–108; *Le Livre des Fais du bon messire Jehan le Meingre dit Boucicauat, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes*, ed. D. Lalande, Genève 1985, pp. 40–42, 74–77. On Machaut's Baltic experiences, see among others V. Žurek, *Sur les traces des grands croisés. Le goût pour la croisade de Jean et Charles de Luxembourg et l'inspiration française*, in: *Histoires et mémoires des croisades à la fin du Moyen Âge*, dir. M. Nejedlý, J. Svátek, Toulouse 2012, pp. 273–291; on Boucicaut's crusading activities, J. Paviot, *Boucicaut et la croisade*, in: *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge (France, Bourgogne, Bohême)*, dir. M. Nejedlý, J. Svátek, Toulouse 2009, p. 69–83; N. Housley, *One man and his wars: the depiction of warfare by Marshal Boucicaut's biographer*, “*Journal of Medieval History*” 2003, vol. 29, issue 1, pp. 27–40; on the literary depictions of the Baltic *Reisen*, L. Chollet, *Les Sarrasins du Nord. Une histoire littéraire de la croisade balte (XIIe–XVe siècles)*, Neuchâtel 2019.

³ The classical work on Mézières and the crusade is N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405) et la croisade au XIVe siècle*, Paris 1896, which has to be completed by more recent studies, such as M. Radkovská, “*Le Songe du Vieil Pelerin*”: *l'idée de croisade rêvée et vécue chez Philippe de Mézières*, in: *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen-Âge...*, pp. 31–42; M. Głodek, *Utopia Europy zjednoczonej. Życie i idee Filipa de Mézières (1327–1405)*, Słupsk 1997; K. Oschema, *De l'Universalisme périmé au refuge de la Chrétienté: L'“Europe” de Philippe de Mézières*, in: *Philipp de Mézières et l'Europe. Nouvelle histoire, nouveaux espaces, nouveaux langages*, dir. J. Blanchard, R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Genève 2017, pp. 27–50; P. Buc, “*L'Épître lamentable*” au regard de l'exégèse et de la tradition des croisades, in: *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe...*, pp. 205–220; and the introduction of Philippe de Mézières, *Une Épître lamentable et consolatoire*, eds. P. Contamine, J. Paviot, Paris 2008.

near 1370–1435).⁴ My goal is to show that beyond the criticism of the Baltic crusades, one can find, in both writers, an idea of what the crusade should be – and what it should not be. The difference of their treatment of crusading is most probably implied by their different literary mission: while Mézières was writing to moralize about chivalry, especially for French and English knights whom he thought to be mainly preoccupied by worldly renown and aggressive bravery, Włodkowiec was a jurist who had to defend his King's right in a theological and legal dispute. Their targeted audiences were also different: the French poet hoped to be read by members of the royal family and the aristocracy, and his Polish counterpart wrote for the conciliar assembly sitting at Constance.⁵

Born in the lesser nobility of Northern France, Philippe de Mézières left his family's castle in his very youth and began the

⁴ On Paweł Włodkowiec, see mainly S. Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri and his doctrine concerning international law and politics*, 2 vol., Londres etc. 1965; *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica = Works of Paul Vladimiri (a selection)*, t. 1, tłum., red. i koment. L. Ehrlich, Warszawa 1968; and the more recent studies of P. Kras, *The Conversion of Pagans and Concept of *Ius Gentium* in the Writings of Cracow Professors in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century: An Overview*, „Bažnyčios istorijos studijos. Studies in Church History” 2013, vol. 6, pp. 23–53; P. Knoll, “A Pearl of Powerful Learning”: *The University of Cracow in the Fifteenth Century*, Leiden 2016, pp. 237–244; K. Ożóg, *Uczeni w monarchii Jadwigi Andegaweńskiej i Władysława Jagiełły (1384–1434)*, Kraków 2004, pp. 206–217; *idem*, *The Role of Poland in the Intellectual Development of Europe in the Middle Ages*, Cracow 2009, pp. 111–119; A. Lenartowicz, *Paweł Włodkowiec and Andreas Laskary as the Authors of the Polish Revindication Programme against the State of the Teutonic Order in 1412–1418*, in: *Arguments and Counter-Arguments. The Political Thought of the 14th-and 15th Centuries during the Polish-Teutonic Order Trials and Disputes*, ed. W. Sieradzian, Toruń 2012, pp. 111–122; T. Wünsch, *Paulus Vladimiri und die Genese des „realistischen Denkens” in der Lehre von den internationalen Beziehungen: Der Krieg zwischen Polen und dem Deutschen Orden als Stimulus für ein neues politiktheoretisches Paradigma*, in: *Tannenberg – Grunwald – Žalgiris 1410: Krieg und Frieden im späten Mittelalter*, eds. W. Paravicini, R. Petrauskas, G. Vercamer Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 27–42; F. Russell, *Paulus Vladimiri's attack on the Just War: a Case Study in Legal Polemics*, in: *Authority and Power*, eds. B. Tierney, P. Linehan, Cambridge etc. 1980, pp. 237–254; C. Reid, *Paulus Vladimiri, the Tractatus, Opinio Hostiensis, and the Rights of Infidels*, in: *Sacri Canones Servandi Sunt*, ed. P. Krafl, Prague 2008, p. 418–423; L. Chollet, *Ecrire l'histoire de la conquête: l'utilisation de l'histoire dans la polémique contre l'Ordre teutonique au sujet des droits des infidèles (1386–1418)*, “Hereditas Monasteriorum” 2014, vol. 4, pp. 17–47.

⁵ On the French and Polish views of the Baltic *Reisen*, L. Chollet, *Croisade ou évangélisation? La polémique contre les Chevaliers teutoniques à l'aune des témoignages des voyageurs français de la fin du Moyen Âge*, “Ordines Militares. Colloquia Torunensia Historia” 2015, vol. 20, pp. 175–203.

life of a wandering knight. He waged war in Italy and was knighted before Smyrna during the crusade led by Humbert II, Dauphin of Viennois in 1347. Soon after he visited the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, where according to his own words, he chose to dedicate his life to the liberation of the Holy Places. He then served King of Cyprus as his chancellor, taking part in the 1365 crusade against Alexandria. When King Peter got killed in 1369, Philippe went to France and became one of the advisors of King Charles V. He retired in 1380 at the Celestine' convent in Paris, but kept many links with the court. This experienced and learned man mainly spent his last 25 years writing.⁶

His most famous work is *Le Songe du Vieil Pelerin (The Dream of the Old Pilgrim)*, finished in 1389. The main political ideas expressed in this book may be summarized as follows: the importance of peace agreements between France and England; the need to reform Christendom, with France showing the way to other Christian countries and the creation of a truly Christian and disciplined knighthood. All this would lead to the liberation of the Holy Land, made possible by a *passagium generale* that all the Christian nations would lead together. For this sake, Mézières tried to set up his own military-religious order, that he entitled the Order of the Passion of Jesus-Christ.⁷ In her book *Utopia Europy zjednoczonej* Marzena Głodek has shown that the Teutonic Order most probably served as a model for the organization of the Order of the Passion – even if Mézières introduced his own original ideas in the successive rules he wrote for his Order.⁸ Although King of England inclined to Mézières' ideas and even if some renowned knights joined the Order of the Passion, his grandiose project never became a reality.

⁶ On the different aspects of Mézières' life and activities, N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières...*, *passim*; and the essays collected in *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe...*; *Philippe de Mézières and His Age. Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century*, éd. R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, K. Petkov, Leiden–Boston 2012.

⁷ P. Contamine, "Les princes, barons et chevaliers qui a la chevalerie au service de Dieu se sont ja vouez". *Recherches prosopographiques sur l'ordre de la Passion de Jésus-Christ (1385–1395)*, in: *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge...*, pp. 43–68; *idem*, *L'Ordre de la Passion de Jésus-Christ de Philippe de Mézières. Une utopie de chevalier*, in: *Élites et ordres militaires au Moyen Âge: Rencontre autour d'Alain Demurger*, eds. D. Carraz, P. Jossierand, L.F. Oliveira, Genève 2015, pp. 125–134.

⁸ M. Głodek, *Utopia Europy zjednoczonej...*, pp. 80–82.

Mézières' most relevant description of the Teutonic Order as a model for a Christian knighthood is found in the *Songe du Vieil Pelerin*.⁹ The first part of the book is set up as a long journey all over the world, in which the poet pretends to find examples of what should be done or should not be done in Christian Europe. Teutonic Order's Prussia is one of the best places the poet says he encountered in his imaginary journey. Prussia is well administrated, the castle of Marienbourg displays magnificent wealth dedicated not to manly honor but to God's glory, and the Knights are pious and disciplined armed men – in other words, they are the kind of knights Mézières would like to see in France and elsewhere in Western Europe:

Twelve knights of this Order went out of Syria and the Holy Land when the curse of God fell on the Eastern Christians for their sin, and the great city of Acre was finally lost to the Christians. Then, twelve Knights of this Holy Order, who wore in their heart the light of the real cross, all disarmed and on foot [...] went in the country of Prussia, who thus was inhabited by idolaters. And in the deep forest, they spotted a huge oak; they dug a moat around it, and they made small lodges on this oak. By day, they slept in these lodges, and by night they harassed the unbelievers.¹⁰

⁹ Philippe de Mézières, *Le Songe du Viel Pelerin*, ed. J. Blanchard, Genève 2015, vol. 1, pp. 206–226.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 213–214: “Xii. chevaliers tant seulement de la religion, qui s'estoient partis de Surie et de la terre de promission quant la malediction de Dieu fu mandee sus la Crestienté d'orient pour leurs pechiés, et la grant cite d'Acre derrainement perdue aux Crestiens. Lors .xii. chevaliers de ceste sainte religion, qui la vraye croix plongie en la fontaine de lumiere portoient en leurs cuers, tous desarmés et a pié, chascun s'espee, sa lance et son escu, vindrent en ceste contree de Prusse qui estoit lors ydolastre. Et en la parfonde forest espierent ung grant chaisne; firent un fossé entour, et en petites logetes, qu'il firent sur ledit arbre lesdis chevaliers se herbergoient de jour, et a la nuit couroient sus aux mescreans. Les dessusdiz .xii. chevaliers de ceste religion gaingnoient grandement de la despouille des anemis de la foy et petit a petit tant multiplierent a l'aide des Crestiens d'Alemaigne et de Polane qu'il firent entour le chaisne une ville cloose de palis; et monterent a cheval et chevaucherent de jours par telle maniere que en proces de tamps, par grans labours et merueilleuses batailles, multipliant leur besant, conquistrent ceste region de Prusse a la foy de mon Pere. Et la ou l'arbre dessusdit estoit, aujourd'uy est la meilleur cité de Prusse appelée Thoron”.

This is an allusion to the foundation of Altstadt Thorn, the first town of Thorn (Pol. Toruń) which the Prussian chronicler Peter von Dusburg describes as having been founded around a huge oak, used by the Teutonic Knights as a reinforced tower.¹¹ Mézières probably heard the story through a Teutonic Order's brother or through his guide when he was in Prussia – not as a crusader, but as an ambassador for King Peter of Cyprus (most probably in autumn 1364). Here the writer uses the topic of the oak as a symbol of force, and the forest as a symbol of paganism to be converted, an allegory which is to emphasize the Christian and heroic character of the Teutonic brethren.¹²

Historians have shown that the description of Marienburg and Prussia in Mézières' *Songe du Vieil Pelerin* is probably based on his own reminiscences.¹³ However, the writer only keeps what may serve him as a model for his own military order. In this regard, he explicitly says that the Teutonic Knights would shame the French nobility:

This holy order gives a great shame to many; not only to the other knightly orders, but also to all the Christian princes. [...] Every morning, they [the Teutonic Knights] wake up at matins and in their castles and convents, they live the life of monks. But when they ride against the enemies of the faith, when they are armed under the banner of the cross, each one of them looks like a prince.¹⁴

Religious lives at peace, martial splendor at war, bravery and devotion to God at all times: this is exactly what Mézières hopes for his Order of the Passion. His depiction of the Teutonic Order is thus a literary construct, used as a mirror to steer his French audience toward a "best" knightly life.¹⁵

¹¹ S. Szczepanski, "Arbor custodie que vulgariter dicitur Wartboum". *The function and existence of the so-called "watchtower trees" in Pomesania and Żuławy Wiślane in the 13th–14th centuries*, ZH 2011, vol. 76/1, pp. 5–18; W. Paravicini, *Preussenreisen...*, Bd. 1, pp. 270–271.

¹² L. Chollet, *Les Sarrasins du Nord...*, pp. 372–377.

¹³ S. Józwiak, J. Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim w Malborku w czasach wielkich mistrzów (1309–1457)*, Malbork 2019, pp. 211–213.

¹⁴ Philippe de Mézières, *Le Songe du Viel Pelerin*, vol. 1, p. 216: "Chascune nuit se lievent a matines et en leur chastiaus et convents, maintient vie de moines, et as chevauchies contre les anemis de la foy, quant il sont armés, soubz la baniere de la crois, chascun ressamble un prince".

¹⁵ S. Gouguenheim, *Les Chevaliers teutoniques*, Paris 2007, p. 586.

The aristocratic laymen who may have read Mézières' work are more directly targeted in the last redaction of the rule of the Order of Passion, written in 1396, just before the French knighthood engaged in the crusade that would ultimately end in the disastrous battle of Nicopolis (25 September 1396).¹⁶ In the text, Mézières explicitly attacks the habit of crusading as he saw it within the lay nobility of his time:

There are some knights [...] especially in the Kingdoms of France, England, Germany and Scotland, more than in other countries, who, for the sake of gaining bravery and worldly prowess, under the disguise of devotion, undertake journeys to Prussia, Grenade, Barbary, [...]. Each time that a renowned knight from one of the above said kingdoms undertakes such a journey – by his own will and without having a fully-formed idea of what he is doing – the others follow him even less wisely, like a sheep following another.¹⁷

Mézières adds that such lay crusaders do not care for efficient military activity, but only for enhancing their worldly renown. Such expeditions are thus inefficient and even harmful for the cause of Christianity, because the unbelievers harassed by a party of West European knights who go back to France or England after having accomplished “chivalric” deeds would just retaliate against East European or Mediterranean Christians as a way of revenge.¹⁸ In conclusion, Philippe de Mézières sees only a few causes that

¹⁶ P. Contamine, “*Les princes, barons et chevaliers qui a la chevalerie au service de Dieu se sont ja vouez*”..., pp. 43–68.

¹⁷ *Philippe de Mézières' Order of the Passion: an annotated edition*, ed. M.J.A. Brown, Lincoln 1971 (unpublished dissertation), p. 67: “Il sont aucuns chevaliers dit la royne Providence es vii. langaiges de la crestiente et par especial es royaumes de France et d’Engleterre, d’Almaigne et d’Escosse, trop plus qu’es autres langes, qui pour acquerre voullance et prouesse mondaine vestus par dehors d’un manteau de devocion [...] emprendant les voyages, c’est assavoir en Prusse ou en Grenate en Barbarie en Turquie en Honguerie en Servie ou en la double Ablaquie. Et toutes les foiz que aucuns chevaliers au monde renommez des dessus diz royaumes de leur propre voulente et sans meur conseil precedent emprendre les voyages, les autres les sivent ligierement encores moins avisez, comme une brebis fait l’autre et ce avient aucunesfoiz pour aucunes nouvelles ligieres et volans qui ne sont point toutes vrayes ny entieres ilz se mettent au chemin et ont ja determine combien ilz doivent demourer aiant petit regart a la necessite et pourfit de la guerre qu’ilz trouveront”.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 67–74.

should be considered as legitimate targets of crusading: the retaking of the Holy Land and, after he learned of the defeat suffered by the Christian knights at Nicopolis, the defense of Christian Europe.¹⁹ Everything else, he writes, is nothing but vainglory.

Vainglory and blind violence are the ingredients of the Baltic *Reisen*, according to the Polish scholar Paweł Włodkowic. Born near 1370 in the land of Dobrzyń, Włodkowic studied canon law in Prague and Padua.²⁰ Together with his friend Andrzej Łaskarzyc, the future bishop of Poznań and Jagiełło's courtier, Paweł was the student of Cardinal Francesco Zabarella, one of chief intellectuals of his time. The jurist was introduced to the higher political and ecclesiastical circles. In 1409, he may have drawn the attention of the "conciliar" Pope to the issue of Samogitia, a still pagan land disputed between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania.²¹ Back in Poland, he became the rector of Cracow University in 1414–1415. Although he was not the head of the Polish delegation at the Council of Constance, his role in the trial between the Teutonic Order's and Poland's delegates earned him a certain celebrity.²²

Tractatus de potestate papae et imperatoris respectu infidelium (also called according to its implicit, *Saevientibus*) is one of the first speeches that he delivered at the Council of Constance, during summer 1416.²³ Włodkowic attacks the Order for harassing the Lithuanian unbelievers described as peaceful, which would be contrary to the *Ius gentium*, according to authorities such as Pope and Cardinal Francesco Zabarella, Włodkowic's former master and one of the key figures of the Council. The *Reisen*, the huge expeditions organized twice a year with the help of guests from Western

¹⁹ This position is apparent in his last work, *Une Epistre lamentable et consolatoire* (1397): K. Oschema, *L'Europe de Philippe de Mézières...*, pp. 27–50.

²⁰ The carrier of Paweł Włodkowic is fully described in S. Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri...*, vol. 1, pp. 115–155.

²¹ A. Lenartowicz, *Paweł Włodkowic and Andreas Laskary...*, p. 116.

²² On Polish-Lithuanian politics at the Council of Constance, D. Baronas, S.C. Rowell, *The Conversion of Lithuania: from Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians*, Vilnius 2015, pp. 361, 366–378; G. Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler: Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania*, Budapest 2006, pp. 43–47; N. Housley, *The Later crusades...*, pp. 358–362. On the conversion of Lithuania, see lastly S. Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens. Les Baltes face aux chrétiens (XIIIe–XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris 2021.

²³ Ed. S. Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri...*, vol. 2, pp. 792–844; see the translation in *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica*, t. 1..., pp. 2–112.

Europe, are chosen as an example illustrating the misdeeds of the Order:

Yet these Crucifers [the Teutonic Knights] have not ceased up to now to attack even peaceful and quiet infidels and to invade their lands and dominions: on the original pretext, as if pagan fury were still raging against believers in Christ, they summon Christians to help, they make it a rule to invade lands of infidels with a strong army, twice a year, that is, on these days and in these times, to wit, of Assumption and of Purification of the Glorious Virgin Mary: those periodic actions they call in their vulgar tongue *Reisen*.²⁴

So far, Włodkowic looks similar to Philippe de Mézières, although he does not speak about vainglory, but about the legality of war. Falsely disguised as pious work, the *Reisen*, he adds, lead to the damnation of all the actors involved:

And thus is turned into a custom the error that the faithful of Christ, believing that by military service they do homage to God, flock there in great numbers and on the pretext of spreading the Catholic faith a quiet people of infidels is being cruelly attacked. Hence follow homicides, the faithful are exposed to the same danger of damnation as infidels, robberies and endless other unspeakable things are perpetrated.²⁵

As Jacques Chiffolleau has shown, the mention of deeds that are so horrific that they cannot be spoken (*nephanda*) is often associated with the categorizing of deviants, villains or heretics.²⁶

²⁴ Paweł Włodkowic, *Tractatus de Potestate Papae et Imperatoris (Saevientibus)*, ed. and transl. L. Ehrlich, in: *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica*, t. 1..., p. 3: "Tamen Cruciferi eciam mansuetos infideles et quietos inpugnare et ipsorum terras et dominia invadere usque modo non cessarunt sed sub primo colore quasi adhuc rabies paganica in Christicolae deserviret convocant in subsidium Christianos assumunt sibi pro regula cum valido exercitu invadere partes infidelium bis in anno, hijs scilicet diebus et temporibus videlicet assumptionis et purificationis gloriose virginis Marie quas vices suo vulgari sermone resas vocant".

²⁵ *Ibidem*: "Sicque in consuetudinem error deducitur quod fideles Christi causa exercende milicie credentes obsequium prestare Deo in multitudine illuc confluent et occasione catholice fidei ampliande gens quieta infidelium crudeliter inpugnatur. hinc secuntur homicidia vadunt fideles cum infidelibus pari dampnationis periculo rapine fiunt et alia nephanda infinita".

²⁶ J. Chiffolleau, *Dire l'indicible. Remarques sur la catégorie du "nefandum" du XIIe au XVe siècle*, "Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations" 1990, vol. 45/2, pp. 289–324.

Włodkovic's public is thus supposed to understand that the Teutonic brethren belong to these doomed categories. His depiction of Lithuania's conversion shed light to his approach. If the war against pagan Lithuanians was already unjust, the situation worsened, Włodkovic goes on, when Grand Duke Jagiełło converted and has been crowned King of Poland. The subsequent baptism of Lithuania, attributed to the Poles in Włodkovic's writings, made the Teutonic Knights furious:

The Crucifers ponder upon these miraculous happenings and, as if pained that there has thus been lost for them the occasion of seizing the possessions and dominions of the aforesaid [Lithuanians], they invade with greater ferocity the said neophytes many times, again and again, in their usual way, they kill cruelly both priests and also many others, both those already baptized and those not baptized, they burn their quite new churches, and they commit numberless other things which decency bids one pass other silence.²⁷

Włodkovic does not target the idea of crusading in itself, but the fact that the crusade accomplished here by the Teutonic Knights is not a righteous one. Like Mézières, he accepts the crusade as a means to fight for the Holy Land, to recover the soils once held by Christians, such as Southern Spain, and to defend the Christian countries.²⁸ On the one hand, this was more or less the traditional thinking concerning the possibilities of fighting a just war against unbelievers.²⁹ On the other hand, Paweł must have been aware that his King potentially needed to organize his own crusade against

²⁷ Paweł Włodkovic, *Tractatus de Potestate*..., p. 4: "Considerant hec mirabilia Cruciferi et quasi moleste ferentes quod eis causa occupandi possessiones et dominia predictorum taliter deperierit maiori ferocitate invadunt pluries et successive moro solito dictos neophitos et tam presbiteros quam eciam alios iam baptizatos quam et non baptizatos multos crudeliter perimunt cremant ipsorum novellas ecclesias et alia innumera faciunt que honestas postulat subticere".

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 20–21, 63.

²⁹ At least according those following Innocent IV; the (minoritarian) position of Cardinal Hostiensis (d. 1271) denied any political rights to the unbelievers living after the birth of Jesus Christ: C. Reid, *Paulus Vladimiri*..., pp. 418–420; B. Kedar, *Crusade and mission: European approaches toward the Muslims*, Princeton 1984; J. Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels. The Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250–1550*, Philadelphia 1979.

the neighboring Tatars or Russians, so the Polish delegates were not supposed to condemn all crusading options.³⁰

On the opposite side, the Teutonic Order's war is described in Włodkowiec's treatise as a war of aggression falsely disguised as a crusade. Thus, the sacred aspects usually linked to the holy war are said to be nothing but lies. The subsequent speeches Włodkowiec delivers in front of the Council develop the idea of the Teutonic Knights as hypocrites and wrong crusaders. In *Causa inter regem Poloniae et Cruciferos*, written in late 1415 with the other members of the Polish delegation but published only in autumn 1416,³¹ he attacked not only the Order's deeds, but its doctrine such as that reflected in *certas litteras et articulos* used by the Grand Master's delegates during the arbitrage at Buda in 1412–1414.³² These documents are said to be imperial and papal privileges from the 13th century, as well as written statements, which the Order would have produced in front of King Sigismund of Luxembourg and his deputy arbitrator Benedict Macra.³³ Włodkowiec's idea is to show that the content of these letters underlie the erroneous idea that *these brothers fervently exert themselves there in spreading the cult of the Catholic faith*.³⁴ Thus, there would be a gap between the original mission attributed to the Order – that is to defend hospitals in the Holy Land – and their actual behavior in North-Eastern Europe. The latter is, Włodkowiec says, nothing but violence and aggression:

Therefore, to say, as these men say, that this glorious order of theirs was instituted by these letters in order to exterminate infidels and to take from them their temporal goods etc.: what else is this but to say that this order of theirs has been

³⁰ N. Housley, *The Later crusades...*, pp. 360–361; F.H. Russel, *Just War...*, pp. 252–253

³¹ P. Kras, *Conversion...*, p. 47.

³² Paweł Włodkowiec, *Causa inter regem Poloniae et Cruciferos (Ad Aperientiam)*, ed. and transl. L. Ehrlich, *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica*, t. 1..., p. 145.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 144–147. See the commentary *ibidem*, pp. LXIII–LXIV, 260, n. 3–4. Włodkowiec has been present himself at these negotiations: A. Lenartowicz, *Paweł Włodkowiec and Andreas Laskary...*, pp. 116–119; see also P. Bar, *A Tortuous Path to Reconciliation and Justice: Sigismund of Luxembourg as Arbiter in the Dispute between the Teutonic Knights and Poland (1412–1420)*, "Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung" 2017, vol. 66/1, pp. 3–40.

³⁴ Paweł Włodkowiec, *Causa...*, p. 146: "Ipsi fratres ad hoc ibi ferventer insistent ut cultum Catholice fidei ampliarent".

instituted or founded upon willful homicide, theft, ravishing and robbery? It certainly is necessary to admit this, and it offends pious ears not a little, and consequently it will not be possible to deny that this is an erroneous sect, in no way to be tolerated in God's church.³⁵

A few lines later, the Teutonic Order is accused of promoting a heresy worse than the infidelity of the Jews and the Saracens, and worse than many heresies:³⁶

And since this order contains an error which is contrary to the faith, for faith according to the Apostle operates through charity (Galatians 5), while this order includes violence and robbery, seditions and homicides etc., – who, therefore, will doubt that this same order is a cruel heresy excluding the Apostolic faith?³⁷

Włodkowiec goes on with a Biblical quotation often used to describe the heretics: *Beware of false prophets, who come to you dressed up as sheep while underneath they are savage wolves* (Mat. 7, 15).³⁸ The accusation that Włodkowiec threw at the face of the Teutonic Order came to nothing, as the Papacy did not want to choose between the competitive Baltic powers.³⁹ More importantly, the so-called “Prussian heresy” Włodkowiec pretended to find in the Order's doctrine was more than doubtful.⁴⁰ Still, his ideas on what crusading

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 193: “Dicere ergo secundum quod dicunt isti homines quod iste eorum ordo gloriosus per istas litteras est institutus ad exterminandum infideles et ad recipiendum eis bona temporalia etc., quid est hoc aliud dicere quam quod iste eorum ordo est institutus vel fundatus super homicidio voluntario, furto, rapina et latrocinio? Certe necessarium est hoc fateri quod offendit non modicum pias aures et per consequens negari non poterit hanc esse sectam erroneam, in Dei ecclesia nullo modo tolerandam”.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 199–200.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 197: “Cum autem iste ordo errorem continet fidei contrarium que secundum Apostolum per caritatem operatur (Ad Galatos v° capitulo) in eo scilicet quod includit violenciam et rapinam, sediciones et homicidia etc.: Quis igitur dubitabit eundem ordinem crudelem esse heresim excludentem fidem Apostolicam”.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 197: “Attendite a falsis prophetis qui ad vos veniunt in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces”.

³⁹ W. Urban, *The Teutonic Knights at the Council of Constance*, in: *Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia y de las instituciones eclesiasticas en Europa: Trabajos en homenaje a Ferran Valls i Taberner*, ed. M. Pelaez, Barcelona 1990, pp. 4058–4061.

⁴⁰ On the so-called “Prussian heresy”, see S. Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri...*, pp. 689–741.

should be important to be considered by historians interested in the later crusades.

The French writer Philippe de Mézières and the Polish jurist Paweł Włodkowic shared some criticism against what they considered “wrong crusades”. For Philippe de Mézières, a wrong crusade is characterized by seeking for vainglory, that is worldly honor. The typical “bad crusader” in this case is a lay nobleman who goes fighting unbelievers without thinking of the strategic implication of this acts. Philippe’s bad crusader only hopes that his name will be remembered by heralds and passed to further generations.⁴¹ In this aspect, Mézières is very close to other critics of “worldly crusading”, like the Englishman John Gower (d. 1408) or the Austrian poet known as Heinrich der Teichner (d. 1378).⁴² His criticism does not concentrate on the Teutonic Knights but on the volunteers taking part in the *Reisen*. Mézières needed to spare the image of the Teutonic Order as a model for his dreamed Order of the Passion, so his criticism on “bad crusaders” is only focused on the Grand Master’s guests.

Paweł Włodkowic’s criticism is slightly different, in the sense that he does not condemn the Baltic *Reisen* as vainglory, but as an aggressive and unjust war. He affirms that the so-called “Prussian heresy” is widely spread in Europe, which can be seen by the fact, that “there has been flocking in aid to them the armed knight-hood from almost all Christian parts: from Italy, from France, from England etc., and especially from almost all of Germany, where they [the Teutonic knights] also possess castles and great

⁴¹ On the role played by the heralds in spreading the renown of the lay knights taking part in the *Reisen*, W. Paravicini, “Bellenville”. *Wappenbücher, Herolde und Preußenfahrten in europäischer Forschung*, “Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte” 2005, vol. 32/1, 2005, pp. 185–190; *idem*, *Preussenreisen....*, Bd. 1, pp. 329–332.

⁴² John Gower, *Le Mirour de l’Omme*, in: *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macaulay, vol. 1, Oxford 1899, p. 264; Heinrich der Teichner, *Daz di herren nicht frid schaffen*, in: *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, vol. 2, ed. H. Niewöhner, Berlin 1954, N° 353, pp. 95–97; see also W. van Anrooij, *Heralds, knights and travelling*, in: *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, ed. E. Kooper, Cambridge 1994, pp. 46–61; H. Birkhan, *Les croisades contre les païens de Lituanie et de Prusse: idéologie et réalité*, in: *La Croisade: réalités et fictions*, ed. D. Buschinger, Göppingen 1989, pp. 31–50; S. Vander Elst, *Chivalry, Crusade, and Romance on the Baltic Frontier*, “Mediaeval Studies” 2011, vol. 73, pp. 287–328; L. Chollet, *Les Sarrasins du Nord....*, p. 331–346.

dominions”.⁴³ However, the guilty party is not the foreign crusaders coming to help the Teutonic Order, but the Order itself. In an allusion to the battle of Grunwald (1410), he says that the fallen guests of the Order have been lured by the Grand Master’s call.⁴⁴ In his eyes, the lay crusaders who went to support the Teutonic Knights are more or less victims of the Order’s political game.

Thus, each writer uses the image of the Teutonic Knights for his own purpose. While they are a model to be followed in Philippe de Mézières’s works, the Knights are an evil and treacherous enemy in Paweł Włodkowic’s treatises.⁴⁵ The answer to the question of what crusading should be is however quite similar in both authors’ writings. The Frenchman and the Pole seem to agree that crusading should fulfil only two legitimate goals: the defense of Christendom and the recovery of the Holy Land. In this, they are very traditional. However, their different pictures of the Teutonic Order and of the Baltic crusades remind us that the ideology of crusading was by no mean monolithic in the late Middle Ages. Sometimes a model of piety and Christian heroism, sometimes charged with misdeeds and hypocrisy, the Teutonic Knights embody the ambiguous image of the crusaders as warriors who may always slip on the boundary between good and evil.

⁴³ Paweł Włodkowic, *Causa...*, p. 201: “Affluebat enim eis in subsidium armata militia de omnibus fere partibus Christianis: de Ytalia, de Francia, de Anglia etc. et presertim de tota quasi Germania, ubi etiam possident castra et magna dominia”.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 207: “[...] hic oportet licet dolenter dicere, quod nuper nondum VII annis elapsis vulgari fama attestante ad C milia vel quasi Christianorum armatorum isto errore per eos seductorum et precio conductorum bellando temere uno die perdidierunt passive occasione dominij dictorum Samagitarum quod taliter usurpare conabantur et conantur”.

⁴⁵ The treacherousness attributed to the Teutonic Knights by Paweł Włodkowic had an important impact in later historiography: A. Koźuchowski, *The Devil Wears White: Teutonic Knights and the Problem of Evil in Polish Historiography*, “East central Europe. L’Europe du centre-est” 2019, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 135–155.

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Streszczenie

Wzór dla rycerstwa czy siedlisko herezji?
Zakon krzyżacki w dziełach Philippe`a de Mézièresa
i Pawła Włodkowica

Pomimo tego, że krucjaty bałtyckie były jednym z najaktywniejszych frontów krucjatowych w późnym średniowieczu, także doczekały się krytyki. W niniejszym artykule podjęto próbę porównania krytycznych opinii formułowanych przez francuskiego rycerza i poetę Philippe`a de Mézièresa oraz polskiego prawnika i duchownego Pawła Włodkowica. Każdy z nich wykorzystywał obraz krzyżackich wypraw na Litwę (tzw. rejs) do własnych celów. Podczas gdy Mézières moralizował o rycerskości, Włodkowic musiał bronić praw Polski w sporze teologiczno-prawnym na soborze w Konstancji. Obaj zgadzali się wszakże, że krucjaty powinny służyć tylko uzasadnionym celom, czyli obronie chrześcijaństwa i odzyskaniu Ziemi Świętej, w związku z czym w swoim pisarstwie zawarli krytyką tego, co uważali za „złe krucjaty”. Dla Philippe`a de Mézièresa typowym „złym krzyżowcem” był świecki szlachcic, który szukał próżnej chwały i nie dbał o Boga. Francuski pisarz koncentrował swoją krytykę na zachodnioeuropejskich rycerzach-gościach ochotnikach biorących udział w rejsach, ale sam zakon krzyżacki wyobrażał sobie jako instytucję pobożną i rycerską, zatem godną do naśladowania. De Mézières stworzył w swoich dziełach taki pozytywny wizerunek zakonu, ponieważ był dla niego wzorem idealnego zakonu rycerskiego. Dlatego też jego krytyka skupiła się wyłącznie na rycerzach, którzy przybywali do Prus, aby brać udział w wyprawach na Litwę.

Paweł Włodkowic natomiast nie potępia uczestnictwa w rejsach jako próżnej chwały, ale dostrzega w nich agresywną i niesprawiedliwą wojnę. Dla niego za krucjaty nie są odpowiedzialni zwabieni krzyżacką propagandą cudzoziemscy krzyżowcy, ale winny jest sam zakon.