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LETTERS OF GEDIMINAS

[See also "[The Translation of Letters of Gediminas](#)" and "[Commentary on the 'Letters of Gediminas'](#)" in this issue, *Lituanus* 15:4]

2. Letter of Gediminas to Pope John XXII, [1322]

A contemporary copy on parchment, undated; was in the archives of the order in Koenigsberg, now in Goettingen. Taken from F. G. Bunge ed., *Liv- Est- und Curlaendisches Urkundenbuch* (LUB), vol. I, Reval, 1853; vol. II, Reval, 1855; vol. VI, Riga, 1871; vol. II, no. 687. Basis of dating is the reference to this letter in letter 3.

To the most excellent father, lord John, supreme pontiff of the Roman throne, Gediminas, of Lithuanians and many Russians king etc.

It is a long time since we have heard that all the worshipers of the Christian faith ought to be subject to your authority and paternal direction, and that the Catholic faith itself is governed by the providence of the Roman church.

It is for this that by the present letter we declare to your reverence that our predecessor king Mindaugas with his whole kingdom was converted to the faith of Christ, but because of the savage wrongs and innumerable treacheries of the master of the brothers from the Teutonic house, they all fell away from the faith; for this reason we, to our sorrow, up to this very day have constantly remained in the errors of our forefathers.

For many times our predecessors, for the sake of making peace, sent their envoys to the lord archbishops of Riga, whom [the envoys] they [the brothers of the Teutonic order] cruelly killed, as is evident from the case under lord Isarus who with us and with the brothers of the Teutonic house on behalf of the lord Boniface arranged peace and a truce and sent his letter to us, but when the envoys were returning from the house of the lord Isarus, some they killed on the way, some they hung or forced them to submerge themselves.

Likewise our predecessor king Vytenis sent his letter to the lord legate Francis and the lord archbishop Frederick asking them to send him two brothers of the Franciscan order, assigning to them a place and a church already built. Learning about this, the Prussian brothers from the Teutonic house sent an army by devious ways and inflamed with fire the mentioned church.

Likewise they seized the lord archbishop and bishops and clerics, as is evident in the case of the lord John who died¹ in the curia in the time of the lord Boniface, and the case of the lord archbishop Frederick who was fraudulently ejected from church. Likewise one cleric, lord Berthold, whom they cruelly killed in the city of Riga in his very own house.

Likewise they cause the earth to become desert, as can be seen in Zemgale² and many other places. However they say that they do this so that they may defend Christians.

Holy and revered father! We do not fight Christians to destroy the Catholic faith, but to resist our injuries, as do Christian kings and rulers; this is evident because we have with us brothers of the Franciscan order and the Dominican order to whom we have given complete freedom of baptizing, preaching, and administering other rites.

In fact, reverend father, we write these things to you so that you will know why our forefathers died in the error of infidelity and unbelief. Now however, holy and revered father, we most earnestly appeal that you turn your attention upon our lamentable state, because we, like other Christian kings, are ready to obey you in all things and to receive the Christian faith, provided that by the mentioned torturers, namely the mentioned master and brothers, we may be oppressed in no manner.

3. Letter of Gediminas to the citizens of Luebeck, Sund, Bremen, Magdeburg, Cologne, and other cities, January 25, 1323

Written on parchment in a contemporary handwriting, without a seal or traces of a seal; preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from K. E. Napiersky ed., *Russisch - Livlaendische Urkunden*, St. Petersburg, 1868, no. 54.

To all Christians spread throughout the whole world, to men and women, especially to the cities, renown above all others, of Luebeck, Sund, Bremen, Magdeburg, Cologne, to the others indeed all the way to Rome, Gediminas, by the grace of God of Lithuanians and Russians king, prince and duke of Zemgale, with constancy of respect and favor, greeting.

With this letter we signify to those here present, to those absent, as well as to future generations that we have sent our envoy with our letter to the apostolic lord and most holy father about the reception of the Catholic faith and we know his reply; and also every day we await his legates most impatiently; so that if they come to you, these travelers are to be sent to our presence in an honorable manner. That we wish to be deserving in a similar or a greater occasion, because whatever of benefit you have done to them, you have done to us.

All things that we wrote about in our letter to the holy father and our supreme lord, the pope, we will be eager to observe inviolably for the praise of God and the honor of the holy church, to erect churches, as we have already done, know that one was built by us for the Dominicans in our city of new Vilnius less than two years ago. Indeed those for Franciscans, one in Vilnius our aforesaid city and the other in Novgorodok, this last one was burned by fire by the Prussian cross bearers for the destruction of Christians and the extirpation of Franciscans in our land. Which one again this year we made to be rebuilt for the honor of the Omnipotent God and of his genetrix, the virgin Mary, and of the blessed Francis, so that the praise of Christ, to our benefit and for the healthful salvation of our sons and wives and all worshipping the true God Jesus Christ, might continue ceaselessly by the same brothers.

| We invite | bishops, priests, and religious of all orders, if only their lives are not corrupt, as of those who build cloisters and carry away the offerings of good men and then sell them and fill the said city ("for you have made it a den of thieves") — we have excepted such, their friendship will not be in common with us.

Furthermore, we open our land, dominion, and kingdom to every person of good will.

To knights, armsbearers, merchants, healers, smiths, carpenters, cobblers, fur-makers, millers, storekeepers, and each person of mechanical arts — to all those named above we want to distribute land to each according to his dignity.

These colonists who will wish to come, let them cultivate our land for ten years without taxes. Let merchants come and leave freely without any taxes and duties, with all impediments completely removed.

If knights and armsbearers will want to remain, I will grant them incomes and possessions, as is proper.

Let all these people enjoy the civil law of the city of Riga, unless then something better will have been found by the council of the men of discretion.

Whoever shall obstruct the aforementioned and shall even obstruct those coming from knowing about the above will harm us seriously; let those know that this is done not to them but to our royal majesty.

For after this time we wish to be prejudicial to none, but to give aid to everyone and to strengthen by an eternal union peace, brotherhood, and true charity with all of Christ's faithful.

That these things may remain unchanged we have given our seal to this letter as a witness and protection.

Given in our city of Vilnius after mature deliberation in the year of our lord 1323, on | the feast of | the conversion of Saint Paul the apostle.

We ask all councilors to copy this letter and affix the copy to the door of a church, while the letter itself without any delay out of favor to us to send to a neighboring city, so that in this way the glory of God may become known to all.

Pray God for us.

4. Letter of Gediminas to the citizens of Luebeck, Rostov, Sund, Greifswald, Stettin, and Gotland, May 26, 1323

A copy, made on July 18, 1323; was in the archives of the Order in Koenigsberg, now in Goettingen. Taken from LUB, vol. II, no. 690.

Gediminas, by the grace of God of Lithuanians and Russians king, prince and duke of Zemgale, to the honorable men, the providential and honest advocates, councilors, and citizens of Luebeck, Rostov, Sund, Greifswald, Stettin, and Gotland, merchants and artisans of all conditions, greeting and royal grace and favor.

Since all kingdoms, one of which we hold, are subject to the king of heaven Jesus Christ, as form in matter or a slave in a house, granted that we appear the least of kings, by the providence of God we appear the greatest in our own dominions, in which we have |the power | to instruct and govern, to condemn and to save, to close and to open.

Finally you have already crossed our borders without any inspection, for visiting Novgorod, Pskov; all this we allowed for the sake of future good.

Now you have seen and with your ears from day to day heard the injury of all your | affairs |. Our forefathers sent to you their envoys and letters, opened to you the land, none of you came, not even a dog from your side replied with gratitude to those offers.

Let those things written before not frighten you. If they promised one thing, we with the blessing of God will make double and even more, for we have sent our letter to our father, the holy lord pope, about union with the church of God, and with indescribable impatience are awaiting the arrival of his legates; whose presence we have promised in writing that we oversee.

Taking council with yourselves about it, send to us from all your lands high ranking envoys, men just and worthy of confidence; above and beyond our signature and this our letter confirmed by our royal seal, above all this, we, having given our pledge, promise to all of you that we will establish such a peace between us the like of which Christians have not even thought.

We will collect bishops, priests, religious of the Dominican and Franciscan orders, whose lives are praiseworthy and upright, but we do not want the coming of such who make a refuge of thieves from monasteries and sell offerings, to the detriment of their souls, and out of which come thieves to the danger and murder of clerics; we council every ruler to beware of such monastics.

Moreover, beyond everything granted by our predecessors, we grant according to our royal gift in this present decree that our land is free, without duties, from exactions and tolls of the road to all merchants, knights, vassals; whom I will endow with incomes, to each according to his dignity; to artisans of all conditions, namely craftsmen, cobblers, carpenters, stonemasons, saltmakers, millers, silversmiths, makers of missiles, fishermen, and others of any condition, let them come with their children, wives, and beasts of burden, let them come and leave according to their pleasure far removed from all disturbance; having given our pledge in this, we promise that they will remain safe from all unjust attacks of my subjects.

To farmers who wish to come and remain in our kingdom, we grant and concede for ten years to work freely and without taxes, while for half of this period let them be exempt from all royal works; after the expiration of the aforesaid period and depending upon the fertility of the land, they will give a tenth as in other kingdoms or nations they have been accustomed to give, however with this that with us the grain will be more abundant than is customary in other kingdoms.

Let all the people use the civil law of the city of Riga, unless then something better be found by the council of the men of discretion.

So that you will be more secure and be more certain, we have rendered you two Franciscan churches which we have erected, one in our royal city called Vilnius and another in Novgorodok, and a third Dominican, so that each person may worship God according to his rite.

Thus, so that this our granting of privileges may remain unchanging and strong, we have ordered this writing written and we have caused to be affixed to it our seal, so that you knowing that we have sent the same seal to our lord and most holy father, will believe that we will observe unchanged everything which we have written to him in a letter.

In this letter we reject the deniers of our seal as malicious destroyers of the faith, heretics, liars, and as men deprived of all honor.

Through the dukedom of the lord Boleslav, duke of Mazovia, everyone will be able to have a secure approach to us.

Given in Vilnius, in the year of our lord 1323, on the feast of Corpus Christi.

We ask you to copy this letter after it has been read in one city, and with the testimony of religious and other men worthy of trust to send it without delay to another, so that our desire be made manifest to all.

Farewell.

5. Letter of Gediminas to the monks of the Dominican order, May 26, 1323

A copy, made on July 18, 1323; was in the archives of the order in Koenigsberg, now in Goettingen. Taken from LUB, vol. II, no. 688.

Gediminas, by the grace of God of Lithuanians and Russians king, prince and duke of Zemgale, to the learned men and pious, the masters and priors of any Dominican province, to all brothers, but principally to the master of Saxony and the priors established under him, greeting and the very best wishes.

Let your honorable, commendable, and learned [person] know that we have sent our envoys with a letter to our father, the glorious lord Pope John, so that he might vest us with the first stole; that we day to day await his legates with great fear

and impatience, because with the lord Jesus Christ assenting, we will be already prepared to carry out whatever his will is pleasing.

Therefore we wish to collect bishops, priests, religious, except those who sell their monasteries and engineer the slaying of clerics. We wish to protect the rights of the church, honor the clergy, and spread the worship of God.

Therefore we ask that you announce this to men in cities, places, and villages, wherever anyone of you will happen to preach.

Also if there be any knights and armsbearers, we will give them incomes and land, as much as they wish; to merchants, wrights, carpenters, missile makers, cobblers, and craftsmen of any kind, we grant the freedom to enter and leave our land, with wives, children, and beasts of burden, without any taxes or duties and with every disturbance far removed.

Although the cross bearers because of this matter burned our seal to insult us, it seems, so that they would extinguish the work begun by God and obscure the eyes of men, however, we send this letter with the same seal as we have caused a letter to the dearly beloved lord, the apostolic father, to be sealed in a similar way, in certain confidence and protection, for sooner will iron change to wax and water change to steel than we will recall a word sent out from us.

Those evil ones who act maliciously against this letter and seal are deniers of the truth, worshipers of the devil, destroyers of the faith, lying heretics, and are deprived of all honor, in this letter.

After reading and copying it, let this letter be sent by the master and priors of Saxony as soon as possible, so that the glory of God may complete what it has begun.

Given in the year of our lord 1323, on the feast of Corpus Christi.

Farewell.

6. Letter of Gediminas to the monks of the Franciscan order, May 26, 1323

A copy, made on July 18, 1323; was in the archives of the order in Koenigsberg, now in Goettingen. Taken from LUB, vol. II, no. 689.

Gediminas, by divine providence of Lithuanians and Russians king, prince of Zemgale and duke, to the religious devoted to Christ and the reverend and pious fathers and men, to ministers, custodians, and guardians, and all other brothers of the Franciscan order spread throughout the whole world, especially however to the minister of Saxony and all other brothers, greeting with wishes of bringing about a continuous well-being.

We wish that you would know that we have sent our letter to our most excellent lord John, supreme pontiff of the apostolic throne, so that he would help us together with others of his sheep to the pastures of plenty; in this matter we have received a reply that his legates will soon come; their delay arouses for us an endless concern, so that the work of God might be completed more quickly and the seductive fraud may cease.

We desire through you and your brothers to spread our will in all cities, localities, and villages and exhort the people through saving admonitions, so that what God has watered he should raise and reap as well, and place it in the heavens with the blessed. Thus we wish to collect bishops, priests, and religious of all orders, especially from yours for which we have already built two churches: one in our royal city called Vilnius and the other in Novgorodok; to which for us during this year let you appoint four brothers who know the Polish, Zengallian, and Russian languages, such as are there and have been; and also from the Dominicans, to whom we will give a church at a future time; however we except those religious who traffic in their monasteries, to the loss of their rulers, the slaying of clerics, miserably maltreating their own souls.

Furthermore, making known to the people and brothers, you may begin to make known our love to cities, localities, and villages, that to knights and armsbearers we will grant income, however to merchants, wrights, carpenters, silversmiths, saltmakers, and certainly to artisans of any condition, the free capacity of entering and leaving our land through the dukedom of the duke of Mazovia, the lord Boleslav, without any taxes, duties, without any right to encumber with unforeseen tolls of the road.

We will present this letter unchanged, for our word will endure as strong as steel.

In testimony of this matter we have considered that to this letter our seal which we sent to the apostolic lord and our most holy father and which the crossbearers burnt as an insult to this legation, ought to be affixed.

The contradictors of this seal and the serious matters in this letter, we pronounce deceitful persecutors of the faith, malicious and perverse heretics.

Given in Vilnius in the year of our lord 1323 on the feast of Corpus Christi.

After the ministers and custodians have read it, let this letter be sent to another province, and let all the brothers faithfully pray for the king, his sons and queens, and also for the whole land, in order that the lord would finish what he began.

7. Letter of the council of the city of Riga to Gediminas, 1323, [prior to October 2]

A small sheet of parchment; preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from K. E. Napiersky ed., *Russisch - Livlaendische Urkunden*, St. Petersburg, 1868, no. 54. Dating based upon the request to keep duke David from undertaking any military activities. According to the chronicle of Pskov, this took place in 1323.

To the illustrious prince lord Gediminas, by the grace of God of Lithuanians and Russians king, the councilors of the city of Riga, greeting in the lord.

Let it be known to you that we have received the letter you recently sent to us; from it we have learned that you were ready to make peace and a truce with us, as Vytenis of happy memory, your brother and predecessor, had with us, and besides that we might send our envoys to you without any care.

Therefore know that we would gladly send our envoys to you about the matter, but we cannot do this for the brothers; for they send their envoys to you, whenever they wish; that we will not be able to do this, and we are totally ignorant of what they decide, they do not reveal anything to us.

Therefore, we urgently and obediently ask your providence not to draw up any separate peace and truce with those brothers, except when there is agreement from three sides, namely, the archbishop and his chapter, that master of the Teutonic brothers, and us — the city of Riga, as has been the custom of old.

Furthermore, you asked for a reply about the status of our archbishop; therefore you may know that the lord our archbishop in the Roman curia, we have really learned, in all things obtained his will against the mentioned brothers and we hope that he himself, the lord willing, will soon return with joy.

And may another matter be known to your lordship, that your petty robbers bring great damage to us right up to our city; thus, we humbly ask you that you deign to order the petty robbers in such manner that they may not burden us any more.

Farewell.

[On the other side.]

We thank your graciousness for the friendly letter you so recently wrote us; therefore, may your royal munificence know that the brothers disturb us seriously and in many ways, even in a time of truce they do not fear to cruelly kill our fellow citizens equally in our city as outside it; therefore we do not know if or when they will want to hostilely attack us and to invade our city.

For which reason we earnestly ask your serenity in case the said brothers undertake to attack us, although the possibility is remote,³ to help us, as you offered to us in your letter; therefore, we ask that you do not make any peace with the said brothers where we would not be, like they, participants in the same treaty of peace.

You wrote other things to us, so that we might inform you about the status of our archbishop. Thus know that his negotiation in the curia, as we recently learned, is in a good state, and we hope he himself will be returning shortly.

Farewell.

Written on the vigil of Andrew.

And other things, we have learned that the lord David is king in Pskov. Since you and he are special friends, we earnestly ask your sincerity that you would deign to put in order in such a way that he, with your grace mediating, would be a friend of our city and protector of our fellow citizens, for they often journey through his land; that we intend to repay with our services.

8. Peace treaty between Gediminas and the order, the Danish viceroy in the land of Revel (Tallin), the bishops, and Riga

The original; written on parchment in an old German; with thirteen seals; preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from M. Hein and E. Maschke eds., *Preussisches Urkundenbuch*, Koenigsberg, 1932, vol. II, part I, no. 418.

All those who will see and hear this writing, the king of Lithuania Gediminas greets and wishes them health and peace in the lord.

With this writing we announce that in response to our letters have come to us the envoys of the bishop of Riga, Valdemar of Rosen and mister Arnold Stoyve, the vicar general of the bishop; the envoys of the chapter, mister John Molendinum and mister Thomas; the envoys of the bishop of Oesel, mister Bartholemew of Vellin and mister Ludolf from Wittenhove, canon of Hapeselle; the envoy of the bishop of Dorpat, his vassals, and his city, mister Herman Lange; the envoys of the

viceroi, and his vassals, of the noble king of Denmark, brother Arnold, prior from Revel, and mister Henry from Parenbeke; the envoys of the master of Livonia and all the brothers, John of Lowenbroke, commandant of Mitau, brother Otto Bramhorn; envoys of the city of Riga, mister Henry of Mitau, mister John Langeside, and mister Earnest from the same city; the prior of the Dominicans, brother Wessel; envoy of the Franciscans, brother Albrecht Schluth.

We together with the above named, with the advice and consent of our council of the wise, have made a strong peace with all Christians who send to us their envoys and wish to remain at peace with us with the following conditions:

[1] That all roads on land and on water must be without any barriers, open, and free to every man, whether on foot or in a vehicle, equally from them to us as for us to them.

[2] Here are the lands where we have made peace: from our side — the land of Aukštaitija and Žemaitija,⁴ Pskov, and all Russian [lands] which are under our rule; from the lands of the rulers — the diocese of Riga and the city of Riga; from the side of the master — Klaipėda⁵ and Kurland, and all the lands which belong to Livonia and which are under the care of the master and his brothers; from the side of the bishop of Oesel — the whole diocese and all lands which are under his government; from the side of the bishop of Dorpat — the whole diocese and all lands which are under his government, together with the city of Dorpat; from the side of the king of Denmark — Hareyn, Wirlant, Allentaken and all other lands which he governs. This peace we have made this way.

[3] If it happens that one man will act unjustly with another, that one can demand [redress] from him who will do him injustice, and also to demand that his case be settled according to the law of his land.

[4] However if it happens that such a decision could not satisfy him, then he can with his affair address the rulers of that land in which that injustice was done to him; they must help him obtain complete justice.

[5] Further, if treasure of any kind be carried out to another country, it must be returned as soon as it is sought for.

[6] Further, if a free man wishes to travel from one land to another, he can do this freely.

[7] If a slave escapes from one country to another, *he* must be returned as soon as this is demanded.

[8] If it happens that one man carry out to another land the treasure, or some other thing, of another, this must be returned as soon as it is demanded.

[9] This peace must be constant and firm, and none can break it. However, if it happens that some man who is subject to us would desire to break that peace, he is not entitled to this without our permission. However, if from some just reason someone would wish to repudiate this peace, that one must warn the other two months in advance.

[10] So that all these affairs between us take place in a friendly way and in a favorable spirit, we grant the right of Riga in our land to every man who shall travel to us or leave us.

[11] And let every merchant from both sides carry on that trade which he likes.

In order to confirm that above stated matter and for the strengthening of that constant peace we have affixed to this writing our royal seal. This writing has been made in our royal castle in Vilnius, in the one thousand three hundred twenty third year of the birth of our lord, on the Sunday after the day of Saint Michael.

11. Letter of Nicholas, custodian of Prussian Franciscans, to the faithful, November 25, 1323

Taken from LUB, vol. II, no. 698.

To all the faithful of Christ who will read this letter, brother Nicholas, the custodian of the Prussian Franciscan custody, together with other guardians entrusted to his care, sincere love in the lord.

When the confessors of the truth see that the truth endures calamity, they must not only have compassion for those suffering the injury, but ever must help with opportune remedies, as far as is expedient. Because of those matters, we seeing that the reputation of the religious men, the lords of the Teutonic house, is seriously and undeservedly blackened because some of their enemies dare to assert that they are striving vigorously to impede the king of Lithuanians who desires with his people to accept the Catholic faith, to all of you, as is required by justice, for the present excusing of the above mentioned lords, for it is certainly and most completely known to us from recent events, we declare through this letter that that said king has sent out certain letters to parts of the world, in which he asserted that he with his people and the whole kingdom wishes to receive baptism and to join the congregation of believing people.

Very many of the official envoys who went to him in this matter not only found out the deceit in his deed, but they even heard him blaspheming God.

Not being content with this, his accomplices invaded Christian lands and those about them damaging them so much that they abducted, leading them back into captivity, a great multitude of people of both sexes, apart from those killed and cremated in churches of whom there is no number.

How therefore can it be probably true and believable that those often mentioned men, who leaving the world and because of such religious devotion dedicating themselves to the defense of Christians, and daily even exposing their very bodies to dangers and death — we have really witnessed this often with our own eyes — could impede the conversion of the aforesaid king and his nation, when in the meantime he with his accomplices so often bring evil things to Christians and them themselves.

Desiring therefore that this testimony of truth about the said matter to the mentioned lords be useful and praiseworthy, we affirm the present letter by affixing to it the seals of our offices.

Given in Kulm, in the year of our lord 1323, on the feast of Catharine.

12. Letter of Pope John XII to Gediminas, [June 1], 1324

Taken from A. Turgenev ed., *Historica Russiae Monumenta*, St. Petersburg, 1841, vol. I, no. 108.

To the most excellent and magnificent man Gediminas, illustrious king of Lithuanians and many Russians, to adore God and to fear him, bishop John, servant of the servants of God.[6](#)

The letter of your greatness to us filled with devotion and with concise words undoubtedly came to us with agreeable pleasure and with the good-will of our brothers, the cardinals of the holy Roman church; in which when we turn our attention to your piety, when we admit[7](#) the plan of your healthful salvation, when we contemplate with the attention of intense meditation that feeling of devotion which you assured us you had towards God, us, and the Roman church, you have given our hearing a matter of joy and gladness.

After the very first words of your gracious greeting in the very beginning of your letter you noted that all the followers of the Christian faith must become subject to our authority and that the whole Catholic faith is governed by provision of the church of Rome; you also declared to us that some time ago your predecessor Mindaugas[8](#) with his whole kingdom had been converted to the faith of Christ, but because of the savage and inimical[9](#) wrongs of our beloved sons the master and brothers of the Teutonic order of the Blessed Mary of Jerusalem abandoned this faith and relapsed into a former error, and that to you also befalls to this day, even though against your will, to remain in this error; and further in the same letter you have listed very many articles of serious charges, of many injuries, of manifest excesses against the same master and brothers, adding that you in no way fight against Christians so as to destroy the Christian faith, but to defend yourself from your enemies, as do other Christian kings and princes; also that you have with you brothers of the Dominican and the Franciscan orders whom you have commissioned and have given them a free license to baptize, preach, and teach the Christian people, and also the unbelievers, so that they may be converted to the omnipotent God and lord.

Finally, you pleaded with us that we would deign to attend upon your pitiful state because you are ready to obey us in all things, like other Catholic kings, and to obey and accept the true faith, provided that the said master and brothers not trouble you in any way; you together with your children, present and future, choose us and our said brothers, cardinals of the mentioned Roman church, as parents, and also repeatedly plead that we would deign to send our honorable brother Frederick the archbishop of Riga, together with out legate of the apostolic see, to those regions in order to make peace and establish boundaries.

After a certain period of time, a second letter, filled with an odor of devotion which your excellency sent to us, brought a great deal of exaltation and joy to us and our said brothers, due to the fact that you and all the other princes and barons of your kingdom, honorably persevering in your promise in respect of ourselves and the said church, have indicated those who are conspicuous for their full sincerity, that in your person dwells that spirit of reverent obedience which, as we believe, was given to you not without the gift of divine grace, as is noted in the beginning of that letter: because from divine illumination you admit that there is one God, father and son and holy ghost, and firmly believe this and hold to this, knowing that we have been placed by the true and living God[10](#) as the shepherd and governor of all those seeking for salvation, and that which we loose and bind in heaven and on earth will remain the decree of the supreme judge.

The course of the same letter contains many more pleasing things which are agreeable with our intentions which were inserted in the same letter, but for the sake of brevity we omit.

Therefore, we together with the said brothers having considered the first as well as the second letter with the needed attention, thank in all ways the omnipotent God the father, from whom all good things come, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, to whom inclines without any obstacle of difficulty anyone he wishes, because the grace of the holy spirit, it seems, has given light to the eyes of your mind with the rays of his brightness and has shown to you the way of Catholic truth, in order that your royal providence may beneficially establish again that Catholic faith which your above mentioned predecessor had accepted with his whole kingdom, although he later fell with great harm to himself into the earlier error, as is mentioned in your letter; especially because we see[11](#) that in this case our desire and that of the church itself will be

fulfilled, if we see the same church growing with a numerous progeny and the various families of nations, under the observing of the same faith, congregating into one people acceptable to Christ and living in the house of the lord.

Just this house, namely, the one church, our lord gathered together for himself and the nations and chose it, without blemish and faults, as we read in the "Canticle of Canticles": "One is my betrothed, my chosen one, my unblemished one."

And the lord himself protests in the gospel that there is one fold for the sheep and one shepherd, and the Catholic faith in its apostolic creed declares that there is one Catholic and apostolic faith; the lord Jesus Christ himself built it upon himself as the cornerstone; and he redeemed it by shedding his precious blood; whose power of direction with the prerogatives of privilege he entrusted to blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles, as his vicar and through him to his successors, saying: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," and when he after his resurrection said repeating three times "Feed my sheep"; he admits that he prayed for his faith, speaking to him in the gospel: "I prayed for you, Peter, that your faith not weaken and you, turning back occasionally, strengthen your brothers." And in order that the authority of the same prince of the apostles and of his successors be universal and that his power to introduce into the kingdom of heaven be indisputable, he said to him: "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whomsoever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whomsoever you loose on earth will be loosed also in heaven." Thus those, who come in to this fold and surrender to the care of such a shepherd and also end the journey of their lives while keeping to his teaching and authority, will merit the grace of salvation. Those who stray from this will bear the sentence of damnation.

Thus, out of fatherly love we desire that you having repudiated the harm of your salvation would become worthy to join the company of the elect and you would believe, hold, and serve the same as the mother, the Roman church, and having rejected altogether the errors of schismatics, observation of which leads one to stray from the path of light and the way to darkness opens, you might receive the grace of conversion and true cooperation.

That is the reason why we turn our spiritual eyes to our venerable brother Bartholomew, bishop of Electen, and our beloved son Bernard, abbot of the monastery of the blessed Theofred of the diocese of Anicia, men truly learned, praiseworthy, in life and conversation, having the grace to proclaim the gospel, acceptable to us and to the said brothers [cardinals]; on the advice of the same brothers we have decided especially to send them to you and the country under you as the envoys of ourselves and the said see, so that they would explain the gospel to you and to your kingdom, preach God and our lord Jesus Christ and salubriously teach and inform you in the truth of the faith of the true and holy, catholic and apostolic Roman church, so that you and your nation by their healthful teaching, knowing that Jesus Christ himself is the son of God, may be baptized, for not until then will you be reborn, and may deserve to be strengthened with the sacrament and worship his glorious name by observations of the Christian faith.

Because you have revealed to us and our brothers the said cardinals certain matters with the above mentioned articles in the first as well as the second letter, you turned to us for protection, while reproaching the said master and brothers, having carefully considered, this flows out of our trust and sincere good will,¹² and seeing that you do not refuse to accept in these matters our decision and that of the church itself, submitting yours to her obedience and with confidence ask for help, we, after you will have accepted the same faith and returned to the care of the church, with our letter will explain to and, with the lord as author through the wisdom of the apostolic see, command that master and brother that they completely cease all molestations, damages, and injuries and that they undertake to live with you in brotherhood and peace, without which the creator of peace cannot be honored properly; in the same way since according to the apostle we are everybody's debtors in justice, especially for those articles, suits, and accusations which, as you set forth, you have with or against the said master and brothers, we, having received the sign of your happy conversion, promise to you, your children, and kingdom to produce the fulness of so favorable justice and so securely defend, that you, who together with you children have chosen us and our said brothers the cardinals, as we said in the beginning, as parents, with merit will be able to rejoice that you have chosen such parents and in that in us and the said Roman church you found what you hope to find as the help of a father and mother.

But also we have given commands to the said bishop and abbot to consider and order all those questions between you and the said master and brothers in the lands spoken about here and which will pertain to the worship of God and his honor, the exaltation of the Catholic faith, the honor of the apostolic see, the comforting of churches and paupers, the welfare of the soul and body.

Therefore we ask, admonish, and urge your majesty that you favorably receive the same bishop and abbot as if it were we in their person, for the honor of God, reverence for the apostolic see and us, and treat them honorably, heed their saving admonitions, while to those Catholic Christians who live among you, you would be pious, merciful, benevolent, and benign, and would allow that that bishop and abbot and other suitable persons, having the grace to proclaim the gospel, whom they consider fit to assume such duties of preaching, proclaim Jesus Christ to those Christians and others, unbelievers, under your government.

Given in Avignon.

13. Letter of Pope John XXII to the German order, June 1, 1324

John XXII etc.,[13](#) to the beloved sons, the master and brothers of the Teutonic [order] of St. Mary of Jerusalem, shelterer of the poor and the sick, greeting etc.[14](#)

The father of light, from whom as is known comes every good and every perfect gift, has prepared the spirit, it seems, as we have learned from his most devout letters sent to us and our brothers, the cardinals of the holy Roman church, of the magnificent man Gediminas, of Lithuanians and many Russians king, for recognizing and receiving the light of the Catholic truth; for that reason in accordance with the devout and repeated request of that same king we have taken care to send to that land our venerable brother Bartholemew, the bishop of Electen, and our beloved son Bertrand,[15](#) the abbot of the monastery of the blessed Theofred in the diocese of Anicia, men truly learned, who earlier distinguished themselves in great and weighty matters and who are avid propagators of the Catholic faith, as special legates of the holy see hoping that from their hands that king and other princes and nobles of that land with their people, having been reborn through the water of holy baptism, will receive the true and holy Catholic faith and the truth of the gospel.

Since that king has set forth that because of certain complaints, suits, and questions which he has against you, he does not refuse to become obedient to our judgment and that of the church, and even asks with confidence for our assistance in these matters, we, desiring that he and all unbelievers be converted to the Catholic faith, and wishing, as much as with the help of God we can, to favor this with favor and encourage with good deeds, very much ask, urge, and demand of all of you, tightly bound by the virtue of holy obedience, that, as soon as that king, with the help of God, will have accepted the Catholic faith, you will entirely cease to molest, damage, and injure him and the people of his kingdom; also we desire that you live in brotherhood and peace, without which the creator of peace cannot be properly worshiped, with that king and other people of that land who will be converted to the Catholic faith.

We on our part, since according to the apostle we are debtors in justice to everyone, about the above mentioned matters, suit, and questions, after the conversion of that king to the Catholic faith, intend through the display of best and swift justice to exhibit our apostolic duties of solicitude.

Given in Avignon, June 1 in the eighth year [of our pontificate].

14. Report of the envoys of the papal legates, [1324]

If not the original, then an original draft of the report on parchment, preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from K. E. Napiersky ed., *Russisch-Livlaendische Urkunden*, St. Petersburg, 1888 No. 67.

Let it be known to you that we... those sent to the king of Lithuania from the legates of the apostolic see, from the lord archbishop, and from the council of the city of Riga... arrived in his city of Vilnius on the sabbath [16](#) after the feast of All Saints; about vesper time he had us invited to his presence.

When we came to him, sitting with his councilors in his hall, we presented him with the letters of the lord legates, the lord archbishop, the bishop of Oesel and Dorpat, and the council of the city of Riga, which he received graciously.

Afterwards we told him that we had to negotiate matters with him on behalf of the apostolic lord and the above mentioned lords; he replied that the time was unsuitable since we came directly from our journey and after its labors we must rest and be of good and joyful spirit.

The next morning we went to the Franciscan brothers to hear mass and before mass we talked with brother Nicholas asking him if the king were of the same will as when he had written to the apostolic lord and the whole world, insistently asking for his advice; from him we learned that he belongs to the royal council; that for the love of Christianity he inform us in what way we could carry out the matter of the apostolic lord entrusted to us; he replied, that the earlier resolution had changed so much that he no longer desires to accept the faith of Christ at all; however, we could get no further advice from him and thus we entered the church to hear mass.

After mass we talked with brother Henrick and Berthold, Franciscan brothers, asking for advice as in the earlier case; they replied that the king had had a good resolution, but alas with other circumstances he has changed completely and has become opposed; they themselves have not been in his council for a year, only brother Nicholas took part, from whom [17](#) they suspected of that calamity and of the turning away from that noble resolution which began under the inspiration of the holy spirit.

In the meanwhile, while we were at mass, the king sent for brother Nicholas; while we wanted to return to the inn after mass, accompanied by brother Berthold; an emissary from the king came and called brothers Berthold and Henrick to the presence of the king.

After the meal, the king sent to call us; when we arrived, we found him in his hall together with his councilors, of whom there were about twenty; this we disliked very much for we hoped to find him alone.

After we had consulted among ourselves, his plan became clear to us: from this we understood that he has changed his mind; desiring to win his favor, we began to speak about the arrival of the lords, and about the process done against the

brothers, and about the returning of prisoners and their wealth after the making of peace; for this he thanked us very much and rejoiced.

Afterwards we related to him how he had sent his letters to the lords the councilors of Riga, and noted that he is unable to send his envoys to that city with letters, because in the previous year he did send his envoy to that city who was arrested on the road, starved, and cruelly tortured to death; he had asked the councilors [of Riga] that they themselves send someone of their own with his letters and affairs to the apostolic lord and that they spare no expense, because the time had come which might resolve a great thing with an insignificant one; for this reason, the councilors having rejoiced sent me... with your letter to the lord our supreme pontiff, who, with the lord archbishop mediating, received your letter with indescribable joy and ordered to call the cardinals into a consistory on the next day and explained to them your will in accordance with what was contained in your letter; the lord archbishop and I were present there.

But [the pope] could not find so quickly suitable persons to carry out such a great and saving work; however, after only a short delay had passed, he sent the venerable in Christ fathers and lords... with full commissions in accordance with your desire, as you had written to the apostolic lord and the archbishop; they, with the lord assisting them, arrived in Riga in good health together with the lord archbishop, while us they sent to you desiring that all your affairs prosper ever better; they are sent for bringing about your conversion, for which you and your parents for a long time have labored; with great eagerness they desire to see you, for they are sent for your salvation and for the exaltation of your kingdom.

After which the king asked whether we knew what was contained in the letters which he had sent for the apostolic lord, the lord archbishop, and the whole world.

We replied that the intention of the letters was this that he is desirous of accepting the faith of Christ and of being baptized.

Then he replied that he had not ordered this written, however, if brother Berthold wrote this, then let it fall on his own head. "But if I ever had this as a purpose, let the devil baptize me."

Afterwards he affirmed that he desires to add the apostolic lord as a father, as he wrote, since " he is older than I, and such others I will consider parents, and the lord archbishop in a similar way I will consider as father, for he is older than I, while those who are of the same age as I, I will consider brothers, while those who are younger than I — sons; I allow Christians to worship their God in accordance with their customs, Russians in accordance with their rites, Poles in accordance with their customs, while we worship God in accordance with our rites, and we all have the one God."

And, to put it briefly, he completely confirmed the content of the letters, excepting only baptism, — that he does not wish to be baptized. And about this he said the following words: "What do you say to me about Christians? Where will we find greater injuries, greater iniquity, violence, lying, and greed than among Christian people, and especially those who seem upright religious like, for example, the crossbearers, who however do all kinds of evil: they captured bishops, imprisoned them, and held them there in great misery, until they acquiesced in their wishes, some they exiled, killed off clerics and religious, did the greatest harm to the city of Riga and did not keep anything of what they had promised with oaths since the first appearance of Christianity; this took place most evidently in the previous year when the envoys of the rulers of the earth were here, and with the consent of them all, without any coercion, made peace in the name of all Christians and affirmed it with oaths and, besides, kissed the cross, and immediately thereafter did not observe anything of what they had affirmed with oaths, for they slew my envoys whom, as we had agreed, I sent to confirm the peace; but not only them but many others and many times they killed, looted, tied in bonds, mistreated them seriously; thus because of such I no longer believe their oaths."

The next day we went to the Franciscan church and heard mass. After mass, when we had already returned to our inn and had eaten, the king sent to us his emissaries from his council, who inquired of us whether we wished to abide by the peace which had been made, and who wish to abide and who do not wish to abide, and whether there are any who wish to abide by the peace; he himself is ready to abide by what he had promised, while those who do not wish to abide by it, he has resolved to compel by force to abide; thus, in this matter they asked for a reply.

We, having consulted among ourselves, replied that now when the king has repudiated his noble thought, which he had entrusted to the apostolic lord, the lord archbishop, and to the whole world, we do not know what the lord legates, and archbishop, and his suffragans would intend to do; but if it pleased him to send his envoys with us, they would be more able of informing him about the observing or not observing the truce.

This pleased him with the condition that we take his envoys under our responsibility, that they be able to go and return safely; and this we did.

Afterwards, the next day, the king's interpreter, a Christian, invited us to the Franciscan residence. There we found his, namely the king's agent with his councilors; Dominican and Franciscan brothers took part; and thus that agent of the king asked the Franciscans who it was who prepared the letter sent to the apostolic lord.

Brother Henrick replied that he had written the letter with which the king sent his own legate to the city, who was badly treated on the way, for he was imprisoned and afflicted with starvation, however, the letter was taken to the lord pope.

Then he asked brother Berthold whether he had written the letter, that the king is desirous of being baptized.

He replied that he had. written the last letter, which had been sent through the council of Riga, and that in it he had not written anything except from the mouth of the king: that he is desirous of being an obedient son and to surrender to the care of holy mother church, to admit Christians and, to speak briefly, propagate the faith of Christ, for he has come to understand that he is living in error.

The agent replied thus: "Thus you admit that he did not order you to write about baptism?"

Then Berthold himself and brother Nicholas of the Dominican order replied and we all did, that to be an obedient son and to surrender to the care of holy mother church is nothing except to be baptized.

Then the agent and brother Nicholas replied that brother Berthold is the one who has made such confusion of the affairs of the king, and with such replies they left.

As they were leaving, we insistently asked the agent for the opportunity to speak with the king alone and in person; he said that he would inform the king.

However the next day the king sent that same agent of his with some others of his council who had to confer with us in secret, for the king could not speak with us in person, since he was busy with the tartars.

And in this way we began to narrate to them the whole matter according to what we had been enjoined by our rulers and, as much as we were able, explained to them, asking that they during the audience would explain to the king that if he were to remain firm and constant in his good resolve, he would obtain such honor as is possessed by any Christian king on this earth, and even greater, and he would also exalt his kingdom and his whole nation.

Besides this, that the apostolic lord had granted all power which he personally has to our lords the legates, and power to fulfill every request of the king twice over; in short, he can become such a powerful and great ruler and king, as any may be in this world.

Besides this we asked that he send an answer to our lord legates, the archbishop, and city by a letter; they said that the king desires to do this and send it with his envoys; which he did not do.

[On the other side.]

These are the things which took place later and which we heard in secret about this matter.

Later we heard from brother Henrick, brother Berthold, and other brothers and even laymen, that the Prussian brothers gave many clothes and valuables to the powerful in Žemaitija and that they rebelled because of this against the king, saying, that if he accepted the faith, they [are prepared] to conquer him himself, his sons, and all his supporters and, with the support of the brothers from the Teutonic house, to expel him from his kingdom and extirpate him entirely.

Such threatening words were many times repeated in the presence of the king during that year; the Russians also spoke similar threatening words against him; because of this the king has turned away from the faith that he no longer dares talk more about baptism.

Besides this, from the same Franciscan brothers we heard that they heard from one Dominican, a friend of brother Nicholas, and we ourselves heard this from his lips, but only in secret among ourselves, that brother Nicholas had said to him these words: "One time I sat with the king during a meeting; then the king began to speak about his conversion, asking my advice about what to do. I replied: it seems to me that you act unwisely; you have chosen as your father the archbishop of Riga, but he himself cannot defend himself, for he has spent a long period of twelve years in the city of Rome on his own affairs and has not finished them up to this time; thus in what way will he who cannot help himself defend you, and the apostolic lord is so far away that before he can come to your aid, you will be completely and totally destroyed; but if you wish to continue on this road, then you must choose another powerful king, for example, the king of Hungary or Bohemia; they could defend and safeguard you."

Many other things we heard on this matter, but we cannot remember them.

Later, when it was time to depart, we went to father Hennekin, the king's interpreter and said to him these words: "Hennekin, you are a Christian man and are bound to love Christ and the Christian faith; this you do, as we know, from your whole heart. We warn you in the name of the baptism which you have received to think about the salvation of your soul and about the last judgement of Christ, where each one will have to give an accounting about all of his visible and secret deeds, to tell us the truth whether the king was of that purpose as he wrote to the lord our supreme pontiff about his conversion and the receiving of the faith of Jesus Christ, for we have learned that you were the translator between the king and brother Berthold, when he wrote the above mentioned letter."

He replied to this asking that those things which he said we keep under the seal of confession, because if anybody found out, he would lose his life: "You, lords, have so deeply moved me, that I have to tell you the truth. I know that the king had strongly resolved to become converted, for he had the letter written with great desire; but why he has turned away from this, I do not know, of course, the devil has sown his seed; again, as before, I ask you to keep this in secret."

Later we heard from one Franciscan brother, that one woman from the royal family related to him as a secret that the king at the time when we were there, after the conversation with us, having with him his relation Erudas, retired to his bedroom and cried very bitterly through the whole night and, having made an interval, began to cry again; and this he did three times every night; thus because of this that woman could conclude that he did this because he had been forced to repudiate the enterprise he had begun.

15. Letter of the council of the city of Riga to Luebeck [1324]

A contemporary copy on parchment, preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from K. E. Napiersky ed., *Russisch - Livlaendische Urkunden*, St. Petersburg, 1868, no. 62. Dating based upon the reference to the fact that in the previous summer, the council of Riga had transmitted letters of Gediminas to the council of Luebeck.

To the honorable and wise men, the lord councilors of Luebeck, the councilors of the city of Riga, expression of devotion and respect with plenitude of all good things.

Through the relations of certain reliable witnesses and even from authentic writings, namely official documents, it has become known to us that the brothers of the order of the Teutonic house have seriously slandered us before you with their letters, in connection with the letters of the king of Lithuania which, on behalf of the same king, we transmitted to you last summer; the said brothers assert that those were drawn up and sealed by us; by our truthful word we declare that God does not know and would not have endured this from us, nor would the world, as well as that the peace is genuine.

In fact, the rulers of Livonian and Estonian lands, and first of all the brothers of the said order — all having agreed and in union, but each one separately — sent official envoys to that above mentioned king of Lithuania, in order to study and test the truth of those articles about which they learned from letters sent by the king himself to you and other principal cities, and the rulers of others in the land of the Teutons and in our province of Riga.

When those legates came to the said king with his letters which we mentioned earlier, and after they had been read and affirmed in the presence of all the legates, the king in connection with that publicly admitted as his own the seal attached to the writing, as well as the articles which were stated in the letters in accordance with words pronounced by him. And again the king, having been asked whether he will try to keep to the said articles, replied: "Let the legates of the lord pope come to me, whose coming I await with the greatest desire; while what I have in my heart is known only to God and to me." And in this way he really affirmed every article of those letters by his own reasonings, as also all the mentioned legates who returned from that king ...testified.

Thus the said legates made a strong peace with that king and his people in the name of all Christians, not through fear or force, but having concern for the urgent need and utility of all Christian men.

That the above [was admitted] by the mentioned legates and first of all by the aforesaid envoys of the said brothers from the house of the Teutons, namely, brother John of Levenborgh, the commandant of Mitau, and brother Otto Bramhorn; they, having been asked by one of the envoys, the honorable knight lord Voldemar of Rosen, in four instances replied that on behalf of their own order of the house of the Teutons, they have free power of making or repudiating it; first and principally the mentioned brothers in their own name and that of the order, and the remaining envoys together with the mentioned brothers, sent by the rulers of the lands named, in their own name and that of their rulers swore to observe it inviolably; and the draft made for the mentioned peace, the named brothers ratified with their seals together with the seals of all the envoys, giving to the mentioned king as testimony and a guarantee of the peace in question, as you will see in the copies of the mentioned writing, which the presenter of this letter has as a commission to show to you and others, in order to compare with the answer of the said king to questions posed by the said legates and with the other articles of those letters, developed more fully.

Thus the brothers of the Teutonic house have repudiated that peace, although their above mentioned legates, as has been said, made a firm peace, and gave oaths in the name of the said order and marked it with their seals, for evidence, against God, justice, and to the harm of all Christians in Livonia and Estonia and those participants in the treaty not consenting with the same brothers in the repudiation of the peace, namely, the lord bishop of Oesel and his diocese, the city of Dorpat, and ourselves.

Thus we, with the blessing of God, do not intend to become oath breakers and to be considered as such by others; while they in public and in private, by all the intrigues that they can, oppose it and [the reason] is more obvious to us than to others.

Thus, only this winter the master and brothers of the said order of the Teutonic house, while kissing the cross, made peace with the Russians in Novgorod with such conditions that the freedom and possessions of all our fellow citizens who come to Novgorod be taken away; thus those Russians obtained the possessions of our aforesaid citizens and presented them

themselves to the said brothers; this was officially announced in the presence of all in the same Novgarod in public and in council by the duke and the *posadnik*, such an answer was given to some of our citizens by the same people of Novgarod: that they had not entirely appropriated in a prohibited way and that in respect of their lives and possessions they had applied the safeguards determined by law; they were set completely free only by the joint aid of merchants present there from your city and other cities; for this, we are endlessly grateful to you and to them.

However, shortly after the above mentioned brother Otto Bramhom came to Novgarod, he, as was said, together with other envoys accepted the known treaty of peace in Lithuania, with oaths in his name and in that of the order frequently mentioned here, he, basing himself upon the treaty made earlier, again arrested some of our wealthier citizens there in Novgarod who had been released earlier; only by the grace of God and the favor of those merchants about whom it has been spoken, they were again released from prison and set free.

They inflict these and other unbearable injuries upon us in perfect security and without warning because we, guarded by divine grace, as we said earlier, do not wish ourselves to be and to be considered oath breakers and do not repudiate, as the said brothers of the Teutonic house wish, the known treaty of peace.

Since the bishop and cathedral chapter of Varmia presume to write to you, by chance at the urging of others, that we, for the sake of gain or certain temporal things, as if criminally, treacherously, deceitfully, and falsely have fabricated the things mentioned before, — to which we reply and wish to declare to you with full clarity that we, as far as it is in our power, have decided to labor to strengthen the known peace and through our legates together with the legates of the rulers of the above mentioned lands, Livonia and Estonia, to act for the benefit of all Christendom; however, on the other hand, it is clear to us more brightly than light that the said brothers of the Teutonic house are trying to violate the said peace because of the goods which they have piled up in their castles, namely in Daugavpils,¹⁸ Mitau, and Rezekne¹⁹ and also in other towns on the border with the Lithuanians or those in the immediate vicinity, for in those castles and towns the said brothers with those Lithuanians in secret, without the consent of the other participants, are keeping another treaty of peace made for purposes of trade.

Further, even before the above mentioned common peace with the king and his subjects by the often mentioned legates was ratified, the illustrious prince, a Catholic, duke of Mazovia, who recently in Christian rites took to wife the daughter of that same king of Lithuania, insistently asking great things obtained from that king some of the Lithuanian army to help him against his enemies, namely, wishing to lead it to the lands of his aunt, the dutchess of Dobrzyn, however, that [army] had hurriedly returned to its own country before the making of the said treaty.²⁰

Besides, that devastating of the lands, namely, of the possessions of the diocese of Dorpat and the king of Denmark,²¹ was done before the said king had sent a letter of any kind, — they presumed to send a letter to you contrary to their promise either by words or more fully by certain writings and statements for your ears alone.

You must know — we say this in good conscience — that such, whoever they are, proceeded in sending against the form of justice and that we are ready, as soon as this is demanded of us, to prove the authenticity of the mentioned peace with documents, affirmed by seals of one side and the other, namely, of the said king of Lithuania and of all the legates afforenamed; besides in no way are you to consider as truth that which was written to your honorable persons against us by the said bishop, the chapter of the church of Varmia, and certain monks.

Also with this letter we devotedly and very earnestly ask your noble persons that in case if someone, as has been said, will presume to speak or write against the above presented matter, deign to believe nothing until you receive our written reply; on the other hand, to protect us with your gracious favor, to give us priority for the sake of our readiness to always serve you in all matters; that to you and yours, those we are able, we intend to repay.

And the said letter we would have most willingly sent to you long ago, but we could not do this because of the great distance of the trip and the attacks by the said brothers of the Teutonic house; they do not permit any letter to be taken outside the boundaries of the country, and because the said brothers do not keep mutual agreements which had been negotiated and made in Peronā between them and ourselves and affirmed by the oaths and writings of the present rulers of the frequently mentioned lands, Livonia and Estonia; they also do not permit us to make use of our freedoms, which from old belong to us in a peaceful way in accordance with our privileges and independence.

We fear, as we have learned, that soon from those brothers great war and contention is imminent with us and if we undertook anything for our defense, know for certain and we call to witness the omnipotent God the father, and the compassionate mother, the virgin Mary, that we did this because of our just reason and because of necessary means for our defense; we devotedly and insistently ask all of you that together with us | you pray | God, the very giver of justice, and the blessed virgin Mary, the guardian of that justice, that they guard and defend the just side. Amen.

16. Letter of Gediminas to the bishops of Dorpat and Oesel, the Danish viceroy in the lands of Revel, and the council of the city of Riga, [1324, after September 22]

A contemporary copy on parchment, without a seal; preserved in the state archives of the city of Riga. Taken from K. E. Napiersky ed., *Russisch - Livländische Urkunden*, St. Petersburg, 1868 no. 69. Dating based upon the reference to the return of Frederick, the archbishop of Riga, September 22, 1324.

Gediminas, of Lithuanians and Russians king.

To the reverend fathers and lords in Christ, the bishops of Dorpat and Oesel, the captain of the land of Revel, and also to the councilors of the city of Riga and all others, who live with us in peace, a friendly salutation and abundance of all good things.

We make known to you each and all and we complain with the grief of our heart that that peace which had been made between us and you and affirmed in writing by both sides and confirmed by the lord pope, now without any fault on our side is violated in an unfriendly way by the brothers crossbearers from the Teutonic house; they do not keep the provision of that treaty that those who do not wish to keep the peace, must renounce it two months in advance; they, having trampled on all this and without regard for any justice, have done us a great deal of harm in the lands under our rule, like men who have forgotten their salvation.

And first in this, that they captured six inhabitants of the border regions, whom they forced to redeem themselves from them, while two they cruelly killed.

Likewise, they have so fortified with their guards all routes over land and on water, that none nowhere can go from us to you or from you to us, although this is directly against the provisions of the writings given out by both sides.

Likewise, they killed one hunter from Upytė, while two they led away captive.

Likewise, they stole three horses from Voinata, which they drove away to the brother named Ungnade.

Likewise, they would have captured our castle of Medela, if we had not managed to fortify it in time, but in any case they killed many men and others they led away with them.

Likewise, they hostilely devastated the land of Polock and captured people and horses, some of whom they returned, while they still retain by force twenty persons, doing considerable harm to their own souls.

Also, shortly after lent, [they attacked] the same land and again like ravenous wolves cruelly slew with the sword eighty persons, some others they drove away with themselves, fifty fine horses, clothing, and other goods, whose number cannot be known.

Also [they did not return] about three hundred really guilty subjects, who [fled] the country ruled by us; they received them and did not return any one of them.

In this way, all this and much more which cannot be counted here was done to us by the said brothers crossbearers after making of the said peace and while it was still in force; they do not fear God, do not fear men, and [act] like men who trust only the strength of their own arms; however, it is known to all of you that punishment is established for violators of this peace. However we, showing justice and our indulgence openly to you, have up to this time inflicted no injuries upon them, although in the time of the said peace we have received endless damages; thus about what should be done in the future and with whom we should keep the peace, let us know as quickly as possible.

Given in Vilnius on the day of the Holy Trinity. As a sign of credibility we have decided to affix our seal to this letter.

Also in this they violated trust, because they have given a pledge of security to our envoys coming to them, after they had come, they arrested them, except Lesse, whom, having wounded, they set free; what they did to the others, we do not know to this day; they kept their horses and all other things.

Also after the news reached us that the lord archbishop had returned from the curia, we sent to him our envoy, inquiring after his health; they hung the said envoy.

Also in the treaty of peace [was the condition] that they must return two castles, namely, Daugavpils and Mežotne, this they have not done.

All of the injuries we mentioned we suffered during the period of the said peace.

Furthermore, they are trying to destroy this peace wherever they can... | to harm | our people as much as they can. In this way peace between us cannot last long, if you do not find in this matter some other way out.

1 The text in Lithuanian has "who was put to death." Trans.

2 Also called Semigallia. Trans.

3 In the Lithuanian text, this clause reads "putting everything aside." Trans.

4 Žemaitija, sometimes called Samogithia; Aukštaitija, eastern Lithuania. Trans.

- 5 In German usually called Memel. Trans.
- 6 According to Rabikauskas, in the review which appears in this issue, the words "bishop John, servant of the servants of God" should be omitted. Trans.
- 7 According to Rabikauskas, "admit" should be replaced by "turn to." Trans.
- 8 According to Rabikauskas, this should read "king Mindaugas." Trans.
- 9 According to Rabikauskas, "inimical" should be replaced by "innumerable." Trans.
- 10 According to Rabikauskas, this should read "the living and true God." Trans.
- 11 According to Rabikauskas, "see" should be replaced by "except." Trans.
- 12 According to Rabikauskas, "our trust" should be replaced by "true trust" and the whole passage restructured to that it would be Gediminas who has the confidence and good will which the pope sees and because of which, the pope is willing to help him. Trans.
- 13 According to Rabikauskas, "John XXII etc." should be omitted. Trans.
- 14 According to Rabikauskas, "greetin etc." should be replaced by "greeting and apostolic benediction." Trans.
- 15 This should be Bernard.
- 16 "Sabbata" is the word used in the Latin text; the Lithuanian translator used "Saturday." Trans.
- 17 The Lithuanian translation implies that in the opinion of the two Franciscans, brother Nicholas was somewhat responsible for the king's change of mind. Trans.
- 18 Also called Dünaburg, Dvinsk. Trans.
- 19 Also called Rositten. Trans.
- 20 The letter of the bishop of Varmia to which this text refers appears as letter 9 of the *Letters of Gediminas*. The letter claims that in 1323, Lithuanians attacked the dutchy of Dobrzyn and "Captured the city of Dobrzyn, destroying it by fire to its foundations; in it they killed two thousand people, while in the land itself of Dobrzyn — six thousand people of both sexes, also seven priests and forty other clerics whom... oh sorrow! they led away to perpetual slavery. Also they slew two monks of the order of St. Benedict, and burned ten parish churches, not counting chapels..." Trans.
- 21 The letter of the bishop of Varmia claimed that in 1223, Lithuanians attacked the Livonian possessions of the king of Denmark and the diocese of Dorpat "slaying and capturing four thousand people of both sexes and burning down five hundred and two parish churches." Trans.