

SUMMARY

*Christian Agricola and the
Swedish Ecclesiastical Policy in
Estland during 1583–1586*

The heyday of the clerical life of Christian Agricola (1550–1586), Bishop of Tallinn and son of Bishop Michael Agricola from Turku, was his work in the development of the ecclesiastical situation in Estland – during a short time, he was the most important representative of the Swedish ecclesiastical policy on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland. After his studies at the cathedral school in Turku, Christian Agricola was sent to Germany, where he studied at the University of Leipzig and the University of Wittenberg and where the Lutheran orthodoxy became the dominant trend. When Christian Agricola returned to Finland in the autumn of 1577, he was appointed Chancellor of Turku cathedral school. Christian Agricola was the obvious favourite of Johan III and for the cathedral school it was a period of efflorescence.

Christian Agricola was consecrated Bishop of Tallinn and the administrator of Haapsalu by the Archbishop of Uppsala on September 8th 1583. In the autumn of 1583, John III consecrated four new bishops in total, whereas the ordination was conducted according to the Catholic ritual and with Catholic attributes. The newly consecrated bishops took the oath of allegiance and pledged loyalty to the dynasty and signed a document with which they confirmed their loyalty to the new liturgy. Nevertheless, the position of the bishop of Tallinn was not completely identical with the corresponding positions of Sweden and Finland. The task of Christian Agricola was to implement the Swedish ecclesiastical policy in Estonia. It is written in the privileges of 1561 that the Evangelical teaching shall remain in force in the regions under Swedish rule and that the right and pure Word of God shall be preached. At the centre of the conflict which eventually developed with the nobles and the city of Tallinn on the church was the question of filling the positions of clergymen and funding the churches, first and foremost the question of how broad was the advowson of noblemen which had developed during the reformation and the question of what was the role of cities in appointing the clergymen.

Agricola's closest fellow worker was David Dubberch, a representative of Lutheran orthodoxy who came from Pomerania and was appointed dean by Pontus De la Gardie in 1580. David Dubberch later continued Agricola's work in the role of the visitor of the church of Estland. The new bishop of Estland probably found time to look around the parishes and to acquaint himself with his sufficiently complicated field of work in the beginning of autumn 1584. Christian Agricola's first impressions and his primary course

of action become apparent from his letter to John III, which is dated September 14th 1584. The bishop is letting know that he has started to acquaint himself with the condition and problems of the church. As a next step, in October 1584, the bishop started to plan the pastoral letter to the noblemen of four districts, who together formed the knighthood. Agricola's pastoral letter touched upon the most acute problems of that time: church buildings and clergymen, without which the diocese could not operate.

Two special broad instructions in German and Latin have survived in the form of manuscripts; the former regulated the church reformation and the bishop's visitations in Estonia, in the latter, the ideas about the synod of Estonian clergy, consistory and ecclesiastical court were presented. These were not, however, regulations approved by Sweden, these were only drafts, which were never signed by the King.

There is no consensus among the scholars about the author of these regulations. In favour of Christian Agricola as the author of the regulations speaks the fact that the work with the regulations was never finished because of his sudden death in Tallinn on February 9th 1586. The regulations were not finished, they did not receive official approval and they were not printed, although, without doubt, this had been the ultimate aim of drawing them up.