

Christianity, Europe, and (Utraquist) Bohemia:
The Theological and Geographic Concepts
in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times

Petr Hlaváček
(Prague)

In the Middle Ages by a rather hybrid merger of the religious concepts *Ecclesia universalis* and *Civitas dei* with the geographic term *Europa* there arose a new geographico-political and theological entity, namely *Christianitas* – Christianity, which through its intensive missionary activity clearly declared its ambition to absorb the entire world.¹ Europe-Christianity is a dynamic figure, it expands and shrinks, its frontiers are “floating” frontiers. The Euro-Asian frontier in the east – still much discussed today – was then seen, according to the ancient tradition, on the river Tanais; that is, Don, somewhere below present-day Moscow.²

The thirteenth century is precisely the key period for the formation of Christianity’s and Europe’s identity in confrontation with the “otherness” of Asia. In the year 1187, Muslim troops under the command of Saladin reconquered Jerusalem, the assumed center of the Christian world. Asia again burst sharply into the European reality. The dream-like images of an approaching coalescence of the world into Christianity collapsed. Friedrich Barbarossa, who already had seen himself as the new King of Jerusalem and *imperator mundi*, perished in 1190 during the Third Crusade, in fact, on the soil of the Holy Land, when he drowned in the river Saleph. Pope Innocent III issued the call for the Fourth Crusade that culminated in 1204 with the sack of Constantinople, the Christian metropolis on the borderline between Europe and Asia, and the spiritual and political center of the eastern “schismatics.” Western Christian civilization was not the only candidate for world rule. In confrontation with the “alien” or “other,” especially with the Orient/Asia, the civilization of the West became conscious of its otherness, and thus of its own identity.

In the year 1235 an imperial assembly, headed by the new great khan Ogodei, gathered in the Mongolian capital of Karakorum. The discussions dealt with plans for a great Western campaign. In the year 1238 Moscow fell into Mongol hands, and Kiev followed in 1240. The Mongol threat thus emerged immedi-

1 This study originated within the framework of my project „Christianitas – Occidens – Europa. Der Europa-Begriff und die europäische Identitätsbildung in den Königreichen Ungarn, Polen und Böhmen“, which was financed by the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung, and carried out in the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas in Leipzig.

2 Concerning the eastern frontier see, for instance, Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York, 1996), 18-20; Czech transl. idem, *Evropa: Dějiny jednoho kontinentu* (Prague, 2005), 29-30.

ately at the borders of Poland and Hungary, which in the mid-thirteenth century, together with the Kingdom of Bohemia, represented a geographic and mental periphery of Christianity, an imagined and at the same time real boundary between the West and the East, between Christian Europe and schismatic or pagan Asia. In the year 1241, this borderland was directly and very brutally confronted with the Asian otherness, as it became an object of the destructive Mongol invasion. The gradual liquidation of the Russian principalities did not evoke a major response in Europe, inasmuch as the ecclesiastical, political, and intellectual elites of Western Christianity imagined Russian territory as an indistinct mistiness of uneasily grasped geographic contours. The approaching “clash of civilizations” was interpreted in theological terms: the Mongols, or more properly the Tartars, according to the European imagery, living somewhere at the very edge of Tartarus-Hades, were considered descendants of the mysterious biblical antagonists Gog and Magog. The Mongol aggression culminated with the defeat of the Christian host at the Silesian town of Liegnitz on 9 April 1241. The King of Bohemia, Wenceslaus I, then executed a manoeuvre at the Czech-Silesian border, by which he saved Bohemia from an invasion and thereafter dispatched heralds with the news of “the victorious defense” to Emperor Frederick II. Subsequent historiographers then saw in the Bohemian King a hero, who actually prevented another invasion of the Mongols into the center of Europe.³

Thanks to King Wenceslaus’ decisive political and military measures during the Mongol invasion, the Kingdom of Bohemia entered the European consciousness as a potential future instrument of Christianity’s defense against the threat from the East. This (self)representation was augmented by the Bohemian political intervention into ecclesiastical affairs under Přemysl Otakar II. During his reign the Kingdom of Bohemia became the symbol of Christian expansion in the opposite direction, namely to the East — into the pagan regions of Prussia and Lithuania. In the year 1255, the Bohemian King finally responded to the pleas of Pope Innocent IV and launched a crusade into Prussia with a mighty force, composed of knights from all his lands. The official aim

3 Gustav Strakosch-Grassmann, *Der Einfall der Mongolen in Mitteleuropa in den Jahren 1241 und 1242* (Innsbruck, 1893), 43-71; Hansgerd Gökenjan, „Der Westfeldzug (1236-1242) aus mongolischer Sicht,“ in: Ulrich Schmilewski, ed., *Wahlstatt 1241. Beiträge zur Mongolenschlacht bei Liegnitz und zu ihren Nachwirkungen* (Würzburg, 1991), 35-75; Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české* [The Great History of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown], vol. 2: 1197-1250 (Prague, 2000), 353-361; Josef Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských 1198-1253* [The Beginnings of Bohemia as a Kingdom] (Prague, 2002), 160-165. See Petr Hlaváček, *Role Českého království ve středověkém křesťanstvu aneb dialog Evropy a Asie v literárních dílech české provenience (1300-1400)* [The role of the Kingdom of Bohemia in medieval Christianity or Dialogue of Europe and Asia in literary works of Czech provenience (1300-1400)], in *Odorik z Pordenone: Z Benátek do Pekingů a zpět. Setkávání na cestách starého světa ve 13.-14. století*, eds. Petr Sommer, Vladimír Liščák (Colloquia mediaevalia Pragensia 10) (Prague, 2008), 173-184.

of the expedition was to assure the security of Christianity's frontier and, of course, the Christianization of local pagans. The pope bestowed on the Bohemian King the title of *princeps christianissimus, et strenuus athleta Christi*.⁴ There was nothing exceptional in this in the European context, yet it was as if the pope thereby offered the Bohemian king a key to a novel interpretation of his role at the periphery of the Christian West. It was not surprising, however, inasmuch as the Bohemian Kingdom was the only consolidated and rather ambitious political entity in this area, and Přemysl Otakar II decided to overtly play the role of "the Knight of Christ" at the boundary with pagan and schismatic Asia. At the start of 1256, the King marched with his army along the sea gulf directly to the pagan temple in Romova, which he destroyed, and then near Rudava entirely routed the pagan warriors. The captured Prussian chieftains were baptized. At the highland near the river Pregola, Otakar then ordered the foundation of a new town, which in his honor was named Královec/Königsberg [now Kaliningrad].⁵

Přemysl had intended to pursue further his political and ecclesiastical interests in Prussia, but he met with opposition from the German crusading orders that had initially supported his campaign. Originally, it was his wish for this part of Eastern Europe to be integrated with, or subordinated to, the Kingdom of Bohemia, and he planned to erect a separate ecclesiastical province with its seat in Olomouc which would be headed by his counselor Bruno of Schauenburg, the Bishop of Olomouc. The struggles in Prussia were inspired by the recollections of St. Vojtěch [Adalbert]. At the behest of Pope Urban IV the King's thrust was newly directed against the pagan Lithuanians and their neighbors. His expedition against Lithuania in 1267, however, failed to succeed when the local king Mindaugas repelled the attack. A similar fate met the idea of restoring the archiepiscopal See of St. Methodius in Olomouc.⁶

The crusade against the pagan Prussians and their formal integration in the Christian Europe, struggles with the Hungarians who were allied with both pagans and Christian schismatics, as well as the new crusade against the pagan Lithuanians, all that— together with the other Bohemian successes in the political, ecclesiastical, and economic field — considerably contributed to the new image of the Bohemian King Otakar as a central personage in the fateful conflict between Christianity and paganism, i.e., between Europe and Asia. The Bohemian King, who was an integral part of the papal plans for a crusade in the Holy Land, and who had the imperial crown virtually in his grasp, was by his contemporaries cast in the role of a new Alexander, the ruler of the world. From

4 *Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*, Pars II. Annorum 1253-1310, ed. Josef Emler (Prague, 1882), 19-20, n. 45.

5 Vaniček, *Velké dějiny*, 64-73.

6 *Ibid.*

the 1250s to the 1270s, the poet Sigeher, who lived at the court of Otakar, composed lyrical and epic poems in middle-upper German singing the praises of the Bohemian King and his exclusive position in Christianity. Sigeher had already celebrated King Wenceslaus I, in whom he saw an heir to Solomon's wisdom and to the virtues of the legendary kings Fruot and Arthur. The poet also praised Wenceslaus's son, Přemysl Otakar II, especially for his campaigns against the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians. He even sees in him the mainstay of the Christians' resistance to the pagans: "If Otakar does not win, then we are all lost." In his subsequent poems, Sigeher ascribes to the King "the spirit of Alexander," and presents him as precisely a new Alexander.⁷ This identification with the Macedonian King evidently became, during the second half of his reign, a programmatic part of the Bohemian King's political and literary representation. In 1271, the King commissioned Ulrich von Etzenbach to compose an Alexandrian epic about him, and he obtained for that purpose from the Salzburg Archbishop, Friedrich von Walchen, the very popular manuscript *Gesta Alexandri Magni* by Philipp Gautier de Châtillon (Philippus Gualtherus de Castellione, †1201). Etzenbach did not complete his composition until the late 1280s, or at the start of Wenceslaus II's reign, who resumed the ambitions of his tragically deceased father. The middle upper German *Alexandrine* is an overt panegyric of Přemysl Otakar II. The poem in verse also includes a description of Asia, as well as Alexander's plans to subjugate all of Europe.⁸

The contemporary Czech-language epos of Alexander is a no less symbolically rich and many-faceted source for a reflection of the Czech intellectual grasp of the concept of Christianity and Europe, as well as its delimitation vis-à-vis paganism and Asia. It is a poem in verse, consisting of ten chants of which, however, not more than one third has been preserved. Both epic works about Alexander, produced in the Bohemian court circles toward the end of the thirteenth century, formed a part of the mighty wave of renewed interest in the great Macedonian warrior at the time of the culminating phase of the crusades, which again restored Asia and the Holy Land to the European intellectual ambiance. The Alexandrian theme was in the Middle Ages given a Christian cast with the Macedonian King anachronistically presented as a de facto Christian ruler, a true representative of Europe in the struggle against pagan Asia or – as the case may be – Africa. The Czech epos is by no means only a translation or a retelling of the Latin model, but to a great extent an innovative work. Here there is also a consistent application of transforming a pagan ancient hero into a Christian knight. After all, this excellent poetical composition was undoubt-

7 Moravo, Čechy, radujte se! Němečtí a rakouští básníci v českých zemích za posledních Přemyslovců [Oh, Moravia, Bohemia, rejoice! German and Austrian poets in the Bohemian lands during the last Přemyslids] ed. Václav Bok and Jindřich Pokorný (Prague, 1998), 37-39.

8 Ibid., 89-122.

edly intended for the ears of the King of Bohemia and the highest Bohemian nobility. King Alexander, to whom “the entire world became subject,” and whose might exceeded the power of Rome and all the emperors, is in fact explicitly mentioned as a monarchical model for the Bohemian King, who could – and ought to have – become a notable buttress for the entire Christianity. According to the author of the old Czech epic, it would then be possible to expect that the pagans at the northwest frontier of Europe – the Lithuanians, Tartars, Turks, and Prussians – would give up their idols, and that also the schismatic Russians would rejoin Christianity.⁹ This list places the last existing pagans of Europe on the same level as the pagans of Asia and Africa, and thus the earlier campaigns of Přemysl Otakar against the Prussians and Lithuanians were seen as being of equal worth with the crusades into the Holy Land.

The Alexandrian story was to confirm in a Christian guise the eternal juxtaposition of Europe and Asia, updated as one between Christianity and paganism. Europe is not explicitly mentioned, but it is that “Greek land” of Alexander,¹⁰ the antipode of paganism, whose ambition is to rule the world. Influenced by his mentor, the philosopher Aristotle, Alexander dreams – the same as every representative of Christianity – “that there was not a single country in the world, which was not subject to him.”¹¹ Hence he sets out for Asia in order to subjugate the continent in the same way as the contemporary knights set out for Jerusalem and the Holy Land in order to regain them for Christianity. In the vision of the Alexandrian epic, Asia is a continent where Babylon stood. It is a region of abundance, which contains the river Euphrates flowing out of Paradise, where “pure gold is from Arabia” and “precious stones [are] from India,” and which is separated from Europe in the north by the river Tanais (Don).¹² Above all, however, Asia contains the real center of the world from both the geographic and theological point of view:

There is also in that country,
Which is the center of the whole world,
Jerusalem, an ancient city,
For God’s dying, of course, famous.¹³

Therefore exactly Christian Europe is virtually duty-bound to follow Alexander in his attempt to subjugate the Asian continent and Africa.¹⁴ Alexander,

9 *Alexandreida* [The Epic of Alexander], *Památky staré literatury české*, 4 sv., řada A, ed. Václav Vážný (Prague, 1947), 125-126. For a commentary I use the still inspirational study, Albert Pražák, *Staročeská báseň o Alexandru Velikém* [The Old Czech Poem About Alexander the Great], (Prague, 1945).

10 *Ibid.*, 29.

11 *Ibid.*, 36.

12 *Ibid.*, 44-45.

13 *Ibid.*, 45-46, 100.

“the Greek King,” despite being actually a pagan, is directly juxtaposed to King Darius, who is saddled with the designation of the “Pagan King,” although the celebrated Alexander was equally as pagan. The Greeks, that is King Alexander and his knights, these by literature Christianized pagans, thus become the representatives of Christianity, while Darius and his Persians, still “holding the world in their power,” represent paganism, or even – somewhat simplistically – the realm of the Saracens.¹⁵ The allusion in the text to the contemporary conflict of the Christians with the Muslims is in the Holy Land virtually perfect. It is clear as day who, for the author of the late thirteenth century, represented the eulogized “Greek heroes.” After all, he assigned to some of them – of course, without any support from either Greek or German textual models – Czech names such as Radvan, Mladota, Jan, and Radota.¹⁶ The entire story is staged, above all, as a single great contest that concerns the domination of the world, hitherto illegitimately claimed by the pagan Darius.¹⁷ There is a flashback to the ancient struggle for Troy, again now surrounded by anachronistic Christian accents. Alexander visits the ruins of the town, and the heroism of Heracles is eulogized.¹⁸ Yet the author could not go so far as to completely conceal Alexander’s real “non-Christian” character. Although Alexander reached all the way to India, which was “the ultimate region in the entire world,”¹⁹ because of his sins he died soon afterwards. Even so, he succeeded in uprooting the successor of Babylon, the Persian empire of Darius, an event that symbolized the desired future victory of Christianity over paganism.²⁰ In the Czech Alexandrian epic we also encounter one of the persistent constituent elements of the irrepressible dynamism of the Christian West – a yearning for adventure. The fights of Alexander’s knights are portrayed exactly as a “*dobrodrustvo*,”²¹ a term that in old Czech expressed goodness, philanthropy, and friendship, a joint striving for good.²² At the same time the more familiar modern meaning of the term as “adventure” is coming into its own and resonates as an explication of the concepts of knighthood and bravery.

In approximately 1301 a composition in verse originated at the court of a Silesian Duke, Bolek I of Svídnice, which depicted the heroic participation of the Thuringian Landgrave, Ludvík, a relative of the Přemyslids, in the crusade

14 The text refers to Egypt and Libya see, for instance, *Alexandreida*, ed. Vážný, 89, 92.

15 For references to “paganism” and “pagan faith” see *ibid.*, 63, as well as 69, 74 (here “he is surrounded by paganism” or “encounters many Saracens”).

16 *Alexandreida*, ed. Vážný, 66-68.

17 *ibid.*, 57.

18 *ibid.*, 49-50.

19 *ibid.*, 146-147.

20 *ibid.*, 126-127.

21 *ibid.*, 88, 124.

22 See *Klaret a jeho družina* [Klaret and His Followers], Vol. 1: *Slovníky veršované* [Dictionaries in Verse], ed. Václav Flajšhans (Prague, 1926), 20.

of Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa in the Holy Land. The epic also contained a eulogy of the Bohemian King Wenceslaus II, who subjugated Poland and Hungary, so that his empire bordered the realms of both the pagans and the schismatic Greeks:

Who knows a lord,
To whom such a chunk of the world pays homage?
In this way, from sea to sea,
He lords it over the Christian people...²³

There was a particular expression of this Bohemian eastward expansion and of the effort to realize a universal Bohemian monarchy. It was the unofficial restoration of Slavonic liturgy by King Wenceslaus II, who allegedly summoned priests and monks “here from Russia, there from Prussia or Greece, and not once, but many times, from the remotest regions of Hungary and the littoral in order to say masses for him for him in the Greek and the Slavic languages.²⁴ The eastern periphery of Europe and of Western Christianity thus had for a brief time fallen under the scepter of the Czech Přemyslids. Their ambition was to create a firm bulwark against the threats from the East, as well as against the claims of the Roman Empire from the West. Exactly during the reign of Wenceslaus II, there appeared proposals for a *translatio imperii ad Bohemos*, and the Czechs are viewed as the future axis of Christianity.²⁵ Minnesinger Ulrich von Etzenbach, then attached to the Bohemian royal court, reflected these Bohemian great-power ambitions in his epic in verse, *Wilhelm von Wenden*. According to him, the Bohemian monarchs were destined to create a large Slavic and Teutonic Empire and to become the leaders of all of Christianity.²⁶ Following the murder of the last Přemyslid, Wenceslaus III — in Olomouc in 1306 — however, the entire eastern part of Europe was for many years engulfed by chaos. Nevertheless, the intellectual and governing elites of Bohemia remained conscious of the spatial contours of Europe and Christianity, and Europe remained one large stage upon which the King of Bohemia was an active player. Such a clear image of the world’s division, and Bohemia’s place within it, is presented — entirely according to West European conventions — in the so-called *Second Continuation of Kosmas’ Chronicle* from the end of the thirteenth century: “In the division of the world, according to geometers,

23 Moravo, *Čechy, radujte se!* ed. Bok and Pokorný, 126-127.

24 *Zbraslavská kronika*, ed. František Heřmanský and others (Prague, 1976), s. 108; see also Karel Stejskal, *Klášter Na Slovanech* (Prague, 1974), 8.

25 Jan Blahoslav Novák, “L’idée de l’empire romain et la pensée politique tchèque au moyen âge,” *Le monde slave*, Nouv. sér. II/2 (1925), 45-61.

26 Rainer Kohlmayer, *Ulrichs von Etzenbach „Wilhelm von Wenden“*. *Studien zur Tektonik und Thematik einer politischen Legende aus der nachklassischen Zeit des Mittelalters* (Meisenheim, 1974), 45-47, 106.

Asia includes under its name one half of the world, and Africa with Europe the other half. Germania lies in Europe, and within its precincts toward the northern side, Bohemia is placed."²⁷

After 1310, the Bohemian elites were drawn into increasingly intensive contemplation about Christianity and Europe thanks to their new rulers from the Luxembourg dynasty, who completed the integration of their part of Europe into the political and ecclesiastical structure of the Christian West. At the same time, the new dynasty caused Bohemia to become one of the liveliest intellectual centers of Europe. The concept of Europe is also encountered in *Chronicon aulae regia*, a chronicle rich in meaning, written mainly by Abbot of Zbraslav, Petr Žitavský († ca. 1339). His annals include a fictional letter to Henry VII, the first emperor from the Luxembourg dynasty, composed by the Italian poet and humanist Francesco da Barberino (†1348). The text is dated to 1313 – the year after Henry’s coronation in Rome and that of his sudden death – and it is conceived as a statement of the hypostatized imperial crown, urging its acceptance by Henry. God is praised that he had bestowed on the “crown” in Henry “as his most excellent angel such a great ruler of the world” [*jako svého nejznamenitějšího anděla tak velikého držitele světa*]. Henry was eulogized in biblical allusions as “as a lily among the thorns,” as “the king and the lord of rulers,” and as “a star shining from the north,” which would happily rule *in Europa tota et Affrica maioremque partem Asiae*.²⁸ Henry’s son, King John of Luxembourg (†1346) was an embodiment of an ideal knight from the Arthurian legends, who himself – at least symbolically – restored the knightly company of the Round Table. The views expressed in the *Chronicle of So-Called Dalimil* (ending originally in 1314) best demonstrate how the political and ecclesiastical elites interpreted the place of the Bohemian Kingdom within Christian Europe at the end of the Přemyslid era and the start of the Luxembourg one. Right at the beginning, the anonymous author refers to the division of humanity into nations, i.e., the proverbial confusion of the tongues:

So originated also the Serbian race.
There, where the lands of the Greeks lie,
It occupied the sunny plains
From the sea to the gates of Rome.²⁹

27 “V rozdělení světa podle zeměměřičů zahrnuje Asie pod svým jménem polovinu světa a polovinu Afrika a Evropa. V Evropě leží Germánie, v jejichž krajinách směrem ke straně půlnoční jsou umístěny Čechy.” In “Druhé pokračování Kosmovy kroniky,” in *Pokračovatelé Kosmovi*, ed. Marie Bláhová a Zdeněk Fiala (Prague, 1974), 186.

28 *Zbraslavská kronika* [The Chronicle of Zbraslav], ed. František Heřmanský, 278–283.

29 *Kronika tak řečeného Dalimila* [The Chronicle of So-called Dalimil], eds. Marie Krčmová, Hana Vrbová, and Marie Bláhová (Prague and Litomyšl, 2005), 13.

And it was exactly from this Serbian region, from a country called Croatia [*Charváty*], came the original “Čech,” the founding father of the Czech nation and of the Land of Bohemia. Again the idea intruded into general consciousness that the Slavs and the Czechs were somehow related to the wonted Greek glory, and hence were the political legatees of the Greeks – an idea later codified by the so-called Privilegium of Alexander the Great for the Slavs.³⁰ We are facing here the embryonic form of the political doctrine of Charles IV and John Marignola that the Slavs-Czechs are that “sunny nation” that forms the axis of the Christian empire. Thus at the time we already hear the intimation of that Czech self-confidence which would subsequently culminate in the *translatio imperii* by Charles and in the national messianism of the Bohemian Reformation.³¹

Italian humanists attached their hopes for a restoration of the empire also to Henry’s grandson, the King of Bohemia and later also the Emperor of Rome, Charles IV. Francesco Petrarca wrote to him in a letter from Padua, dated 24 February 1351:

Do not let yourself be delayed either by the care of Transalpine matters, or by the charms of your native land! Whenever you glance at Germany, think of Italy [...]. Imagine in your mind the venerable form of the city of Rome, think of a matron bent with age..., how she addresses you: “[...] after five hundred years spent in Italy, during the following two hundred years – and there are most credible witnesses to this – I passed with war and victory through Asia, Africa, Europe, indeed the entire world [...]”³²

In fact, shortly after his imperial coronation in Rome, Charles IV wrote to Constantinople to Emperor John V Palaiologos – the only dignitary *in orbe christiano*, who was his equal – suggesting a joint crusade against the Turks, i.e., against Asia.³³

An exceptional personage in Bohemia at the time of Charles IV was the polymath Master Bartoloměj of Chlumeck, called Klaret (†1370), whose work by its quality significantly transcended the contemporary literary production of Czech provenance. Klaret, apparently an alumnus of the University of Prague, worked as a teacher in the cathedral school at St. Vitus, perhaps even as its schoolmaster. His writings were largely intended for use by his students. In them, among others, he attempted to develop Czech equivalents to the learned

30 Anežka Vidmanová, “K privilegiu Alexandra Velikého Slovanům,” [About the Privilege for the Slavs of Alexander the Great], in *Husitství, Reformace, Renesance*. Sborník k 60. narozeninám Františka Šmahela, 3 vols. (Prague, 1994), 1:105-115.

31 Kateřina Kubínová, *Imitatio Romae. Karel IV. a Řím* (Prague, 2006), 153-164.

32 *Slovem obnovená. Čtení o reformaci* Renewed by Word: Readings About the Bohemian Reformation], ed. Amedeo Molnár and others (Prague, 1977), 26-27.

33 Ferdinand Seibt, *Karel IV. Císař v Evropě, 1346-1378* [Charles IV: Emperor in Europe, 1346-1378] (Prague, 1999), 239-240.

Latin terminology.³⁴ In the so-called *Vokabulář gramatický*, a Latin-Czech treatise for the use of students of the Faculty of Arts, which originated in the circle of Klaret's school around 1360, we already find in the chapter, *Nomina terrarum* an unsystematic list of Latin geographic terms, including the names of the continents: *Europa, Azya, Affrica*.³⁵ A more voluminous work, *Glossarius*, was undoubtedly written by Klaret around 1365. It was his principal accomplishment, not simply designed for pedagogical purposes, but also for showcasing his scholarly achievements. The author acknowledged his friends and benefactors, in particular Emperor Charles, Prague Archbishop Arnošt of Pardubice, and Olomouc Bishop Jan Očko of Vlašim.

What did Klaret know about the world? How did he understand his existential space? The stage of human events is for him *mundus*, that is the Old Czech *swiet*, in which the fundamental entity is *krziestyanstvo* (*cristianismus=křestanství* [in Czech], therefore not *christianitas*!). It is contrasted with *heresis=kacierzstvo*, and especially *paganitas= pohanstvie*.³⁶ Seemingly odd is Klaret's Czech equivalent of the Latin *barbarus*, when he translated it as *lytven* or Lithuanian, because Lithuanian had been a Czech synonym for pagan in the Czech Alexandrian epic from the end of the thirteenth century. It reflected the general awareness of the existence of paganism in Lithuania, the eastern periphery of Christianity.³⁷ Master Klaret also for the first time in the Bohemian milieu deals with the noun "a European," and made an original attempt at its translation/ interpretation. An inhabitant of Europe, i.e., *Europanus*, was for him a "Goodman" – Dobřeňan [dobrzenan].³ Klaret based his translation on the Greek "eu," i.e. good. This rather quaint etymological construction resulted from the viewpoint of theology and value judgments. The European was one who represented the foundation stone of Christianity; the one who accepted the joyous news about Christ (*eu-angelion*), and the one who was therefore the real *dobrodějce*, i. e., benefactor.³ Thanks to Klaret, the Bohemian learned discourse returned to — and now truly absorbed — the Christianized form of the European inhabitant, which resulted from a gradual congruence of the concepts of *Europa* and *christianitas*.⁴⁰

The first real literary "dialog with Europe" occurred toward the end of the fourteenth century, at a time when the Kingdom of Bohemia shifted in Chris-

34 Jana Nechutová, *Latinská literatura českého středověku do roku 1400* [Latin Literature of Czech Middle Ages to 1400] (Prague, 2000), 152-154.

35 See Klaret a jeho družina, ed. Flajšhans, 25-26.

36 *Ibid.*, 140, 159-160, *passim*.

37 *Ibid.*, 141.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, 145.

40 Petr Hlaváček, Europa, Böhmen und die Christenheit in den Vorstellungen des Johannes von Saaz und seiner Zeitgenossen, in *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen. Deutsch-Tschechische Konferenz über den Tod und das Sterben* (Tagungsband), ed. Petr Šimáček (Prague, 2007), 36-44.

tianity's mentality from a periphery to the center, and played an increasingly large role in the ecclesiastical, political, and cultural field. The *Czech Chronicle of Bruncvík* dated from this time.⁴¹ This epic in prose narrated how Bruncvík, a legendary Bohemian duke and knight, set out into the world "to seek honor for [people of] his tongue" [*hledati cti jazyku svému*]. He passed, with his retinue, through many lands all the way to the sea. His subsequent voyage ended in a mishap – a storm drove his ship to the island with a magnetic mountain, from which there was no escape. The knight thus became stranded somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea at the dividing lines among Europe, Asia, and Africa. Wandering through the island, Bruncvík encountered a mermaid, whose name was Europe. Bruncvík addressed her, wishing to know whether she was an evil or a good being. "Are you an evil or a good creature?" he asked fearlessly, and thus opened up a dialog with her. "Oh, Bruncvík, I am such as you see me, neither evil, nor good," responded Europe. Bruncvík inquired further whether he could find succor from her in his situation, being so far from home and separated from the European mainland. She responded without hesitation and rather enigmatically: "At times you can, at times you cannot."⁴² Bruncvík then remained and conversed with the virgin Europe. It appears as if in their dialog there was encoded the first Czech inquiry about Europe concerning her identity, as well as a certain ambiguity, even an amorphousness, of her character and substance. Europe was neither evil, nor good; at times it could be of comfort, at others not. Bruncvík's model of "coexistence with Europe" challenges us to a dialogical cohabitation with her. Bruncvík's Europe – half woman, half fish – was not worthy of either idolatry, or contemptuous rejection. Europe is constantly renewing her birth and reformatting herself in front of our eyes, and this many-faceted process requires from us a truly Bruncvíkian daring and persistence.

It is certainly not accidental that, according to literary scholars, Duke Bruncvík was likely a personification of the Emperor/King Charles IV, who had just opened a lasting dialog of Bohemia with Europe, when he integrated the

41 "Kronika o Bruncvíkovi," [The Chronicle of Bruncvík] in *Próza českého středověku* [The Prose of the Czech Middle Ages], eds. Jaroslav Kolár and Milada Nedvěďová (Prague 1983), 163-178; for historical context see Winfried Baumann, "Von Heinrich dem Löwen zum Bruncvík. Zur strukturanalytischen und strukturvergleichenden Interpretation eines slavischen Volksbuchs," in *Die Welt der Slaven*, 28, Neue Folge 7 (1983), 68-77; Václav Bok, "Zur Rezeption des Bruncvík-Stoffes in Böhmen," in *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft*, 10 (1998), 81-91.

42 "Kronika o Bruncvíkovi," 167. For an interpretation of the exempla concerning Europe see, for instance, Winfried Baumann, "Der tschechische Bruncvík und die Melusinsage," *Die Welt der Slaven*, 19-20 (1974/1975), 7-11; Annette Höslinger-Finck, "Der tschechische „Bruncvík“ im Vergleich mit deutschen Bearbeitungen der Heinrich-Sage," Diplomarbeit an der Universität Wien (2000), 56-59.

43 See, for instance, František Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských Čechách* [The Concept of the Nation in Hussite Bohemia] (Prague, 2000), 93-96.

Bohemian Kingdom even more closely with French, Italian, and German cultural centers. Exactly in this cultural climate the specifically Czech messianism was born,⁴³ which resulted from the long-term contamination of the Bohemian elite's thinking by the idea that the Czechs, and the Slavs in general, were the chosen nation, not only in the political, but also the religious sense. The Bohemian Reformation itself was probably one of the products of this conviction, namely that the Czech nation, the roots of which could be traced all the way to biblical times; the nation which was the heir of the ancient Greeks; the nation to which Alexander the Great had handed the rule over the world; that this nation was the "New Israel," which was like the leaven called to renew the entire people of God and all the world. This theological interpretation must be understood in the eschatological context, in which the main and critical stage of the last times – the closing chapter of human history – was Bohemia and, in its heart, Prague – the New Jerusalem where the Kingdom of God commenced its realization.⁴⁴

The period of Bohemian Religious Wars from 1419 to 1434 was characterized by bloody civil wars and by unequal struggles against international intervention by papal and imperial crusaders. On the contrary the Poděbradian period, as we are accustomed to call the segment of Czech history roughly between the years 1444 and 1471, was a time of transition, when something entirely new was born with, of course, roots in the past. The earlier glorious – or rather nostalgically eulogized – reign of King/Emperor Charles IV was gradually gaining a mythical aura, assiduously cultivated, above all, by Catholic intellectuals. The culminating phase of the Bohemian Reformation, when the Czechs saw themselves as the "New Israel" with the ambition to reform – by sword, if necessary – all of Christianity, had also become an event of the past, and the universalist idea had lost its belligerency in the Utraquist milieu. One of the products of those stormy times is the entirely anomalous ecclesial situation in the very heart of Europe, when in Bohemia there existed side by side two ecclesiastical organizations, both of which considered themselves parts of the universal, that is Catholic, Church, and claimed to share the tradition of the Christian West: the Roman Church *sub una*, and the Bohemian (Utraquist) Church *sub utraque*. The anomalous situation became fully established with the support of the Bohemian Governor, later King, George of Poděbrady, who fully respected both confessions existing in his Kingdom.⁴⁵

44 Jan Želivský, *Výbor z kázání* [Selection from Sermons], ed. Amedeo Molnár (Prague, 1954), 28-31, 98, 101, 133-134.

45 For the Poděbradian period, see, for instance, Rudolf Urbánek, *Husitský král* [Hussite King] (Prague, 1926); Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King. Bohemia in European Affairs, 1440-1471* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1965); Frederick G. Heymann, *George of Bohemia. King of Heretics* (Princeton, N. J., 1965).

A notable and incongruous personality of the Poděbradian period and of the entire fifteenth century was Master Pavel Židek.⁴⁶ Born in a Jewish family – hence his sobriquet – he was abducted as an infant, under unknown circumstances, and raised as a Utraquist Christian. He studied at the University of Prague and later in Vienna, where he formally joined the Roman Church *sub una*. He studied theology and medicine in Italy, at the universities of Padua and Bologna, and gained the degrees of master and doctor of medicine. Apparently, he missed the impact of germinating Italian humanism and turned into an eclectic scholar of the traditional cast. In 1442, admitted among the masters of the University of Prague, he became one of the few professors *sub una* at this institution of higher learning. After many disagreements with the Utraquists, Židek left for Plzeň, a city *sub una* in 1448, but as early as 1451 we find him at the University of Cracow. From there he left a year later – for fear of epidemics – for Wrocław in Silesia, where he encountered the ardent Italian Franciscan Jan Capistrano, otherwise the Vicar General of the Franciscan Observant Province, and a papal inquisitor. Probably to ingratiate himself to the Utraquists and assure the possibility of a return to Prague, Židek wrote letters informing Jan Rokycana and his associates about Capistrano’s activities. One of these letters, however, fell into the hand of the mayor of Wrocław, and Židek was put in jail. He was released 18 May 1453 only after a solemn renunciation of the chalice before Capistrano himself. At the start of 1454, Židek once more emerged in Cracow and with renewed energy proceeded to preach against Capistrano.⁴⁷ Arrested on Capistrano’s complaint, the Bishop of Cracow, Zbigniew Oleśnicki, sentenced him to life imprisonment. He was released on the basis of a papal decision in 1455. Returning to Plzeň, he lived in great poverty, and in 1466 he settled at last in Prague and devoted himself to writing. He managed to penetrate into the royal court and soon became a table companion of King George himself. In Prague he lived through the interdict and the subsequent conflicts after the declaration of the crusade against George and the Bohemian “heretics.” His main work is *Spravovna* [Informatory], written in 1470, at the behest of the King himself. He finished and delivered the treatise to the King early in 1471, dying in the same year shortly after the demise of his royal benefactor.⁴⁸ Židek eulogizes George of Poděbrady as “a star out of darkness” that

46 Petr Hlaváček, “Praha jako centrum Evropy a křesťanstva? M. Pavel Židek (†1471) a jeho představy o obnově rezidenční funkce hlavního města Českého království” [Prague – the center of Europe and Christianity?], in *Rezidence a správní sídla v zemích České koruny ve 14. – 17. století (Korunní země v dějinách českého státu III)*, ed. Lenka Bobková, Jana Konvičná (Opera Facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis, vol. IV) (Prague, 2007), 113-125.

47 Concerning Capistrano’s activities in Cracow see Johannes Hofer, *Johannes Capistrano. Ein Leben im Kampf um die Reform der Kirche II*, Bibliotheca Franciscana 2 (Rome and Heidelberg, 1965), 255-259; Małgorzata Maciszewska, *Klasztor bernardyński w społeczeństwie polskim 1453-1530* (Warsaw, 2001), 19-24.

48 For Židek’s biography see M. Pavla *Židka Spravovna* ed. Zdeněk Tobolka (Prague, 1908), i-viii.

settled on the royal throne. He urged the Bohemian King to follow as his model the legendary Alexander the Great, and saw himself in the role of a new Aristotle.⁴⁹

Židek's *Spravovna* involved a rather confused compilation of the then-circulating encyclopedic works, but it also contained – even if taken with considerable grain of salt – several new, original historical, political, and ecclesiastical concepts. At a time when the Professor of Prague University, Martin of Lenčice, produced an astrological prognostication for Oldřich of Rožmberk,⁵⁰ and his university colleague, Jan Ondřejův, a.k.a. Šindel, sought to determine the geographic coordinates of the Bohemian capital,⁵¹ Židek collected materials for a treatise, the quality of which was on the level of school *Elucidaria*, common in the fourteenth century.⁵² Židek's *Spravovna* contained many narrations that sought to place Bohemia into a broader geographic context, and revealed the mediocrity of his knowledge of geography. Nevertheless, these texts are among the few valuable pieces of evidence, showing in detail the geographic and political concepts of a Bohemian Catholic intellectual in the Poděbradian age, and his ambivalent viewpoint concerning the confessional divisions within the Bohemian Kingdom, as well as within Christianity at large.

Židek's idea of the world was expressed in contemporary philosophical categories. He emphasized the “roundness” of the world, but not in the sense of a material sphere – he naturally lacked the knowledge about the sphericity of

49 *Ibid.*, 1, 14, 17, 43-44.

50 Martin of Lenčice (†1462/64), of Polish origin, attached to the University of Prague since 1427, was appointed professor in 1444. Several of his Latin works are extant, among them an astrological prognostication for the year 1455 for Oldřich of Rožmberk. Martin in it referred to a great conjunction from the year 1425, which portended “that a new sect would arise in Bohemia and the power of the Turks would increase; it will continue causing many unpleasant events, because its effects were programmed to span fifty-seven years.” Elsewhere, according to the location of Jupiter, etc., he prognosticated difficulties for the pope and the cardinals, and other travails for the church. Inter alia, he described the seven zones of the world with individual countries and with sharp characterizations of their inhabitants. See *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské* [Selection from Czech Literature of the Hussite Period], eds. Bohuslav Havránek, Josef Hrabák, and Jiří Daňhelka (Prague, 1964), 2:546-551, text on 599.

51 Jan Šindel († post 1456) devoted himself to astronomy and medicine. Later he served as rector of the University of Prague, lectured in Vienna, and practiced medicine in Nuremberg. Toward the end of his life, he returned to Prague, and calculated the city's geographic latitude, publishing the results of his research in the treatise *De tabularum ratione et usum*. See *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, 2:591-593, text on 609.

52 *Elucidarium* (in Czech: *lucidář*) was a kind of a general encyclopedia, which appeared in virtually all European countries since the twelfth century. The reference work treated, first of all, theological questions, but also issues in other disciplines, such as natural science, medicine, astronomy, alchemy, music, law, philosophy, and geography. Czech versions of the *Elucidarium* probably originated in early fifteenth century. In any case, manuscripts and printed copies exist from the century's end. See *Staročeský Lucidář*. Text rukopisu Fürstenberského a prvotisku z roku 1498, ed. Čeněk Zíbrt (Prague, 1903) (= *Sbírka pramenův ku poznání literárního života v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, Sk. I, řada II., č. 5).

our planet – but in the philosophical sense because “a round figure has the greatest volume and is the most comprehensible, hence it was given to the world.” The world hanged down “only by the very word of God,” and was perfect and the only one of its kind, “because there is only one highest Lord and he created one world so that the entire creation may be as one in it.”⁵³ While describing the world itself, Židek discreetly embraced scholastic traditions, and seemed to ignore intentionally the geographic traditions of Antiquity that were being newly discovered by the humanistic savants. Židek favored the biblical context, and consequently one would in vain expect him to refer to the legend of Europe’s kidnapping, which gave the name to the European continent.

The division of the world into three parts, or continents, was described by Židek in the context of the settlement of the world after the great flood, as presented in the Scripture and in biblical exegesis. The biblical Noah, who saved himself and his family in the ark, had three sons, who turned into progenitors of the nations, which filled the earth. Shem moved into Asia. According to Židek the ultimate “Asian” land was India, beyond which one could find the Paradise that “is a garden most beautiful in this world, created toward the sunrise, where there are neither nettles, nor any other harmful spices or fruits.” India, lying closest to the garden of Paradise, was inhabited by great diversity of odd people, such as “dwarfs and Microbites,” “Argonauts,” “Molosiani” with canine heads, “Monoculi” with one eye in the forehead, and “Cyclopedes” with single legs. It was the country where Gog and Magog had settled. Noah’s second son, Japhet, “moved in the opposite direction, namely to Europe, and there he settled with his sons.” He established there twenty countries, among them Greece, Panonia, Italy, Gallia and Hispania. The third son Ham, who was cursed by Noah, “moved to the third part of the world that is called Africa.” In addition, however, his descendents populated also parts of Europe, such as Britain, Scotland, Ireland, Crete, Sicily, “and many other western regions – German, Hungarian, Bohemian, Polish, and Moravian.”⁵⁴

For Židek, the concept of Europe merged with that of “Christianity,” which was a very variable theological, political and geographic idea. This “Christianity,” otherwise also “Empire” (he translates “imperium” as “ciesařstvie”) was described by Židek as “the kingdoms at present subject to the rule of Rome, namely to the pope and to the emperor.” This community, however, did not necessarily coincide with Europe as understood strictly in geographic terms.

53 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 92-93. Concerning the medieval philosophical and geographic concepts of the world, see Rudolf Simek, *Erde und Kosmos im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1992), 37-54, about the roundness of the planet Earth and the world.

54 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 113. Concerning the medieval view how the world was populated by Noah’s descendents see, for instance, Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Fines Terrae. Die Enden der Erde und der vierte Kontinent auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten* (Hannover, 1992), 43-97.

This is proven by the fact that the relevant realms included also the African Numibia, which then belonged to the King of Portugal.⁵⁵ The eastern boundary of this European community was formed by Hungary and Poland, and the southeastern one by Dalmatia and Croatia. These boundaries were indeed “floating:” Europe extended to where the sword of a Christian ruler could reach. Thanks to the successful conquests of the Ottoman Empire, Asia was breaking into Europe.⁵⁶ Židek in this connection mentioned the fate of the Polish and Hungarian King Vladislav VI, “who fought his way close to Jerusalem,” that is, actively expanded Europe/Christianity at the expense of Asia/paganism, only to perish subsequently in 1444 in a battle with the Turkish “pagans.” Židek challenged King George of Poděbrady to unite in faith with other European Christian countries, ending with an invective: “Or does your Highness wish to be better than all the others...?”⁵⁷

The aim of *Spravovna* was entirely clear: Židek wished to induce King George to reject the chalice and to reconcile with the Roman Church, that is, induce him to submit to the pope, “so that Your Highness might restore the entire kingdom to the single universal Christian faith.”⁵⁸ He tries to show in his book that – because of the Bohemian Reformation, that “Hussite heresy” – the Bohemian Kingdom was fatefully separated from Christian Europe. And of course – how otherwise? – he eulogizes the reign of Charles IV, because the Bohemian land then reputedly enjoyed an enormous respect in Christianity. Židek wrote about the start of Hus’s preaching in Prague demanding apostolic poverty, about his execution by fire, about the origins of the chalice, and also about the Prague uprising under Jan Želivský, who allegedly then declared a struggle against the Antichrist.⁵⁹ Židek juxtaposed the eschatological concept of the holy people (“sacrosancta natio bohémica”) of the Bohemian reformers with the Catholic images about the holiness of the Czech nation during the

55 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 158.

56 It is an angle from which the eastern boundary of Europe is also seen by the Polish-American historian, Oskar Halecki, *Grenzraum des Abendlandes. Eine Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas* (Salzburg, 1957), 133-163.

57 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 180-181. About King Vladislav’s expedition against “the pagans,” see among others, *Staré letopisy české (z vřatislavského rukopisu)* [Old Czech Annals: from the Wrocław Manuscript], ed. František Šimek (Prague, 1937), 102-103. Václav Šašek of Břřkov related, how the embassy of George of Poděbrady (1465-67) met in Spain a hermit, who pretended to be a repentant King Vladislav VI, see *Ve službách Jiřříka krále. Deníky panoše Jaroslava a Václava Šaška z Břřkova* [In the Service of King George: Diaries of the Pages Jaroslav and Václav Šašek of Břřkov], ed. Rudolf Urbánek and Bohumil Mathesius (Prague, 1940), 104-105. See also Rudolf Urbánek, *Vladislav Varnenčřík: Skutečnost i legenda* [Vladislav of Varna: Reality and Legend] (Prague, 1937).

58 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 5. See also Petr Hlaváček, Al servizio dell’ordine e della cristianità: Gabriele Rangoni da Verona (†1486) e il suo operato nell’Europa centrale e in Italia, in *Frate Francesco. Rivista di cultura francescana* 74, vol. 1, 2008, 71-95.

59 *Ibid.*, 179.

idealized period of Charles IV. In Židek's rather vulgarized interpretation, the holiness of a nation depended on the number of churches and cloisters, on the multiplicity of holy relics, and on the presence of Imperial Relics at the Castle of Karlštejn.⁶⁰ Eschatological self-confidence of the Bohemian reformers was judged very critically by Židek, who – although having changed his confessional allegiances – was now a faithful son of the Roman Church (and in his intermediate position a true Utraquist). He spoke of the “insane pride” of Prokop the Bald, once a priest and captain of the Taborite host, who had allegedly maintained that he wanted “to subjugate the whole world” by his sword, and even “conquer Jerusalem by his sword and sit on the Roman See,” that is, become the head of Christianity. Prokop, however, “shamefully” perished at the battle of Lipany and was virtually forgotten. Despite this, Židek exhorted King George to a symbolic gesture of reconciliation: “However, Most Serene Majesty, deign to order the inhabitants of Kouřim, Brod, and Kolín to erect a small church on the battle field, where divine services for [the fallen] could be held – after all they were Christians.”⁶¹

On the contrary, Židek vehemently attacked another symbol, namely the statue of King George with sword and chalice on the Týn Church of Prague: “Is this image painted with a sword among chalices, because your Majesty means to fight for the chalice against the entire Christianity, as this struggle has now lasted for several years?” If instead of George's statue there were an image of the Virgin Mary or of Christ's Passions, then certainly “no wars would have broken out.”⁶² Several times in his book Židek denounced George's war “against all of Christianity,” meaning thus his defense of the chalice and the country against the crusades. “If the war is about the chalice, may you know that your Majesty cannot succeed against the writings of all the holy doctors and against the customs of the entirety of Christianity...” With much exaggeration he recommended to George rather a war against the inhabitants of Nuremberg so that they would return “the Imperial Relics,” that had once been kept in Bohemia. “Everyone would approve of that, but otherwise no-one understands the reason for the struggle and the destruction of the country.” In brief, according to Židek, “there is a pressing need to return the entire kingdom to papal obedience, and in particular the contemporary priests, who tore themselves away from the tis-

60 Concerning Bohemian patriotism (and Christian messianism) Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských Čechách*; also Petr Čornej, “Idea národa v husitských Čechách” [The Idea of Nation in Hussite Bohemia], in *Han Hus na přelomu tisíciletí. Mezinárodní rozprava o českém reformátoru 15. století a o jeho recepci na prahu třetího milénia*, Papežská lateránská universita Řím, 15. – 18. prosince 1999, ed. Miloš Drda, František J. Holeček, and Zdeněk Vybíral (Tábor, 2001) (*Husitský Tábor*, Supplementum 1), 379-393.

61 M. Pavla *Židka Spravovna*, 67.

62 *Ibid.*, 6-7, 53.

sue of universal Christianity.”⁶³ A considerable dose of Catholic hypercriticism can be discerned when this Czech Catholic intellectual of Jewish origin, once also a Utraquist, sees the Bohemian Kingdom as though removed from the Christian community. It is more than a simple designation of Utraquist Czechs as schismatics. Židek further went on to question certain theological tenets of Rokycana: “Do not trust him. I believe with my whole soul that we can be better saved, if we receive *sub una* in the unity of the Christian sheepfold, than *sub utraque* outside the sheepfold of the entire Christian realm...” Židek likewise warned the Czechs: “...Constantinople and the Kingdom of Cyprus suffered devastation because they had broken away from papal obedience.”⁶⁴ Hence, the destruction of the Cypriot Kingdom and the conquest of Constantinople represented divine punishments for their contempt for papal jurisdiction. After all, according to Židek the pope was “the father of all Christianity” and literally “the gatekeeper” or “steward” of the heavenly kingdom, “the chest and the seal of the Holy Trinity,” to whom all the Christian kings were subject.⁶⁵ Such assertions, however, sounded blasphemous to Czech Utraquists, headed by Jan Rokycana and Václav Koranda, the Younger.

With zest worthy of an aging and unappreciated savant, Židek tackled the theological and political analysis of the concept of imperium/empire. He maintained that the Roman Kingdom or the Empire, which from the Christian point of view was the focal point of the entire world, had no stable secular center. Židek described how the original imperial residence was contemporary papal Rome. Of course, after Emperor Constantine the Great donated Rome to Pope Sylvester, the West lacked a true imperial residence. According to Židek, there was nevertheless in Europe and in Christianity one town, which had the right to become an imperial city: Prague — “because it is a town that can accommodate the imperial majesty and entourage and lies close to the [seats of] the imperial electors.” Possibly Nuremberg or Regensburg might have also provided a stable imperial residence, but – in Židek’s opinion — Prague was most appropriate. He was, of course, persistent and could not resist pushing his ideas further, such as when he resolutely stated that, in fact, the King of Bohemia should be also Roman Emperor,⁶⁶ because “in truth, no other prince is more appropriate for the election as Emperor than the King of Bohemia, because he lives in the middle of the electors, and Prague is a mighty city that can accommodate any dignity, including the imperial one.”⁶⁷ The Emperor, according to

63 Ibid., 5, 6. Židek censured the Utraquists who “baptize in Czech, which is not the form used by the entire Christianity.” He rejected the liturgical use of vernacular languages and firmly insisted on the use of Latin, as the universal language of the entire Church, *ibid.*, 19.

64 Ibid., 23.

65 Ibid., 25-26.

66 Ibid., 11.

67 Ibid., 159.

Židek, was “the sole highest king above all the other kings in the world.”⁶⁸ Židek here repeated the ideas, which at one time were entertained by the supporters of King George of Poděbrady, striving for his election as the Roman King. Židek was a realist, as well as probably an opportunist. He tried to flatter the King with his proposals, and at the same time manipulate him in favor of a change of the ecclesiastical policy in the Kingdom of Bohemia. That is to say, for Prague to aspire to being a real center of Europe, it would be necessary to introduce certain significant measures. George was to model his reforms after the example of his illustrious predecessor, the Bohemian King and Roman Emperor, Charles IV, who was esteemed as an ideal ruler. During Charles’s reign “wherever a Czech went, everywhere he was considered a saint, and the people declared a holiday, saying: ‘Come and behold a saintly man from a holy land’.” This was because Charles IV erected new churches and monasteries and established an archbishopric, as well as respected the Bishop of Rome. Moreover, he brought to the castle of Karlštejn in Bohemia the so-called Imperial Relics, which were then exhibited for veneration in Prague every year.⁶⁹ The real antihero, an antipode of the ideal ruler, was – in Židek’s eyes – Charles’s successor, the poor Wenceslaus IV, “a glutton and drunkard” who wasted the dignity of the Roman King and never reached the imperial throne. In the meantime, the inhabitants of Prague called on his brother Sigismund – the King of Hungary and later the King of Bohemia and Roman Emperor – “to come to their town as a Lord of the land.”⁷⁰

How should then King George, according to Židek, restore the glory and honor of Prague and of the Bohemian Kingdom? How could he introduce them again into the center of Europe? First of all, he was to send legates to the pope and ask for the dispatch of two cardinals and ten university doctors, who in turn were to convoke a grand congress in Prague. The congress should include representatives of the emperor and of the kings of Poland, Hungary, and France, as well as the duke of Bavaria and the imperial electors, both secular and ecclesiastical. Finally, the ecclesiastical and political unity of the land should be demonstrated by inviting the Bohemian aristocrat Zdeněk of Šternberg, who led the Catholic opposition against King George.⁷¹ Židek’s proposal was not exactly original. Rather, it was a variant of an earlier plan for the unification of Christian Europe, except that this time the main initiative was assigned to the pope.⁷² Subsequently, King George was to promote a religious unification of

68 *Ibid.*, 158.

69 *Ibid.*, 21, 177.

70 *Ibid.*, 178-179.

71 *Ibid.*, 9-10, 61-62.

72 On the project of George of Poděbrady to integrate the Christianity see, for instance, *Cultus pacis. Études et documents du „Symposium Pragense Cultus pacis 1464-1964“ commemoratio pacis generalis ante quingentos annos a Georgio Bohemiae rege propositae.*, ed. Václav Vaněček (Pra-

the kingdom. It meant that he was not to tolerate the Utraquists — to say nothing about the Unity of Brethren, known as “pikharts.” A pressing need was to restore the Prague archbishopric, and installation of a new archbishop, preferably a papal legate, because no suitable candidates were likely to be found in Bohemia. Then the Kingdom of Bohemia would be like the other important European countries, “which in their capitals have beautiful churches, centers of dioceses with a spiritual leader.” The King should also name an inquisitor [*kacermajstr*], who would root out all heretics. All monasteries should be restored and serve as centers of the proposed Romanization of Bohemian Christians.⁷³ Incidentally, I avoid intentionally the term Re-Catholicization; the Bohemian Utraquist Church considered itself an inseparable part of the universal church, and looked askance on the conflation of Catholicity with Romanism.

Another essential step toward the restoration of Prague’s reputation was — in Židek’s opinion — the rehabilitation of the university, because “blessed is every town which has in its midst a seat of wisdom and the arts, and attracts the most excellent youth from the whole world.” Prague would then flourish culturally and economically, and God from heaven would grant Prague — adorned by doctors, masters and student youth — magnificent blessing and brilliance, as well as comfort and riches to the burghers and craftsmen. King George would foster the work of restoration by summoning to Prague a doctor of the Holy Scripture from each Vienna, Leipzig, and Paris, the rest were to be natives of Bohemia. Masters and students would enjoy the same type of liberties and privileges as their precursors during the reign of Charles IV.⁷⁴ Židek stressed the need to restore trade and crafts in Prague, because their decline was blatant and long-term. “And if it lasts longer, Prague will become a wasteland,” he declared ominously.⁷⁵ According to him, it was necessary to attract to Prague skilled craftsmen so that it could be as in the olden times, when Prague exported goods to Vienna, Nuremberg, Venice, and Rome.⁷⁶ George was also exhorted to “build cities, and in them erect churches for divine worship, beautiful houses, and sturdy castles.” Elsewhere Židek proposed, in detail, how to proceed with the renewal of Prague:

May your Majesty deign to restore ruined churches..., order the landlords to repair their houses, not permit any thatched houses in the square....Do not let houses be taken down — not in Hradčany, not in Malá Strana, not at St Apollie-

gue, 1966); Jaroslav Boubín, “Der Versuch einer Neuordnung Europas. Das Projekt König Georgs von Podiebrad und seines Rates Antonio Marini aus dem 15. Jahrhundert,” in *Auf der Suche nach einem Phantom? Widerspiegelungen Europas in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed., Georg Michels (Baden-Baden, 2003), 93-106.

73 M. Pavla Židka *Spravovna*, 10.

74 *Ibid.*, 11.

75 *Ibid.*, 17.

76 *Ibid.*, 20-21.

narius, nor at Vyšehrad – because, in God’s time, these houses will be still repaired. Your Majesty has repaired the Týn Church, the bridge...for this your Majesty will be eternally remembered. And if your Majesty would increase the height of the Old Town’s walls and furnish them with adornments from Podskalí to Vyšehrad, the visage of the town would be much ennobled from that side... And if your Majesty propitiated St. Wenceslaus for a multitude of priests and for an archbishop...the good Lord would send his holy angels to hold a crown of glory over your head eternally.⁷⁷

He urged King George to have the grave of St. Wenceslaus and the graves of the kings in the Prague Cathedral adorned with gold, silver, and precious stones.⁷⁸ The King should personally drive “to the city halls of the Old Town, the New Town and of Malá Strana,” in order to discuss municipal problems with the councilors and restore the exercise of justice and right.⁷⁹ George’s restorative activities were to culminate in the earlier-mentioned war against Nuremberg for the return of the Imperial Relics to Bohemia and the reinstatement of the holiday of their exhibition, so that Prague might once again become the center of universal Christianity.⁸⁰ Židek was a genuine rabble-rouser, who felt that he had nothing to lose and hence pushed his proposals to extremes. His pilgrimage through life ended in Prague in 1471, the same year that King George and Archbishop Rokycana died as well. The King of Bohemia never attained the imperial crown, and Prague did not become the center of Christianity, as Židek had hoped. The glorified “Golden Age of Charles IV” had not been reenacted. On the contrary, the Bohemian lands remained religiously and politically divided, as did the Bohemian royal title that for a period was used simultaneously by Matthias Corvinus and Vladislav Jagiello, who competed for the Poděbradian heritage. And how about Prague? That remained for a long time not the center of Christianity, but rather the center of all kinds of heresy that were known in the history of Europe.⁸¹

77 Ibid., 23.

78 Ibid., 2.

79 Ibid., 29.

80 Ibid., 21-22.

81 For instance, in 1479 a German Franciscan Nicholas Glassberger, born in Moravia, visited Prague, which impressed him as a center of all types of heretics, schismatics, and apostates..See *Chronica fratris Nicolai Glassberger ordinis Minorum observantium*, ed. a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae (Analecta Franciscana II) (Quaracchi, 1887) 469. Michael z Korutan, a Franciscan chronicler from Bohemia at the start of the sixteenth century expressed his sorrow over the heretical Bohemia and the passing glory in an elegy on its capital Prague: “O Praga, quondam civitas splendida Bohemorum, veritatis magistra, nunc perfidissimorum hereticorum magistra errorum ...” See “Chronica Fratrum Minorum de Observancia Provincie Bohemie,” Knihovna Národního muzea, Prague, MS VIII F 75, p. 139. See Petr Hlaváček, *Respublica Christiana aneb spiritualita a církevně-politické představy Bohuslava Hasištejnského z Lobkowicz [Respublica Christiana: Spirituality and Church-political Ideas of Bohuslav Hassenstein of Lobkowicz]*, in *Sborník Národního muzea v Praze (Řada C – literární historie)* 52, vol. 1-4, 2007 – Bohuslav Hasištejnský z Lobkovic a kultura jeho doby, ed. Marta Vaculínová (Prague, 2007), 5-7.

In the sixteenth century with the arrival of the European Reformations, the situation radically changed and Bohemia was again viewed as the central part of the continent.⁸² For instance, in 1537, Johannes Bucius produced his figural allegory of Europe “in the form of a virgin” (*in forma virginis*), which was often reproduced and modified. The Kingdom of Bohemia was depicted here as a precious medallion, resting on the chest of Europe, personified as a Queen. *Bohemia* is thus perceived as a genuine heart of Europe (*cor Europae*). The geographer Filip Cluverius (†1623) likewise described Europe as a Queen, whose navel was Bohemia.⁸³ Karel Škréta depicted Bohemia and Prague in 1661 as the spiritual center of Europe. Moreover, he highlighted – as the spiritual axis of the exemplary Christian continent – the Marian Pillar in the Old Town Square of Prague as a symbol of the triumph of Catholic over Protestant Europe. Bohuslav Balbín (†1688) did not succumb to this kind of triumphalism. On the contrary, he called attention to the danger which had threatened Europe when during the Thirty Years War bloody conflicts raged in the very innards of Europe – in Bohemia.⁸⁴

Bohemia the heart of Europe! In this motion lie the origins of one of the myths, which to this day significantly influences the thinking of both the Bohemian elite and the broad public. In the early modern age Bohemia once again found itself at the center of theological and geographical thought of European intellectuals. The most sophisticated and most original Czech thinker of this period was Jan Amos Komenský (†1670), whose work eventually enjoyed a response throughout Europe. Komenský, a theologian of the Unity of Brethren and an outstanding educationalist, saw the importance of the Czech nation in the heart of Europe in its special religious-reformist mission. This interpretation of Czech existence resounded clearly, for instance, in Komenský’s correspondence of 1638: “Look at the nation, which Christ deigned to regard as the first among the European nations by tearing it out of the Antichrist’s darkness, a nation which – before the other nations accepted the light – all alone withstood the raging of the Antichrist for an entire century.”⁸⁵ In his later texts, Komenský tirelessly exhorted to spiritual, cultural and political unification of Europe and the world:

82 Petr Hlaváček, *Die Christenheit oder Europa. Zu konfessionell-geographischen Vorstellungen im Böhmen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, in *Formierungen des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Evelin Wetter (Stuttgart, 2008) (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa, vol. 33), 319-331.

83 Wolfgang Schmale, “Europäische Identität und Europa-Ikonografie im 17. Jahrhundert,” in *Studien zur europäischen Identität im 17. Jahrhundert*, eds. Wolfgang Schmale and others (Bochum 2004), 88-94.

84 Bohuslav Balbín, *Krásy a bohatství České země* [The Beauties and Riches of the Bohemian Land], překl. Helena Businská (Prague, 1986), 49-50.

85 Jan Amos Komenský, *Listy přátelům a příznivcům* [Letters to Friends and Supporters], ed. Bohumil Ryba (Prague, 1970), 124-125.

That about which we, Europeans, have begun our consultations, namely about the ways of common welfare, that concerns all others in the same measure...So that we may be helpful to each other, we are announcing to you in Asia, to you in Africa, to you in America... how far we have progressed in our considerations, we Europeans, whom God had humiliated by his punishments and had induced to contemplate the ways of universal repentance. [...] You from Asia send us fragrant cloths, silk, and precious stones; you from Africa furnish us with parrots, apes, lions, and ivory; you Americans have filled our Europe with your gold and silver. We then have nothing to give? Do we not repay you with anything? Behold, we repay you with the thoughts of our and your salvation, and with the sparks to ignite the light of wisdom for our common benefit.

This much Komenský stated in manifesto of 1644/45 from his *Consultatio catholica*.⁸⁶ In the thinking of this learned polymath the original Bohemian Reformation and its geopolitical concepts transcended the earlier Bohemocentrism and Europocentrism, and aimed at a contemplation of problems on the global scale.

Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David.

⁸⁶ Jan Amos Komenský, *Poselství současně Evropě* [Message to Contemporary Europe], ed. Pavel Floss (Prague, 2005), 160-162.