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# The Constants of Spirituality and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Family of the Bohemian King George of Poděbrady and of the Princes of Münsterberg

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The aristocratic family of the barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady – which included above all George of Poděbrady (d. 1471), the Bohemian King of the “twin people” – played a key role in the history of religion and ecclesiastical politics of central Europe at the turn of the Middle Ages. It is therefore highly surprising that no-one has yet undertaken a significant probing into the family’s spirituality, that is, into the spiritual preferences and their constants, as well as into the forms of ecclesiastical politics. Let us then attempt to identify at least some of the components of this spirituality, springing from the fruitful theological tension between the Bohemian Reformation and Catholic reformism, extending to the very threshold of the European Protestant reformations.

Boček the Elder of Poděbrady (d. 1417), the Supreme Chamberlain and Scribe of the Bohemian Kingdom and a grandfather of George of Poděbrady, belonged among the leading advocates of the Bohemian reform movement. His signature and seal may be found on the manifesto protesting the execution of Hus in 1415, and in no less than the third place.<sup>1</sup> Boček’s son Jan (Ješek) of Poděbrady and Kost (d. 1409) was at the start of the fifteenth century affected by an emotional eucharistic piety (cultivated in the reform circles), as it is suggested by the illumination of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, which was probably painted for Jan.<sup>2</sup> The palace of the barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady was then located in Řetězová [Chain Street] only several dozen meters from the Bethlehem Chapel.<sup>3</sup> We should, however, also note one

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<sup>1</sup> AČ 3 (1844) 187. See also August Sedláček, “Úvahy o osobách v stížných listech léta 1415 psaných” [Reflections about the Persons in the Protest Manifestoes Written in 1415], *ČČH* 23 (1917) 92–93.

<sup>2</sup> The illumination was sold at Christie’s (London, King Street Sale 7911, Lot 24) on 7 July 2010 and is presently part of an unknown private collection. <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/christ-as-the-man-of-sorrows-full-page-5334913-details.aspx?from=searchresults&intObjectID=5334913&sid=db19d498-dd61-4a99-83d6-1b30d6470743>.

<sup>3</sup> Pavel Vlček, ed., *Umělecké památky Prahy. Staré Město a Josefov* [Art Objects in Prague: Old Town and Josefov] (Prague 1996) 220–221. See also Vladimír Piša, *Dvorec pánů z Poděbrad v Praze na Starém Městě* [The Court of the Barons of Poděbrady in the Old Town of Prague] (Prague, 1966); Lubomír Pořízka, Jiří Pešek, and Zdeněk Hojda, *Prager Palais* (Munich, 1994) 34–35.

seemingly minor detail, namely, the simultaneous contact of the Poděbrads with the Franciscan spiritual tradition. Thus, Kateřina of Poděbrady (Catherina Boczkonis), a daughter of Boček the Elder of Poděbrady, and an aunt of the later Bohemian King, was a nun in the monastery of the Poor Clares at Na Františku in Prague, that is, a member of the female branch of the order of St. Francis.<sup>4</sup> The Prague convent, in which Kateřina was mentioned as a Poor Clare in 1402, belonged among the principal centres of the sprouting Franciscan Observance that entertained the ambition to reform the entire universal Church.<sup>5</sup> Already King George's great-grandfather, Boček of Poděbrady, the Royal Cupbearer (d. 1373) – who had close ties to Charles IV – was related (through his wife Alžběta, a Silesian Princess) to the Piasts, who not only supported the monasteries of the Franciscans and of the Poor Clares, but some of whom even became members of these monastic communities.<sup>6</sup> We can, therefore, state that the immediate ancestors of the future Bohemian king of the “twin people” stood close to diverse currents of the Bohemian reform movement as well as of Catholic reformism. Of course, it was not a matter of contradictions because the Bohemian Reformation was not a national heretical revolt, but an attempt at a new definition of catholicity (that is, universalism) of a renewed Church of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Precisely this specific interaction offers a key to an understanding of the personal spirituality of George of Poděbrady and of his seemingly

<sup>4</sup> Kateřina received a dispensation to transfer to another order, either Cistercian or Benedictine. Alžběta (Eliška) of Poděbrady, her sister and another aunt of King George, originally an Augustinian nun, was similarly in 1402 inducted into the office of abbess of the Benedictine nuns at the Church of St. George in the Prague Castle, which conferred the right of coronation of the Bohemian Queens. Concerning the two sisters, see *Monumenta Vaticana res gestas Bohemicas illustrantia* V, ed. Kamil Krofta (Prague, 1903) 1096–1097 (nn. 1893–1896). Several women from the family of the barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady became nuns at the turn of the fourteenth century, and often assumed high functions within their orders. See Miroslav Plaček and Petr Futák, *Páni z Kunštátu. Rod erbu vrchních pruhů na cestě k trůnu* [The Barons of Kunštát: The Family with Upper Stripes on Their Coat of Arms, on Their Way to the Throne] (Prague, 2006) 235–236, 413, 576, passim.

<sup>5</sup> On the early Franciscan Observance in the monastery Na Františku, see Christian-Frederik Felskau, *Vita religiosa und paupertas der Přemyslidin Agnes von Prag. Zu Bezügen und Besonderheiten in Leben und Legende einer späten Heiligen*, [Collectanea Franciscana 70] (2000) 413–484. For a general coverage, see Petr Hlaváček, *Die böhmischen Franziskaner im ausgehenden Mittelalter. Studien zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas* [Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa 40] (Stuttgart, 2011) 24–25.

<sup>6</sup> On the Barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady during the reigns of Charles IV and Wenceslas IV, see Ondřej Felcman and Radek Fukala, eds., *Poděbradové. Rod českomoravských pánů, kladských hrabat a slezských knížat* [The Poděbradians. The family of Bohemian and Moravian Barons, Counts of Klodzko, and Silesian Princes] (Prague, 2008) 45–59.

<sup>7</sup> Petr Hlaváček, “A Reflection on the Political and Religious Role of Bohemia in Christianity,” in: Jerzy Kloczowski and Hubert Łaskiewicz, eds. *East-Central Europe in European History. Themes & Debates* (Lublin, 2009) 131–155; idem, “Reflection on the Religious and Political Roles of the Czechs in Europe in the Early Modern Age,” *BRPP* 8 (2011) 332–339.

compromising acts of ecclesiastical politics. George's father, Viktorin of Kunštát and Poděbrady (d. 1427), an eager supporter of the Bohemian variant of church reform, was personally acquainted with Jan Žižka, albeit he did not share the radicalism of the Taborites and of the Orphans.<sup>8</sup> The youthful George of Poděbrady, the family heir, would fight against them in the Battle of Lipany in 1434 in the Utraquist and Catholic host.<sup>9</sup> George's appointment as the sheriff of four united districts of Eastern Bohemia in 1444, as well as his election as a Governor of Bohemia in 1452, enjoyed the unequivocal support of Jan Rokycana (d. 1471), the Utraquist Archbishop of Prague, who became his lifelong fellow-traveller. Both of them likewise shared an aversion to the Italian John of Capistrano, a Papal Legate and Inquisitor, and the General Vicar of the Observant Congregation of the Order of St. Francis. Active in 1451–1456 in central Europe, especially in the Czech lands, Capistrano was, in their view, disturbing the fragile religious peace in the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>10</sup> After George was elected the King of Bohemia in the Prague Old Town Hall in 1458 by the Utraquist and Catholic estates, his first steps led to the Týn Church, that Utraquist cathedral of Rokycana, where a royal throne had been prepared for him. Of course, the litmus test was then George's royal coronation in the Cathedral of St. Vitus, and this act was preceded by a coronation oath to the hands of two Hungarian bishops authorised by the papal legate, Karjaval. George then swore that he would prosecute heretical errors but, of course, he could not have meant to reject the Compactata that he viewed as the existential foundation of Czech Utraquism.<sup>11</sup>

George of Poděbrady was not a covert Roman Catholic, as some of his contemporaries tried to intimate. His confessional profile was always distinctly Utraquist. In fact, an Utraquist chaplain accompanied him on all his journeys and celebrated masses *sub utraque* for him. However, in the spirit of the Compactata he considered the Utraquist rite as an integral (albeit highly autonomous) part of the Catholic Church, a concept that was based on the distinct ecclesiology of the Utraquist theologians. From as early as 1444 George exercised the so-called foundational rights *vis-à-vis* the Poor Clares

<sup>8</sup> Felcman and Fukala, eds., *Poděbradové*, 56–59.

<sup>9</sup> *Kronika Bartoška z Drahoníc*. In: FRB V (1893) 614. See also Petr Čornej, *Lipanská křižovatka Příčiny, průběh a historický význam jedné bitvy* [The Crossroad of Lipany: The Cause, Course, and the Historical Significance of a Battle] (Prague, 1992) 124; Miloš Dvořák, "Ke strategii Prokopa Velikého v bitvě u Lipan" [On the Strategy of Prokop the Great in the Battle of Lipany], In: *Husitství – Reformace – Renesance. Sborník k 60. narozeninám Františka Šmahela* [Hussitism, Reformation, Renaissance. A Melange for the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday of František Šmahel] 3 vv., eds. Jaroslav Pánek, Miloslav Polívka, and Noemi Rejchrtová (Prague, 1995) 2:551–563.

<sup>10</sup> Johannes Hofer, *Johannes Kapistran. Ein Leben im Kampf um die Reform der Kirche II*, Bibliotheca Franciscana 2 (Rome and Heidelberg, 1965) 57–146.

<sup>11</sup> Concerning the problem of the Compactata and of their role in the Poděbradian period, see a comprehensive treatment, František Šmahel, *Basilejská kompaktáta. Příběh deseti listin* [The Compactata of Basel: The Tale of Ten Documents] (Prague, 2011) 80–86.

convent of the Virgin Mary in Žďár nad Sázavou, which in the mid-thirteenth century was founded by his distant ancestor Boček of Zbraslav, the primal father of the Barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady. In the monastery church that was under Poděbradian protection until 1588, George had installed – yet as the Governor of the Kingdom in the 1450s – a monumental family gallery of the Barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady. He himself figures in the second place after the monastery's founder, and a whole series of ancestors venerates the enthroned Virgin Mary, the patroness of the church, as well as of the entire order of the Poor Clares. The veneration of the Virgin Mary was, of course, an important component of both Catholic and the Utraquist piety. What is even more important is George's emphasis on the family tradition, whereby he could simultaneously demonstrate the antiquity and the nobility of his origins.<sup>12</sup> And that was certainly a good and important qualification for the future king.

George's second wife, Queen Johanna of Rožmitál, although she stemmed from a prominent Catholic family, was distinguished by an exemplary confessional toleration and there are some indications that she may have embraced Utraquism. The so-called Prayer Book of King George is especially significant in that respect. Queen Johanna gave the richly illuminate volume to her husband for Christmas of 1466. This manuscript, which deserves a more thorough analysis, is now held in a private collection. Its allegedly Catholic character caused much irritation, for instance, to the art historian, Jaroslav Pešina, as well as to his contemporary and current colleagues, who did not realise that Catholic and Utraquist theology differed only in a few ecclesiological nuances and especially in liturgical practice.<sup>13</sup>

George of Poděbrady, above all, hoped for a speedy recognition of his royal dignity and of the validity of the Compactata by the Papal Rome, and thereby in a peaceful coexistence of the Utraquist rite with the Roman one in a single Catholic (that is universal) Church. The presumption, however – as we know – was not fulfilled and George, therefore, sought in the milieu of the Roman Church a new agile ally, who could mediate among him, the Utraquist

<sup>12</sup> Tomáš Borovský, *Kláštery, zakladatelé a panovník na středověké Moravě* [Monasteries, Founders, and the Ruler in Medieval Moravia] (Brno, 2005) 158, 334–335. On the paintings, see the recent publication, Lenka Benešová, *Votivní nástěnný obraz v presbytáři konventního kostela Nanebevzetí Panny Marie a sv. Mikuláše ve Žďáře nad Sázavou* [The Votive Fresco in the Presbytery of the Monastery Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and of St. Nicholas in Žďár nad Sázavou], B.A. Thesis for the Philosophical Faculty of Masaryk University (Brno, 2010) 17–34. George also is closely involved in the iconographic decorations in the Castle of Poděbrady from the 1430s and 1440s, where there are extant fragments of frescoes of the Last Judgment and the Martyrdom of 10,000 Knights, as well as of David and Goliath, and of David transmitting royal power to Solomon; see Zuzana Všetěčková, *Středověká nástěnná malba ve středních Čechách* [Medieval Frescoes in Central Bohemia], *Průzkumy památek* 6 (1999) 133–136.

<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pešina, "Modlitební kniha Jiřího z Poděbrad" [The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrad] In: *Sborník k sedmdesátinám Jana Květa* [Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Philosophica et Historica 1], ed. Jaroslav Pešina (Prague, 1965) 133–146.

Church, and the Roman Curia. The choice was surprising for many, albeit it was from the pragmatic point of view the only possible one at that time. It was the order of St. Francis, namely, the reformist oriented Franciscan Observants, who fascinated Czech Utraquists by their ostentatious poverty and fiery preaching.<sup>14</sup> That is, those Franciscan Observants who had been paradoxically introduced into the Czech Lands by the great opponent of the Bohemian Reformation, John of Capistrano.<sup>15</sup> Sometime around 1460 there in fact, above the gate of the eastern wing of the Poděbradian castle Kunštát in Moravia, appears a relief with the Bernardine sun and the three-letter symbol of Jesus “yhs” – that exclusive mark of the Franciscan Observance. It appears on the edifice that was the principal family seat of the Barons of Kunštát and Poděbrady and that was held until 1464 by King George.<sup>16</sup> In 1459, this allegedly “heretical” Bohemian King established a monastery of the Franciscan Observants in Plzeň<sup>17</sup> and a year later in the capital city of Prague.<sup>18</sup> The most prominent architect of this dynamic Poděbradian/Franciscan alliance was an Italian, Gabriel Rangoni of Verona, the first Bohemian Provincial Vicar of the Franciscan Observants, who had eagerly championed an entente between the Churches of Bohemia and Rome. Henceforth, George of Poděbrady was titled “a special benefactor of the Order of St. Francis.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, *Chronica fratris Nicolai Glassberger ordinis Minorum observantium*, *Analecta Franciscana* II (1887) 467–469.

<sup>15</sup> Petr Hlaváček, “Die böhmischen Franziskaner im ausgehenden Mittelalter,” *Studien zur Kirchen und Kulturgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas*, [Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropas, 40] (2011) 95–105. See also, idem, “Les Franciscains observants de Bohême à la fin du Moyen Âge: entre particularisme national, anti-Intellectualisme et non-conformisme religieux,” *Études Franciscaines*, Nouvelle série, 2,1 (2009) 81–98.

<sup>16</sup> Ivo Hlobil, “Bernardinské symboly jména Ježíš v českých zemích šířené Janem Kapistránem” [Bernardine Symbols of the Name of Jesus Propagated in the Czech Lands by John of Capistrano] *Umění* 44 (1996) 223–234; here 229–230.

<sup>17</sup> National Archive, Prague, fond: Archiv české františkánské provincie, listiny č. 31 (1459, 13 February, Rome, Pope Pius II orders transfer of the Minorite Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Plzeň to the Franciscan Observants), č. 34 (1460, 28. April, Prague, King George of Poděbrady agrees with the transfer of the monastery in Plzeň to the Franciscan Observants). See also *Bullarium Franciscanum* (Nova Series), Tom. II (1455–1471), ed. Ioseph M. Pou y Marti (Firenze-Quaracchi 1939) n. 746 (383–384).

<sup>18</sup> The original foundational documents of the Prague monastery are not extant, but an insertion of the privileges of King George (Prague, 14. June 1461) and of Cardinal Bessarion (Vienna, 13. June 1460) can be found in the document, renewing the privileges of the Monastery by Vladislav Jagellon; see National Archive, Prague, fond: Zrušené kláštery, listina č. 1220 (1483, 4. April, Prague).

<sup>19</sup> Petr Hlaváček, “Im Dienst der Christenheit: Der Franziskaner und Diplomat Gabriel Rangoni von Verona († 1486) und seine Wirkung in Italien und Ostmitteleuropa,” *In: Hofkultur der Jagiellondynastie und der verwandter Fürstenthäuser / The Culture of the Jagellonian and Related Courts*, ed. Urszula Borkowska and Markus Hörsch, *Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia* 6 (Ostfildern, 2010), 107–118. See also idem, “Al servizio dell’ordine e della cristianità: Gabriele Rangoni da Verona († 1486) e il suo operato nell’Europa centrale e in Italia,” *Fratesco. Rivista di cultura francescana*, 74, n. 1 (2008) 71–95.

Perhaps, the publicly proclaimed affinity of George for the Franciscans was not merely a pragmatic screen to strengthen him in his diplomatic engagements with the papal curia and with the establishment of the Roman Church.<sup>20</sup> There is much to suggest that he was aware of a kinship between the reformational ethos of the Franciscan Observance and of the Bohemian Reformation.<sup>21</sup> If the highly charged iconographic symbol of the Bernardine sun was appearing in the most intimate ambiance of King George of Poděbrady, then reciprocally a eucharistic symbolism resonating with Utraquism was making its appearance in Franciscan monasteries, especially in the Podedbradian foundations in Plzeň and in Prague. We know, for instance, that in 1465 the General Vicar of the Franciscan Observants, Marek of Bologna ordered the incineration of an allegedly heretical image of Christ the Saviour, who poured his blood from a chalice into a royal crown, from which birds drank.<sup>22</sup> This unique iconographic motif could be construed as an expression of Bohemian Franciscans' support for the "heretical" King. At the same time, might it not have been a covert polemic with the then current anti-Utraquist treatises of Hilarius of Litoměřice, the administrator of the Consistory sub una? Might it not have been an allusion to the theological polemic between the Catholics and the Utraquists about the birds who "eat", respectively "eat and drink"?<sup>23</sup> As early as 1464 this exclusive link of the Franciscan Observance with George of Poděbrady began to loosen; the Franciscan Gabriel Rangoni of Verona could not continue to tack between the fidelity to the pope and the loyalty to the Bohemian King.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the close tie was not severed entirely. When in 1468 – during the crusade against the "Czech heretics" – the persecution of the Franciscans had culminated in Prague, the monks hand-

<sup>20</sup> On the diplomatic power of the contemporary order of St. Francis, see Petr Hlaváček, "The Franciscans, Christianity, and Europe. A Theological and Geographic Concept as the Object of Religious Circulation in the Papal Discourse of the Fifteenth Century," *Le Silence du Cloître. L'Exemple des Saints, XIVe-XVIIe Siècles*, Identités Franciscaines à l'Âge des Réformes II, ed. Frédéric Meyer and Ludovic Viallet (Clermont-Ferrand, 2011) 347–355.

<sup>21</sup> Concerning this phenomenon, see Petr Hlaváček, "Die Franziskaner-Observanten zwischen böhmischer und europäischer Reformation. Ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas," *Kirchliche Reformimpulse des 14./15. Jahrhunderts in Ostmitteleuropa*, eds. Winfried Eberhard and Franz Machilek, Forschungen und Quellen zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte Ostdeutschlands, Band 36 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2006) 295–326.

<sup>22</sup> Lucas Wadding, *Annales Minorum XIII* (1932) 429–430.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, *Traktát o nejsvětějším přijímání lidu obecného pod obojí způsobou* [Treatise about the most holy communion of the laity in both kinds], ed. Antonín Podlaha (Prague, 1905). It appeared in 1465 as a polemic with Utraquism represented by Jan Rokycana, after a disputation at a joint gathering of the clergy sub utraque and sub una.

<sup>24</sup> The situation, of course, was extremely complicated. Still on 6 June 1468, Gabriel of Verona once more appeared at the papal curia as an "orator" of King George of Poděbrady, while a year later he was already firmly in the service of his enemy Matyáše Corvinus; see Caesar Cenci, *Documenta Vaticana ad Franciscas spectantia ann. 1385–1492*, Pars V [Archivum Franciscanum Historicum 94 (2001)] 130.

ed the key to their Prague monastery of St. Ambrose to none other than King George, as a benefactor of the order, who in turn provided armed protection for them on their passage all the way to the walls of Kłodzko.<sup>25</sup>

It would be precisely Kłodzko that would soon become a symbolic centre of the continuing symbiosis in spiritual matters and in ecclesiastical politics between the Poděbradian family and the Franciscan Observance. The descendants of the Bohemian “heretical” King George would consciously link up with some of the earlier forms of the royal ecclesiastical policy and personal piety. This tendency is especially evident in their relationship to the Franciscan Observance; this reformist congregation of the order of St. Francis. The principal supporter of this tradition was the King’s son Henry I. At one point, George of Poděbrady had entertained the intention of placing Henry into the archiepiscopal office in Prague; such a move was, of course, decisively opposed by Pope Paul II. Henry then married Ursula, a daughter of the Margrave of Brandenburg and Elector, Albrecht Achilles, and he chose Kłodzko as his residence.<sup>26</sup> As early as 1472, shortly after his father’s death, he converted to the Roman Church. Together with his wife Ursula, he established in a suburb of Kłodzko the Church of St. George and St. Adalbert (Vojtěch), into which he introduced Franciscan Observants in 1475, and as the founder began to build a monastery for the monks. The monastery church was solemnly consecrated in 1479 by the Bishop of Wrocław, Rudolf of Rudesheim, a Papal Legate. Thereafter, Henry was named in Franciscan sources as “a benefactor of the brethren” (*fautor fratrum*). Similarly, he supported the Franciscan monastery in Kamenec in Upper Lusatia, founded by King Vladislav Jagellon in 1492. Henry of Münsterberg erected the Franciscan Church of St. George and St. Adalbert as the official burial place of the Princely Poděbradian family. In any case, the consecration to St. George pointed directly to King George of Poděbrady, while St. George was now viewed as a patron saint of the entire family. The dedication to St. Adalbert, the patron of the Czech Lands, recalled the linkage of the family with the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>27</sup>

Henry of Münsterberg also erected a chapel of St. George in his castle Landeck in the County of Kłodzko;<sup>28</sup> his other act of family memorialisation

<sup>25</sup> See also *Chronica fratris Nicolai Glassberger ordinis Minorum observantium*, *Analecta Franciscana* II (1887) 427. *Chronica Fratrum Minorum de Observancia Provincie Bohemie*, MS. Prague KNM VIII F 75, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Felcman and Fukala, *Poděbradové*, 262–264.

<sup>27</sup> *Chronica Fratrum Minorum de Observancia Provincie Bohemie*, MS. Prague KNM VIII F 75, 118–119. On Kamenec, see Katja M. Mieth, “Verflechtung östlicher und westlicher Elemente: Bemerkungen zur Ausstattung des Franziskanerobservatenklosters St. Anna in Kamenz (Oberlausitz),” *Die Jagiellonen. Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, ed. Dietmar Popp and Robert Suckale (Nuremberg, 2002) 167–178.

<sup>28</sup> Bogusław Czechowicz, “Sztuka i historiografia Ziemi Klodzkiej. Przykłady kilku sprzezen zwrotnych,” *Kłodzkiy sbornik* 4 (2001) 143–162, here 145.

was in obtaining statues of St. George for the parish churches of Münsterberg and Olešnice in Silesia.<sup>29</sup> The cult of St. George was also strongly accented by Henry's son, George of Münsterberg (the grandson of King George) in a Book of Hours, which was produced around 1495 and in which – aside from christological motifs – there also appears in the litany of All Saints a group of patron saints of the Bohemian Land, enlarged, however, by the addition of St. George as family patron of the Poděbradians.<sup>30</sup>

The Franciscan church of St. George and St. Adalbert in Kłodzko had in fact become for half a century the principal burial place for all the branches of the Poděbradian family; individual funerals here are documented from 1480 until 1522. For instance, the year 1492 saw the burial of Hynek of Poděbrady, an author and a son of King George and of his second wife, Johanna of Rožmitál; he had become a convert to the Roman Church as early as 1473. In 1496, Boček of Kunštát, the first-born son of George of Poděbrady and Kunhuta of Šternberk, was buried in the monastery church; he suffered from a mental illness. Two years later, the family crypt received the body of the founder of the Franciscan church and of the Poděbradian necropolis, Henry of Münsterberg, George's son. In 1500, it was the turn of the remains of Victorin of Poděbrady, the King's second-born son, an Imperial Count, as well as a Count of Münsterberg, Opava, and Kłodzko, who was laid to rest next to his spouse, Helen Margaret of Montferrat, stemming from the Byzantine imperial family of Palaiologs.<sup>31</sup>

The Franciscan monastery in Kłodzko was not the only monastic institution that was founded by one of the members of the Poděbrad family. Thus, in the same year of 1475, a monastery of the Holy Trinity was established in Legnica in Silesia. The founders were Prince Friedrich I of Legnica-Brzeg, a member of the Piast dynasty, and his spouse Ludmila (d. 1503), a daughter of the Bohemian King George and his second wife Johanna of Rožmitál. Princess Ludmila was celebrated as “mater fratrum,” i.e. mother of the Franciscan brethren in the contemporary Bohemian Franciscan chronicle of Michael of Carinthia.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Bogusław Czechowicz, *Książęcy mecenas artystyczny na Śląsku u schyłku średniowiecza* (Warsaw, 2005) 142, 600. On the Franciscans of Silesia, who were included in the Bohemian Franciscan Province, see Petr Hlaváček, “Schlesien als Schlüssel-land der Franziskanerprovinz ‘Bohemia’ im ausgehenden Mittelalter,” *Geschichte – Erinnerung – Selbstidentifikation. Die schriftliche Kultur in den Ländern der Böhmisches Krone im 14.-18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Lenka Bobková and Jan Zdichynec (Prague, 2011) 431–437.

<sup>30</sup> Milada Studničková, “*Sub serenissimo principe et domino Wladislao rege Ungarie et Bohemie [...] vita regularis inducta est*. Die Entwicklung der böhmischen Buchmalerei zur Zeit der Jagiellonen und ihr Verhältnis zu den Nachbarländern,” *Die Jagiellonen. Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, eds. Dietmar Popp and Robert Suckale (Nuremberg, 2002) 233–243, here 234. See also Czechowicz, *Książęcy mecenas*, 144–151.

<sup>31</sup> Felcman and Fukala, *Poděbradové*, 261–266.

<sup>32</sup> *Chronica Fratrum Minorum de Observancia Provincie Bohemie*, MS. Prague KNM VIII F 75, 119–120, 185. On the relation of Princess Ludmila and the Franciscans,

Here, however, it is necessary to note that the apprehensions of the representatives of the Czech Utraquist Church were fulfilled. They were expressed in the Old Bohemian Annals [*Staré letopisy české*], as follows: “How much he [i.e. George of Poděbrady] was advised by Rokycana [and] Lupáč, not to give his daughters to the enemies of the chalice! ... He gave to his son Henry for a wife the daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg, she misled him; to his son Hynek the daughter of the Count of Meissen, he was also misled.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, during the 1570s – only a few years after King George’s death – all of his descendants gradually converted to the Roman Church. As a legacy of the glorious memory of King George, the family of the Poděbradian Princes of Münsterberg fostered the cult of St. George.

George of Poděbrady’s descendants likewise continued to maintain close connections with the order of St. Francis. We have already noted the assistance of his children in the foundation of the monasteries of Franciscan Observants in Kłodzko and in Legnica. Apolonia, a daughter of George’s son Victorin of Poděbrady, entered a convent of the Poor Clares in Střelín in Lower Silesia. From 1523, however, she became an adherent of the Protestant Reformation and finally was married to the lawyer Erhard von Queis, the elected bishop in the Prussian Marienwerder, who was credited with the transition of Prussia to Lutheranism. Another daughter of Victorin, Ursula, was educated as an orphan in the monastery of Magdalene nuns in the Saxon Freiberg. From there she fled secretly in 1528, and became an adherent of the Wittenberg Reformation. She became personally acquainted with Martin Luther, who praised her – the granddaughter of the “heretical King George of Poděbrady – for her personal courage and religious enthusiasm.”<sup>34</sup>

The events in the life of the family of George (the son of Henry of Münsterberg) were even more hectic. His son, Karel I of Münsterberg was the Supreme Captain [*Nejvyšší hejtman*] of the Kingdom of Bohemia, who in his activities oscillated between a fidelity to the Roman Church and the support of Lutheranism. His daughter Kateřina was destined for a monastic career and still as a child was placed in the convent of the Poor Clares in Střelín, where, however, she died early in 1503. An impressive career in ecclesiastical politics, of course, was the lot of his first-born son, Jáchym of Poděbrady and Münsterberg, who received a humanistic education from the Lutheran, Johann Hess. From 1532, he was the prior of the Knights of Malta for Bohemia, Poland, and Silesia, and acted as a tolerant Christian, anchored in Erasmianism. In 1545, he became Bishop of Brandenburg; publically

see also Petr Hlaváček, “Die Oberlausitz – ein neuralgischer Punkt des spätmittelalterlichen Franziskanertums,” *Die Kunst im Markgraftum Oberlausitz während der Jagiellonenherrschaft*, [Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia 3] (Ostfildern, 2006) 163–171.

<sup>33</sup> *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu Křížovnického* [Old Bohemian Annals from the Křížovnický Manuscript], eds., František Šimek and Miroslav Kaňák (Prague, 1959) 238.

<sup>34</sup> Felcman and Fukala, *Poděbradové*, 269–270.

converted to Lutheranism, and forcefully spread the ideas of the Wittenberg Reformation.<sup>35</sup>

Czech historiography, however, missed hitherto the fortunes of possibly the most notable descendant of George of Poděbrady, namely, his daughter Zdena. She was born in 1449 from George's first marriage with Kunhuta of Šternberk. After George of Poděbrady's election as the King of Bohemia in 1458, she was actively engaged in striving for reconciliation with the dynasty of Wettins (of Saxony and Meissen), whose extensive dominions were adjacent to the Kingdom of Bohemia in the northwest. The youthful Zdena of Poděbrady (d. 1510) then became a significant participant in dynastic politics, after she was married in Cheb to Duke Albrecht, the son of the Elector of Saxony, Friedrich II.<sup>36</sup>

We have an entrée into Zdena's intellectual life and her Christian spirituality through her extensive correspondence. Ninety-five of her private letters from 1498 to 1510 are extant, largely addressed to her son, the Duke of Saxony, George the Bearded. They represent a unique source from which to reconstruct, at least in part, Zdena's specific personal piety.<sup>37</sup> Was there an element of Zdena's piety that might have stemmed from her Czech roots and relate thus to the specific Catholic-Utraquist anamnesis of the Barons of Poděbrady's family?

First of all, it is necessary to note that the youthful Zdena was formed after her wedding as a Catholic, albeit in a certain distinctly tolerant spirit. Her husband, Albrecht, the Duke of Saxony, and their descendants were thus predestined to become future candidates for the throne of Bohemia. The first son, born from this marriage in 1471, only a few months after the death of the Bohemian King George, was also named George (Jorgen) after his grandfather, a fact that also signified a symbolic embrace of the Czech Poděbradian legacy. Zdena in an exemplary way took care of the altar of St. Wenceslas, the patron of the Bohemian Land, in the Cathedral of Meissen; the altar had also been an object of attention of earlier rulers of Bohemia. In 1500, she supported her own chaplain Christoph Ratzwitz for the post of Vicar at the altar of St. Wenceslas. She asked, therefore, her son George the Bearded (d. 1539) to issue Ratzwitz a letter of recommendation for the Dean and the Chapter at the Prague Cathedral of St. Vitus, who held the right of patronage for the altar.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 173–179, 272–276.

<sup>36</sup> Uwe Tresp, "Das Fürstentreffen von Eger und die sächsisch-böhmischen Beziehungen um 1459," *Eger 1459: Fürstentreffen zwischen Sachsen, Böhmen und ihren Nachbarn*, [Saxonia, 13] (Döbel, 2011) 67–128, here 104–105.

<sup>37</sup> For a recent edition of Zdena's correspondence, see *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen (1449–1510) an ihren Sohn Georg (1471–1539)*, eds., Sven Rabeler, Alexandra Kursawe, and Claudia Ulrich, [Mitteilungen der Residenz-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Sonderheft 11] (Kiel, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen (1449–1510) an ihren Sohn Georg (1471–1539)* 106, n. 60.

Zdena's conspicuous sympathy for the order of St. Francis and Franciscan spirituality is again striking.<sup>39</sup> In 1493, she pleaded with her son George for the support of the fledgling monastery of Franciscan Observants in the Upper Lusatian Kamenec,<sup>40</sup> which was a Bohemian royal foundation by Vladislav Jagellon. She was an enthusiastic reader of legends about St. Francis; in 1494, she urged her son to get Siegmund von Maltitz, the Court Marshall of Saxony, to return her book of such legends.<sup>41</sup> From 1492 to 1496, Zdena also actively engaged in the cause of the Franciscan Johann of Bamberg, who studied at the University of Leipzig. She asked her son George to help this Franciscan to obtain the doctor's degree, which his theological opponents denied him. It was, in fact, a delicate situation, if we realise that Johannes likewise belonged among the critics of the contemporary indulgence practices; specifically, he opposed indulgences for the benefit of the Cathedral in Freiberg, and he was labelled a heretic by his opponents. Finally, Pope Alexander VI himself intervened in the case on 26 August 1496, when he confirmed the indulgences for Freiberg, and imposed an order of silence on all opponents, especially on the Franciscan Johann of Bamberg.<sup>42</sup> In 1500, Zdena turned to Duke George with a plea to provide for her former servant Gregor Nüssichen, who decided to abandon his secular life and join the Franciscan Observants apparently in Meissen.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Zdena of Poděbrady studied the writings of the controversial Dominican mystic Johann Tauler. After the texts were printed in Leipzig in 1498, she actively intervened to make possible their unimpeded sale.<sup>44</sup>

Zdena's youngest son Friedrich of Saxony provided a major spiritual support for her. He was intended for an ecclesiastical career and from 1487 to 1495 he studied at the universities of Leipzig, Bologna, and Siena,

<sup>39</sup> Zdena, of course, could link up with the traditional support the mendicant orders by the Wettins. Concerning this and other elements of her spirituality, see, for instance, Sven Rabeler, "Die Tochter des 'ketzerischen konigs'. Herzogin Zdena von Sachsen und die fürstliche Frömmigkeitspraxis im späten Mittelalter," *Eger 1459: Fürstentreffen zwischen Sachsen, Böhmen und ihren Nachbarn*, [Saxonia, 13] (2011) 338–353. On intellectual contacts between Bohemian and Saxon Franciscans, see, for instance, Petr Hlaváček, "Eberhard Ablauff de Rheno († 1528) im Geistesleben der böhmischen Franziskaner am Anfang der Frühen Neuzeit," *Leben und Alltag in böhmisch-mährischen und niederösterreichischen Klöstern in Spätmittelalter und Neuzeit*, [Monastica Historia, 1] (St. Pölten and Brno, 2011) 136–146.

<sup>40</sup> *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen*, 55–56 (n. 8).

<sup>41</sup> *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen*, 66–67 (n. 18), here 67: "Auch hab ich zcuerczeyt Maltitz dy legend sancti Francisci gelichen. Ich bitt dych, du wollest ym sagen, das er mir sy eher ye besser widder schick. Domit bis Got beffolle."

<sup>42</sup> *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen*, 73–75 (n. 26). For an overview of the entire case, see Julius Leopold Pasig, *Johannes VI. Bischof von Meißen. Ein Beitrag zur Sächsischen Kirchen- und Landesgeschichte, insbesondere zur Geschichte des Hochstifts Meißen* (Leipzig, 1867) 184–194; Helmut Petzold, "Der Streit um die Freiburger 'Butterbriefe'. Vorreformatorsche Widerstände gegen das Ablaßwesen im Bistum Meißen," *Das Hochstift Meißen. Aufsätze zur sächsischen Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Franz Lau (Berlin, 1973) 147–164.

<sup>43</sup> *Briefe der Herzogin Sidonia von Sachsen*, 114–115 (n. 71).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–82 (n. 33).

where apparently he became acquainted with humanism. In 1498, he was elected Grandmaster of the Order of Teutonic Knights, and held this office until his death in 1510. Moreover, from 1504 on, he acted as coadjutor of the Archbishop of Magdeburg, who was his relative Ernst II of Saxony. It was a genuine paradox that the grandson of the “heretical” King George of Poděbrady became the head of the Prussian state governed by a religious order, and that he carried on an enlightened reformist policy, surrounded by humanistically oriented advisers.<sup>45</sup>

Zdena’s interest constantly kept turning toward the Franciscans. In 1501, George the Bearded, the Duke of Saxony, established on her initiative a monastery of Franciscan Observants in the Ore Mountains (Erzgebirge) in Annaberg.<sup>46</sup> In this edifice the highly important negotiations in ecclesiastical politics were conducted in 1534 that led to the rulers’ summit in Kadaň in the Bohemian part of the Ore Mountains. There the Duke of Saxony George, Elector of Saxony Johann Friedrich, Bohemian King Ferdinand I, Elector of Mainz Archbishop Albrecht of Bradenburg, and the Papal Nuncio Paolo Vergerio issued the so-called Peace of Kadaň between the Catholics and the Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire. A festive banquet of reconciliation was tellingly conducted in the garden of the Franciscan monastery of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in Kadaň.<sup>47</sup> These negotiations, initiated by Duke George, were at the same time an expression of a certain concrete tradition, manifested in the behaviour of the family of Poděbrady and of its relatives. It was the traditional conciliatory spirit in religion, expressed through the diplomatic support of the order of St. Francis. It is also important to remember that Duke George, an ardent advocate of ecclesiastical reform and an opponent of Martin Luther, was likewise in intensive contact with Erasmus of Rotterdam.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For basic information, see Kurt Forstreuter, “Friedrich, Herzog von Sachsen,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, v. 5 (Berlin, 1961) 526. See also, Carl August Lückereath, “Friedrich von Wettin,” *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 4 (Munich and Zurich, 1989) 961–962.

<sup>46</sup> Ferdinand Doelle, *Die Observanzbewegung in der sächsischen Franziskanerprovinz (Mittel- und Ostdeutschland) bis zum Generalkapitel von Parma 1529* (Munster, 1918) 48–49.

<sup>47</sup> Petr Hlaváček, “Kadaňský mír z roku 1534 (Katolicko-luterský pokus o záchranu jednoty Svaté říše římské)” [The Peace of Kadaň in 1534 (A Catholic and Lutheran Attempt to Save the Unity of the Holy Roman Empire)], *Lutheranus* 2007/2008, [Sborník Lutherovy společnosti, 2] (Prague, 2008) 138–146. On the Peace of Kadaň and the context of ecclesiastical politics, see also Petr Hlaváček, Catholics, “Utraquists and Lutherans in Northwestern Bohemia, or Public Space as a Medium for Declaring Confessional Identity,” *Public Communication in European Reformation. Artistic and Other Media in Central Europe 1380–1620*, eds., Milena Bartlová and Michal Šroněk (Prague, 2007) 279–297.

<sup>48</sup> Heribert Smolinsky, “Aspekte altgläubiger Theologie im albertinischen Sachsen in der Reformationszeit bis 1542,” *Herbergen der Christenheit. Jahrbuch für deutsche Kirchengeschichte* 18 (1993/94) 29–43. See also Petr Hlaváček, “Christoph von Carlowitz († 1578), humanista a diplomat reformačních časů” [Christoph von Carlowitz († 1578), a Humanist and a Diplomat of the Reformation Era], *COMOTOVIA* 2009, ed. Petr Rak (Chomutov, 2010) 98–103.

Thus, the Duke of Saxony George the Bearded – the grandson of George of Poděbrady, the Bohemian King of the “twin people”, whose Christian name he bore, son of his daughter Zdena – in his personality interconnected the Poděbradian traditions of spirituality and ecclesiastical politics with inputs from the Bohemian Reformation as well as a Catholic reformism (likewise connected with the reformist ethos of the Franciscan Observance). An additional ingredient in the mix was the Erasmian spirit of conciliation that resisted radical solutions of either the European reformations (particularly that of Wittenberg) or the Roman triumphalism that resulted in the Tridentine anathemas. It is, therefore, justifiable to designate George the Bearded as a late – properly speaking the last – heir of the Poděbradian Christian irenicism that strove for the unity of Christianity and of the universal Church. In conclusion, let us restate that it is possible to identify a certain constancy in Poděbradian spirituality and ecclesiastical politics of George of Poděbrady, and of his children and grandchildren, a constancy that might be called variously a fruitful interaction with Franciscanism; or an emphasis on the Catholicity (universalism) of the Church; or a certain continuity of “confessional tolerance.”

(Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David)