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## WHY SHOULD I BECOME A CHRISTIAN? THE “KRISTIAN LEGEND” IN THE CONTEXT OF BYZANTINE THOUGHT <sup>1</sup>

Václav Ježek

University of Prešov, Prešov, Slovakia

**Abstract.** In this brief account we offer a thematic and comparatist interpretation of the legend of monk Kristian in terms of its Christian ideology and philosophy. Our contextualisation and thematic analysis help also in the long run to assess the date of the legend. We ponder the basic question of “why Christianity”, which in dependance on whether it was significant for monk Kristian or not, reveals to us other historical realities of Bohemia and Moravia of his period. There is an internal dynamic but also contradiction in the legend. Monk Kristian perhaps on political motives sets to show how saints Václav and Ludmila are a source of unity and national identity. However, in his task he falls into a contradiction because what was promised was not delivered. And Christianity is anything, but a road to unity, accord, power that he promised at the outset, which he betrays in his historical information. At the same time an internal dynamic shows that the humble attitudes of Václav and Ludmila bring about the end goal or fulfil the promises about the worthiness of Christianity and its role, since their miracles and sacrifice unite and harmonise the state and build nationhood. A detailed, in-depth study of the thematic construction of the legend offers material for comparison, especially with for the neighbouring Frankish/German areas. We solve these tasks set in the study by comparing the “Kristian Legend” under research with Byzantine sources.

**Key words:** Saint Václav, Saint Ludmila, Bohemia, Byzantium, sanctity.

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## ПОЧЕМУ Я ДОЛЖЕН СТАТЬ ХРИСТИАНИНОМ? «ХРИСТИАНСКАЯ ЛЕГЕНДА» В КОНТЕКСТЕ ВИЗАНТИЙСКОЙ МЫСЛИ <sup>1</sup>

Вацлав Йежек

Прешовский университет, г. Прешов, Словакия

**Аннотация.** В этом кратком исследовании мы предлагаем тематически сравнительную интерпретацию легенды Кристиана, выраженную в понятиях христианской идеологии и философии. Наша контекстуализация и тематический анализ помогают также определить дату возникновения легенды. Мы размышляем над основным вопросом, почему христианство, которое в зависимости от того, было ли оно значимо или нет для Кристиана, иначе раскрывает нам исторические реалии Богемии и Моравии того времени. Имеется внутренняя динамика, а также противоречие этой легенды. Возможно, Кристиан по политическим соображениям готов показать, как святые Вацлав и Людмила выступают источником единства и национального единства. Однако он в решении своей задачи впал в противоречие, потому что то, что было обещано, им не было передано, тогда как христианство является всем, что угодно, но не дорогой к единству. Как и власть, которую Кристиан обещал осветить вначале, он предал в своей исторической информации. В то же время внутренняя динамика показывает, что уничижительные установки к Вацлаву и Людмиле ведут к конечной цели и выполняют обещания относительно христианства и его роли, тогда как чудеса венценосных правителей и принесенная ими жертва объединяют и гармонизируют государство и созданную национальную символику. Углубленное изучение тематической конструкции легенды предлагает обоснованные материалы для сравнения, в особенности в отношении к соседнему

франко-германскому пространству. Поставленные в исследовании задачи мы решаем путем сопоставления изучаемой «Христиановой легенды» с византийскими источниками.

**Ключевые слова:** Святой Вацлав, Святая Людмила, Богемия, Византия, святость.

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**Introduction.** The purpose of this contribution is to reflect on the so-called “Kristian legend”, in the context of a fundamental question. This fundamental question is “what were, the reasons for accepting Christianity and propagating Christianity in the area of Bohemia/Moravia in the period of saints Ludmila and Václav (For the sake of consistency I will use the Czech versions Ludmila and Václav not Wenceslaus)”. While there are numerous studies on the area of Bohemia/Moravia (roughly contemporary Czech Republic) for the crucial period of the ninth to eleventh centuries, not many of these studies strive to offer a contextual/comparativist, but especially thematic analysis of the legend and the issues at hand. Not many studies offer a thematic exegesis of the events in the legend and use this as a platform for dating the legend itself and for further analysis. Discussions related to Byzantium are usually limited to the context of the Byzantine Christian missionary work itself, without attempting to offer a comparativist contextualisation with Byzantine thought generally and the historical events in Byzantium contemporary with the period of saints Václav and Ludmila. We are guilty also of a rather superficial comparison but at least we attempt to reach some conclusions in the small space we have. We will not discuss similar themes in the other sources on Václav and Ludmila in any detail, which would be impossible in a small paper such as this (even though they are crucial for a future general conclusion on the subject <sup>2</sup>).

An important part of Christian mission is of course education, which is an important aspect of the Christianisation process and education and culture in this context has received attention in scholarship. But generally, we must be careful since education and intellectual pursuits are usually limited to a few people and class of people (rulers usually do not belong to them). There is a long term sub-conscious trend in scholarship to overemphasise the importance of education in the wider population.

We believe that a closer inspection of the dynamics related to paganism and Christianity as portrayed in the legend, will offer new insights into the historical events, but also perhaps to the dating of the legend itself. Comparativist studies are of course complex, and dependent on the criteria used. On a general glance, while Czech or Slovak scholarship has devoted extraordinary attention to this period and the literary works from this period, there are perhaps lacunae which sometimes paradoxically emerge in an over researched topic. For example, the scholar Karbusický in the sixties of the twentieth century, in his work, had highlighted the necessity for a broader comparativist analysis of the literary works from our context, which according to him was prevented also by a Communist ideological platform. He wrote (in the naïve period of the late sixties, where it seemed that the communist hold on society is decreasing-my note): “Not long ago, it was not possible simply to use the rejected comparativist method, which has been characterised as the expression of ‘bourgeoisie cosmopolitanism’, and to show that the ‘so precious to the nation motives’ are actually of Germanic origin and that the entire ‘old Czech legends’ do not originate from any folkish traditions. The presupposed ‘folkish’ aspect of the legends is a testimony, to the fact that throughout entire generations we have worked completely anachronistically, mistakenly with contemporary folkish experiences and projecting these on past material” [28, p. 9].

However, comparativist approaches or exegetical thematic analysis are in danger of various generalisations (in our contribution here it is also a problem) or *apriori* mistaken presumptions. Karbusický himself, just as other scholars have perhaps gone too far in their overt critique of the sources, rejecting them as fabrications and mythologies *just because they appear similar* with other sources. Thus, an author such as the Bohemian chronicler Kosmas,

is rejected for example by the scholar Turek as a completely unreliable source because his composition (Bohemian Chronicle) *resembles* themes from classical Greek works [59, p. 39]. Similarly, the German scholarship tradition of *Verfassungsgeschichte*, which attempted to prove the close alliance of the Bohemian/Moravian context with the *Reich*, could have easily used a comparativist thematic analysis to point to parallels or common themes between various sources.

Here we have to be careful in not going to another extreme in rejecting a tradition just because “themes are similar” to other events or traditions. Here again, for example, Karbusický doubts the historicity of the female figure of “Libuše (Libushe)” mentioned by the Chronicler Kosmas because her life as is described by Kosmas remarkably resembles another historical female and the events of her life. He shows that the motive of Kosmas, where Libuše has other two sisters (Kazi and Teta), is found elsewhere <sup>3</sup>. And that the life events remarkably resemble another notable woman contemporary with the period of Kosmas, a certain Matilda of Tuscany (1046–1115). Karbusický then compares and finds a remarkable resemblance between the events and the power of the two women Libuše and Matilda, doubting therefore the authenticity of the former [28, p. 28].

Here we can project this line of thought also to saints Ludmila or the mother of Saint Václav Drahomíra, and easily find parallels with similar themes elsewhere of holy females and their role in the state. The problem is that “**similarity**” has to be defined and we cannot simply reject authenticity, just because there is the remarkable resemblance in issues and life events. Therefore, an internal thematic study of the narrative itself has to be combined with comparativist methods to perhaps offer a more balanced interpretation. In the following account, we will not enter the discussion of the dating of the legend of monk Kristian, neither into the sources the legend uses or relates to, but only offer an internal analysis with comparisons with common themes from Byzantium in the overall issue of the emergence of Christianity in the context of Bohemia/Moravia.

**Political and religious centralisation.** It is perhaps important to remind ourselves that there are reasons for writing hagiography and there

are reasons for the fact that some hagiographical accounts were popular or preserved while others fell into oblivion or were forgotten and lost. From a theological point of view writing a saint’s life is usually the result of Divine inspiration. The saint can mystically “reveal” himself or herself and some author will then write an account of such a saint. Or a particular saint is so popular among the public that a ground movement can stir a desire to provide for such an account. Or there can be a political or missionary desire to produce a saint for political or missionary reasons. Whether we adopt a theological or scientific approach does not really matter, because history itself has unpredictable ways of how a particular writer or hagiographical account is preserved. Often the reason why a hagiographical work and its particular saint is preserved or brought to prominence lies in the fact that a monarch or ecclesiastical authority simply sponsored such a work to be created, paid for its production and for its copies. Similarly, as, for example, the reason why Lenin’s works inundated Europe during the period of the cold war was not necessarily because of the merit of Lenin’s work, but because the political authorities printed so many of his works that whether one liked or not, Lenin became an important person to be reckoned with. The ecclesiastical context would see even in this occurrence the hand of God.

The legend of monk Kristian <sup>4</sup> begins with a foreword by a certain Christian brother associated with the name “Kristian” and is devoted to the second bishop of the “Prague church” (Dei Pragensis secundo pontifici Adalberto). Here we are speaking of Saint Adalbert of Prague (died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 997), who is also known as St. Voytech/Voytieh/Vojtěch <sup>5</sup>. It appears that Voytech/Vojtěch was the birth name and Adalbert a name received upon confirmation. Vojtěch seems to be of Slavic origin, while Adalbert is a Germanic name possibly related to the meaning “noble shining” (*adal* – noble, *berth* – shining or bright). However, Vojtěch, Adalbert or another name also linked with this saint-Béla (Hungarian), have also different meanings, and do not necessarily mean the same as the Germanic “noble shining”.

In terms of the Kristian legend, we must keep in mind the central reasons or historical reasons for such a work (and its saint) to be given prominence or preserved, especially, the dynamics

of why and how its protagonists were artificially or not constructed. In any event, it is more than obvious that an emphasis on the protagonists in the legend is related to the nascent process of statehood and unification in one way or another, just as it was similar in other European contexts (for example, saint Stephen of Hungary and so on).

In any case the Germanic designation Adalbert linked with the local Vojtěch can be taken for a description of the political situation and mood in the area of central Czechia of the period, where Slavic and Germanic elements intermingled. It is also interesting that in works written in Latin there was perhaps little attempt at associating the names Ludmila or Václav with existing Latin or Germanic terms/equivalents, instead leaving the Slavic forms more or less as they were (regardless of the date of the composition).

The date of the composition, its sources and authenticity are part of a long standing discussion, which has not ended until recently. The date of the composition has been variously placed from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly, usually authors from the Enlightenment were more critical to the composition. Some authors have gone so far as to identify the legend as one of the earliest if not earliest testimony to Czech literary tradition<sup>7</sup>.

The paradox of the volumes of studies devoted to this theme is that really little has been done in terms of contextualisation<sup>8</sup>.

In any event the legend of monk Kristian is an important testimonial to an increasing importance of the “local saints” Václav and Ludmila. It is also important to mention that the account of Gumpold, the bishop of Mantovia commissioned by Otto II (written around 980 and describing the life of Václav) suggests an external and internal competition for this saint among the local Bohemian and Germanic structures. Here we are not going to discuss the question of the dependence of monk Kristian on this work or Crescente fide.

Otto II (955 – died 7, December, 983), continued a policy of centralisation and monarchic power and interestingly enough married a Byzantine princess Theophano. Here we may note that the centralisation process was perhaps more advanced towards the west than in Bohemia/Moravia in the tenth century. Otto perhaps realised the importance of saints such as Václav for his

policy of unification, or at least that it would be good to pretend that he was a “universal saint” (common to all national contexts), especially after Bohemia and Poland submitted to him in 979. Claiming a universalism of a particular saint is good political policy (the same is the case with Adalbert, see below). The difficulties of Adalbert’s position in terms of his bishopric in Bohemia are also related to this context. The Kristian legend is addressed to Adalbert, implying something like “here we have saint Václav and Ludmila” who are just as unpopular (as presumably you are-Adalbert).

All the more interesting is that monk Kristian (see below), complains that the locals in Bohemia do not value their saints Václav and Ludmila as would be the case, if they were from neighbouring regions. Here a context emerges of competition over these saints, but also perhaps betrays something of the date of the composition of the Kristian legend. If indeed, according to monk Kristian, the saints were not “known” or “valued” in Bohemia this would move the legend to earlier periods. There is a growing tendency to emphasise the pagan and morally difficult environment of Bohemia in this period, which would mean that Christianity or the cult of saints for that matter would have a hard time making inroads into the psyche of the area. We may note here that a tendency to centralise or rather “edit” “various accounts” of a particular saint is also related to a given goal or political/ecclesiastical purpose preventing possible dissenting interpretations.

In the prologue itself monk Kristian, does not deny that there were already existing sources that he encountered. We are informed that there are many “contradictory”, “not complete” or “differing” (“diversis compositionibus et non pleniter disertam reperiens”) accounts of the lives of Ludmila<sup>9</sup> and Václav<sup>10</sup> and that consequently there was a need to compose a complex account. Here there is a referral to Ludmila as the grandmother “of blessed memory” (“beate memorie Liudmila”) and Saint Václav as the “martyred blessed Václav” (“Passionem beati Wenceslai”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. Prol. 1, 1–10 [29, p. 8])<sup>11</sup>. Here the idea of a “complex” account can should offer us hints of the date and purpose of the composition. The emphasis on the Moravian missions at the outset of the legend can testify to a tendency to emphasise the Byzantine connection

or Slavic environment, which either can mean an earlier composition or later composition (if there was an attempt to protect the Byzantine Slavic context of Christianity in Bohemia). A prologue emphasising the “need to set the record straight” is an important hagiographical marker. The writer sets a distance between his “objectivising” attempts and various “versions” or misrepresentations. This betrays a later redaction a “rethinking” of the themes according to some paradigm. The tendency to balance the Byzantine mission could also betray ties to the Sázava monastery.

The hagiographic emphasis, especially, the terms “blessed” should lead us to further reflection. While in terms of general world hagiographical tradition the story of Sts. Václav and Ludmila appear as rather ordinary<sup>12</sup>, we can highlight that the story is from a political point of view interesting at least in its contextual situation. Thus, Václav and Ludmila are saints, but also rulers. They are further rulers in a semi-Christianised environment, which is further divided between Eastern, Latin-Germanic-Frankish and south-eastern influences, characterised by competition between local languages, and, finally, in the environment, where the kingdom faces many dangers from its neighbours, and, perhaps, is undergoing various efforts at centralisation. This can limit our scope of hagiographical comparison and analysis.

The striking characteristic of Václav and Ludmila is their willingness to accept death without the need to “fight back”. Here a certain saint Emmeramm of Regensburg (7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries), resembles saint Václav in his humility and overt acceptance of death [4]<sup>13</sup>. The theme of a saint willingly and unjustly subjecting himself to death and torture is an important feature. The legend of Emmeramm also states that he was killed unjustly, (claiming to be the father of a child to protect the lady) and willingly accepted this. Lantpert the killer of Emmeramm also greets peacefully Emmeramm like Václav was greeted and then proceeds to kill him and torture him. The saint who, regardless of the injustice, accepts his fate without defending himself or herself is an important theme here. We can also mention another contemporary saint here that is saint Adelaide (born 931). After being imprisoned and tortured by Berenger of Ivrea, who desired her to marry his son, she married Otto of Germany in

951. After the death of Otto, she quarrelled with Otto II (perhaps in the instigation of Theophano), living with her brother in Burgundy. Her life story is remarkably similar to saint Ludmila, both being “interested” in evangelism.

The account has a patriotic tinge to it, referring to the saints Ludmila and Václav as “new stars who due to their virtues shined over their home nation Czechia/Bohemia and all its people” (“qui velut nova sidera lumine virtutum sua rumpam triam suam Bohemiam cum omni simul gente irradiant”). These patriotic references have traditionally led some scholars to doubt the authenticity of the Prologue, which then play a role in the dating of the composition itself<sup>14</sup>. In any case patriotic references definitely do betray a certain context and ideological background. Here we can mention Coptic ecclesiastical narratives, which in a similar politically and culturally difficult context after the Islamic conquest developed a narrative, emphasising, national continuity, ecclesiastical continuity, martyrdom, and so on, in a context which was set against the new developments<sup>15</sup>.

Elsewhere in the Prologue, interestingly enough, the author mentions that if areas of the Carolingians (Carlingorum) or Lothars (Lutheringorum) had witnessed such saints they would have deemed them in great esteem, whereas “We, who have no saints, and who have only these two, ...behave to them without dignity, ...and even though day to day we see unworthy as we are the miracles they perform, as if in faithlessness remain...” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. Prol. 1, 30–40 [29, p. 10]). The words are a very important statement for determining the purpose and possibly the date of the composition. We have a comparison with the West, and an obvious allusion to the semi pagan context of Bohemia. Why would these “national saints” fall into oblivion? Are we speaking of a period of decreasing local power and increasing foreign pressure? Or perhaps there was a tendency of a local Slavic monk to emphasise these two saints to preserve the local Slavic traditions or liturgical forms? This would place the composition within the orbit of Slavic monasticism in Bohemia or Moravia. Here Sázava as a place congenial to both Slavic and Latin Christianity, with certain independence could have been contextually similar to the mindset of this Kristian<sup>16</sup>.

Interestingly the author has no problem in emphasising the Byzantine connection of Christianity in Moravia, and at the same time stating that Moravia accepted Christianity already “in the time of Augustine” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 1, 1 [29, p. 12]). This would suggest a reconciling attitude, not preferring or ideologically supporting one form of Christianity to the other, or, perhaps, a period of time, when the legend was composed and when Byzantine/Slavic influences were so small or extinct that remembering them did not endanger any official line or policy. A contrast is made with Bohemia, which appears slower in the acceptance of Christianity.

Further, Bulgaria is mentioned, which as is emphasised in the legend also accepted Christianity much earlier. The author of the legend is therefore not embarrassed to speak of Christianity appearing *before* the Byzantine mission in Moravia. Another possibility is that this could perhaps also imply an author who has no problem either with Latin or Greek forms of Christianity, but rather with a greater problem of the still existing paganism, which was probably not eradicated. What is also important, is that monk Kristian does not mention Methodius, but Cyril, who came to Moravia after Christianity formed in Bulgaria. Here the emphasis only on Cyril is very strange and at the same time important. Could it mean that the legend was sanctioned by those ecclesiastical clerics who simply did not want to mention Methodius and his ecclesiastical role? Obviously, this would imply that the legend was either produced or at least sanctioned in a period when the region of Bohemia was firmly in the control of ecclesiastical structures from the west and any associations with Methodius deemed not important. I am not sure if scholars have sufficiently emphasised this aspect. The mission from Byzantium is described almost as Cyril’s one-man affair.

The Byzantine mission happened during a specific period of Byzantine history. It is a subject of discussion to determine what the Byzantines expected or did not expect from foreign areas bordering Byzantium or in some form of relationship. Here it suffices to mention Photios concept developed in his *Epanagoge Aucta*, where he believes in a kind of duality of power between the Patriarch and the Emperor. Here we read: “Since the constitution, analogous

to man, consists of parts and members, the highest and most necessary parts are the emperor and the patriarch. For this reason, the peace and happiness of the subjects in soul and body lie in the agreement and harmony of kingship and priesthood in all respects” (*Epanagoge Aucta* 2, 8 [17, p. 59–60]; see also [20, p. 137]).

This neat political expression of Photios period is perhaps suited to the Byzantine period of his day. But we may wonder here, whether we can adapt this thinking to the context of Bohemia or Great Moravia, where it seems the power of the Church/Archbishop and the ruler was constantly in the state of flux or undetermined as is implied by the legend of monk Kristian but also other sources. Often in the absence of functional ecclesiastical authorities, the ruler provided for stability or vice versa. The Byzantine church/state relationship of the period of Photios was undoubtedly dependent on the structures of the state at that period of Photios and Byzantium. It is important to realise that various medieval ideologies of state and church could function in one environment, but not in another, regardless of the desires by the rulers or states involved.

We may speculate that emphasising the sainthood of a ruler such as St. Václav or St. Ludmila and supporting their cult would provide an easy solution to the rather confusing ecclesiastical situation in the given area. The ruler would be a saint and ruler at the same time relativising the need for a permanent or solid patriarch-emperor context/relationship, where it was perhaps obviously not possible to produce one. Of course, the models proposed by Saint Photios have various modifications through history. Earlier the emperor Justinian seems to produce the same ideology. In his *Novella VI*, he writes: “The greatest blessings of mankind are the gifts of God which have been granted us by the mercy on high: the priesthood and the imperial authority”. (“Μέγιστα ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ δῶρα θεοῦ παρὰ τῆς ἄνωθεν δεδομένα φιλανθρωπίας ἱερωσύνη τε καὶ βασιλεία”) ([11, p. 35.27–29]; see also [43, p. 35]). The intimate relationship between state and church is a theme running throughout the history of southern Europe or the Middle East for that matter. The important issue to comment is the role of pagan religions as a cohesive force in such states as Bohemia or Moravia. It appears likely that pagan religion perfectly supplied the locals’

religious needs and perhaps nascent Christianity was simply a politically advantageous religion to formally accept by the various rulers. Generally, an intimate relationship of also pagan religion and political power has a long history going on to the foundations of the Roman republic.

Here an emphasis on the sainthood of a ruler could be a rather cunning way of emphasising the church authority without the existence of a visible or stable ecclesiastical succession or administration and would easily also serve to confirm the legitimacy of the Bohemia dynastic and political structures associated with saint Václav. It is not a surprise that shortly after his death Saint Václav becomes a national icon, being used both by his enemies and even “killers”, undoubtedly as a way of legitimising their various aspirations or claims. A saint legitimises a dynastic line regardless of its various rulers and their status<sup>17</sup>.

Ludmila is followed in popularity quickly just as saint Václav. In other words, whatever political “mess” there was at that time, associating oneself with the legacy of Saint Václav and Ludmila would be enough to gain consistency. We must remember here that the area was still semi-pagan at that time and that adopting “high” theologies such as stating that Bohemia was a “Godly realm” would be difficult. For example, in the empire of Charlemagne the structures would be perhaps more solidified in this context and it would be much easier to stress a duality of power between the church and state in the tradition of Photios.

Even so, the situation of the Empire of Charlemagne has a remarkable resemblance to the Bohemian context. S. Moesch observes: “There was time for Charlemagne to establish himself, as a powerful sole ruler, before acquiring the imperial title. In the generation of Charles the Bald, by contrast, there were intense rivalries. Rival Carolingians strove to win royal resources, and, throughout his reign, Charles the Bald, coexisted with brothers, and nephews with separate territories. He reigned for thirty seven years and was emperor only in the last two years of his reign. Charles the Bald was in a much less secure position” [36, p. 3].

Other political/religious ideologies can also be mentioned here, which apart from Byzantine notions could have been prevalent. There could be

a tendency to emphasise ecclesiastical authority over the secular or vice versa. The Kristian legend mentions that, Moravia converted to Christianity in the period of Saint Augustine (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 1, 1 [29, p. 12]). In an analysis of Augustine’s thought, H.-X. Arquillière argues that in the *De Civitate Dei*, there is a thought taken over into Merovingian times, which stresses the primacy of the church over kingship<sup>18</sup>. In this sense, we can recall the difficulties at mission all protagonists have in Bohemia, which would undoubtedly produce disrespect to the powers of the state or rulers. It must have been more than obvious to people like Saints Cyril and Methodius, Vojtěch or anybody else at that time that any Christianity applied by the ruler would be placed on very shaky ground, and perhaps it would be better, if the church kept a safe distance from political structures at least ideologically. An emphasis on the power of the church would seem more logical.

Here it would be desirable to mention the “sudden” popularity of the Czech-Church-Slavonic version of Gregory the Great’s (540–604) homilies on the Gospel<sup>19</sup>. The appearance and popularity of this work are rather strange in the context of Bohemia. The translation of Gregory’s homilies was possibly made in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in the above mentioned Benedictine monastery at Sázava. Later this work became popular in the Kievan Rus. While we may state that perhaps the Benedictine monks found it naturally congenial to translate this work of a Benedictine Pope, it is highly likely that part of the reason for this translation also lies in the congeniality with the political ideas of Gregory and his opinion about Church-State relationships, even if the work itself is an exegesis of the Bible. While the homilies were popular in monastic circles as a theological work, we may also state that part of the popularity was also perhaps linked with the political/ecclesiastical theories of Gregory, which were either referred in the exegesis itself or in other works of Gregory, which could have also circulated in the same context. The question remains to be asked, what were the ideas of Gregory on the Church/State relationship?

His political ideas are the source of controversy amongst scholars, with some stressing his alleged emphasis on the spiritual/ecclesiastical power, while others claiming that

he also had respect for temporal/political powers. Interestingly enough Gregory is an authority who advocated strongly the respect needed to be given to the Emperor and ruler. M. dal Santo mentions in this regard a letter, which Gregory wrote to the Emperor Maurice in October 596. Here we read: “Almighty God, who has made Your Majesty the guardian of the peace of our Church, preserves you with the very faith which you preserve in the unity of the priesthood, and when you subject your heart humbly beneath the yoke of heavenly piety, through heavenly grace, it is brought about that you tread on your enemies with the foot of fortitude”. (“Omnipotentus Deus, qui pietatem, uestram, pacis ecclesiasticae fecit esse custodem, ipsa uos fide seruat, quam uos in sacerdotali unitate seruatis, cumque supernae pietatis iugo cor humiliter subditis, caelesti gratia agitur, ut hostes, uestros pede, fortitudinis prematis”) [52, p. 57; 32, p. 459]. Gregory considered that the Empire was a “holy commonwealth” (*sancta res publica*) [52, p. 58]. According to M. dal Santo, Gregory appreciated the Emperor as “the most pious of princes” (*piisimos dominos*), whose office was bound up with the purposes of God [52, p. 58].

**The rationale for the acceptance of Christianity.** In terms of scholarship not much attention has been given to the internal intellectual argumentation of sources related to Christian apologia. We believe that a reassessment of internal apologetic Christian ideology in a legend such as the legend of Kristian can yield new insights into the legend itself and its meaning. The authors handling of Christian themes and theology can betray information regarding the work and its contents or audience. This is especially important to assess in areas where Christianity was not the predominant religion and where the hagiographic aim is to develop a rationale.

The fluid and flexible ecclesiastical situation in Bohemia or Moravia at the time of Václav and Lyudmila raises further questions, as to why accept Christianity at all, and risk all sorts of problems both in the realm and outside of it. Was it not simply easier to maintain a pagan framework? Here we come to the obvious conclusion, which was reached by many – Christianity offered culture and education.

Indeed, monk Kristian, speaks of Cyril in the context of Moravia, claiming that the reason why he promulgated the vernacular language,

was because they did not know Latin or Greek, otherwise he would have not dared to introduce the vernacular. “But because I saw that the local people have hard napes and that they are uneducated and do not know about Gods ways, I found, only this means, with which the Almighty God inspired my heart and through, which I have gained many followers for Him” (“Si enim quivissem ullomodo subvenire populo illi, ut ceteris nacionibus, lingua Latina vel Greca, omnimodo id non presumpsissem. Sed cernens populum dure cervicis fore et omnino ydiotas et ignaros viarum Dei, solum hoc ingenium Omnipotentem cordi meo inspirante comperi, per quod eciam multos illi acquisivi”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 1, 34–35 [29, p. 14]). Monk Kristian states that then Svatopluk with his evil designs conditioned the fall of the ruler (without mentioning the name) and permitted the inhabitants of the land to remain half pagan half Christian, a situation Svatopluk supported (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 1, 70 [29, p. 16]). This produced a curse on the land from which “until now” the land has not recovered.

Then the legend of Kristian compares immediately this situation with the Bohemian situation earlier on before the ruler Bořivoj (Borivoi), who united the area. Before Bořivoj there was a peasant of some kind who was wise called Přemysl (Premisl), who began to rule the area after marrying some propheticess, who also foretold that he would become a ruler. The theme of a ruler rising to power from humble peasant origins can be found in many contexts, and traditionally Czech scholarship has thus relativised the historicity of this account. However, this is a mistake, since rising to power from humble origins is a common situation in earlier ages, and does not necessarily mean any kind of historical or literary dependence. For example, it is possible to mention Basil the Macedonian, who coincidentally also lived in the same milieu (811–886), who also rose to power from peasant origins. As John Skylitzes says, there is also an important semipagan woman, who foretells Basil that he will become a ruler emperor and he promises her to appoint her as a mistress of that area if that is fulfilled ([24, p. 123]; see also [26, p. 124]). Basil is further described by Skylitzes as nothing less than a liberator, since the emperor Michael squandered all money on various immoral people, games, and so on, and



also on “transvestitites” (κατέπαιζε δὲ καὶ τὸ Θεῖον μετὰ μαρῶν καὶ ἀσελγῶν ἀνδρογύνων) ([24, p. 131]; see also [26, p. 129]).

As to the legend of Kristian, it continues: “But Czech Slavs, who are settled under the very Arktur and who are devoted to the worshipping of idols, lived as a horse beyond control of a bridle, lawless, without a prince or ruler without a city, move around randomly as dumb animals, only the shear lands they occupied” (“At vero Sclavi Boemi, ipso sub Arcturo positi, cultibus ydolatrie dediti, velut equus infrenis sine lege, sine ullo principe vel rectore vel urbe, uti bruta animalia sparsim vagantes, terram solam incolebant”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 2, 1 [29, p. 16]). Here there is a narrative *topos*. A country living without God is at the same time a country full of ignorant, uneducated barbarians, “without governance”. From the perspective of Christian authors, we may wonder, what would be the advantages, they saw in “accepting Christianity”. Here, perhaps, as elsewhere in other works the advantages would be “order”, “rule”, “governance”. A kind of chain reaction could have appeared: one ruler accepted Christianity, because it was accepted by another neighbouring one, and this in turn legitimise rule.

The Bohemian ruler Bořivoj (Borivoi) as monk Kristian recounts was a pagan, who happened to visit Moravia (Svatopluk), and was seated amongst pagans in a humble position as “pagans do” in front of the table on the ground<sup>20</sup>. Here we must add that the situation does not mean automatically, that all were Christians at Svatopluk’s table (which confirms the other statement, stating that Svatopluk tolerated both Christianity and paganism at his table), but simply that Bořivoj sat “traditionally” as the pagans sit. In any event importantly, Methodius notices him, his humbleness, and tells him that he should be ashamed of himself by sitting with pig herders and not with “princes”.

The next dialogue is a fascinating one, setting the scene for the basic question: “Why would I consider to endanger myself in this issue, or in other words what possibly good can there be for me in the Christian religion?” “Methodius the bishop stated, If you renounce idols and evil spirits which dwell in them, you will become a master of your masters and all your enemies will be subjugated to your will and your posteriority will grow each day, will be like a massive river,

into which various tributaries flow”. (“At ille: Quid, inquit, ob huiuscemodi rem periculi pacior vel quid boni michi conferet Christianitatis ritus? Si, inquit presul Metudius abrenunciaveris ydolis et inhabitantibus in eis demonibus, dominus minorum tuorum efficeris, cunctique hostes tui subicientur dicioni tue et progenies tua cottidie augmentabitur velut fluvius maximus, in quo diversorum confluent fluenta rivulorum”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 2, 30–40 [29, p. 18]). Later, after tribulations, the “prophecy” of Methodius comes fulfilled, and the prince gained further power and children (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 10 [29, p. 24]). The acceptance of God or the true religion as a condition for successful rule and fertility is a famous narrative. We may be cynical here, and if this account is historically accurate one would imagine the state of mind of Bořivoj, who sees his power dwindling and perhaps seeing the successes in Moravia, but also the possibilities of alliances, all of which perhaps went a long way in convincing him that “believing in the true God” results in success.

Bořivoj accepts Christianity and was baptised by Methodius, and monk Kristian makes a point that before leaving Methodius “fully educated Bořivoj in the faith of Christ” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 2, 55 [29, p. 20]). This note on education can be viewed as perhaps a defence against possible existing claims of the raw and uneducated reasons for accepting Christianity. Bořivoj accepts being part of a new “political” or noble community “sitting” with a true political commonwealth.

Upon his return Bořivoj faces opposition towards Christianity and returns back to Svatopluk to Moravia, and to bishop Methodius (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 2, 65–75 [29, p. 20]). Given the promises of unity and power by Methodius upon the baptism of Bořivoj this must have been difficult to understand for a person such as Bořivoj, who had to seek refuge. Similarly, we read in the *Annales Bertiniani* that the king of the Bulgars received holy baptism and faced opposition by his nobles, and “they incited the people against him so they would slay him”. The king prevails, “however, killed fifty-two of the nobles who had especially incited the people against him”. The original text is more elaborated: “Rex Bulgarorum, qui praecedente anno, Deo inspirante et signis at que afflictionibus in populo

regni sui monente, christianus fieri meditatus fuerat, sacrum baptismus cepit. Quod proceres sui moles te ferentes, concitaverunt populum adversuseum, ut illum interficerent”) ([2, p. 85]; see also [3, p. 150]). Another similar paradigm can be mentioned here in the form of the conversion of the Lazi. Similarly to Bořivoj, there was the story in the period of Justin of a certain Tzath (ruler) of the Lazi, who was a pagan and who ruled the Lazi in Persia, but was subject to a certain (king) Kavad of Persia. As we read in the Chronicle of Malalas, that Tzath ran away from Persia and came to Emperor Justin in Constantinople to beseech him to appoint a ruler over the Lazi, and he would then become a Christian: “Accepted by the emperor, *he was instructed* and became a Christian and took as wife a Byzantine woman... after being crowned by Justin, the emperor of the Romans” (...καὶ δεχθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφωτίσθη, καὶ χριστιανὸς γενόμενος ἠγάγετο γυναῖκα Ῥωμαίαν... στεφθεὶς παρὰ Ἰουστίνου, βασιλέως Ῥωμαίων) ([23, p. 413]; see also [55, p. 121–123])<sup>21</sup>.

The Byzantine historian John Skylitzes, mentioning the dramas regarding the conversion of the Bulgarian ruler, in the period of Michael III and Theodora, speaks of “second thoughts” in the mind of the Bulgarian leader, who being initiated into the knowledge of Christian mysteries still speculated. Here Skylitzes account would seem more realistic and true for such situations. Bořivoj, “gladly” accepting faith or for that matter any other Bohemian or Moravian ruler is undoubtedly a literary incursion. Skylitzes mentions that after the return of his sister from captivity in Constantinople (where she became a devout Christian) “the Bulgar ruler kept faith with his erroneous beliefs, clinging to his own religion even though he had been instructed in and informed all about the divine mysteries” (ἀλλ’ ἔτι τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐφύλλατεν ἀπιστίαν, τῆς οἰκείας θρησκείας ἐξηρητημένος) ([24, p. 90]; see also [26, p. 91]). Skylitzes clearly and perhaps realistically portrays the situation, the Bulgarian ruler for various political reasons (including the imprisonment of his sister) accepted Christianity, and at the first occasion of political expediency simply jettisoned this faith. However, Skylitzes continues that after a famine struck his land the ruler reverted to Christianity<sup>22</sup>. He also continues to give another reason for the Bulgarian

rulers’ desire to convert to his religion. Boris commissioned some monk to paint a terrifying scene of some sort in his palace. He commissioned some monk to paint such a scene expecting a theme linked with hunting which he enjoyed. Instead, the monk painted a terrifying scene of the second coming of Christ. This was also an inspiration for Boris to accept the faith (παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπισκόπου τὰ θεῖα μυστήρια ἁωρὶ τῶν νυκτῶν τοῦ θεοῦ μεταλαμβάνει βαπτίσματος, τοῦτο δ’ ἐγνωκότες οἱ τοῦ ἔθνους ἄρχοντες, καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τὴν τῆς θρησκείας μεταβολὴν) ([24, p. 91]; see also [26, p. 91]).

In any event, monk Kristian makes the point that Bořivoj used this occasion of emigration for furthering his knowledge of Christian faith (perfeccius doctrinam Christi nanciscitur). This emphasis on education is again an interesting feature and testifies to the intention by the author of stressing this aspect from one reason or another (*Kristiánova Legenda. 2, 75–80* [29, p. 22]).

Interestingly, the legend emphasises that the people rose against Bořivoj with one voice and with one mind, since he departed from the faith of the fathers and accepted the “unheard of” law of sanctity related to Christianity. Even if the author here exaggerates this unified opposition to Bořivoj, the fact remains that it is an important indication for dating the work and for the situation at hand. Here regardless, of the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius or even Christian missions before the period of Saints Cyril and Methodius it is obvious that Christianity had a hard time in being adopted in these areas regardless of political pressures either from the West, South-East.

The reference to “unanimous” opposition towards Christianity is also important and the reference to “renewing the ancient battle”. The text reads: “When the perfidious people saw this (the acceptance of Christianity by Bořivoj), they renewed the ancient war. In the entire Bohemian nation, they incited a rebellion against the ruler (principis – here the Czech translation always place the term ‘kníže’, which is not problematic in itself, but may in fact misrepresent the situation projecting later titles and functions to this period), because he departed from the customs of the father and accepted a new and unheard of Christian law of sanctity. They rose against him in concord and with one mind, attempting to throw him out of the country, even to kill him” (“Que cernens

perfidus chelidrus, propriis armis sumptis antiqua bella repetit. Populum cunctum Boemorum in furorem principis accendit, eo quod paternos mores relinqueret et novam atque inauditam sanctitatis legem Christianorum arriperet. Surgunt adversus eum uno animo eademque sententia suisque eum a finibus perturbare conantur, seu eciam vitam auferre moliantur”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 2, 65–74 [29, p. 20]). The statement speaks political volumes about the character of the area and the pitfalls of introducing Christianity. A remarkably similar statement appears in Skylitzes, who mentioning the conversion of Boris to Christianity also states: “When the rulers of the people and the common folk learned of his change of religion, they rebelled against their leader and sought to kill him” (κατεξάνισταντε τοῦ ἄρχοντος καὶ ἀνελεῖν ἐσπουδάζον). As far as we can tell this similarity has not been noted by scholars. However, in contrast to Bořivoj, who had to flee, Boris and a few followers manage to repel the rebellious people by “the sign of the cross” (περὶ αὐτὸν ὀλίγον ὄντων τρεψάμενος, τοῦ σταυρικοῦ τύπου προηγουμένου) ([24, p. 91]; see also [26, p. 92]). In any event the conversion importantly means “So that is how the whole of Bulgaria converted to the worship of God and the West enjoyed profound peace”. (“Ἡ πᾶσα Βουλγαρία μετερρυθμίσθη πρὸς θεοσεβειαν καὶ ἡ δύσις εἰρήνης καθαρωτάτης ἀπήλαυσε”) ([24, p. 92]; see also [26, p. 92]).

The Kristian Legend then mentions our famous Ludmila, who was the wife of Bořivoj. She is not portrayed as a woman, who suddenly accepted faith, but as a woman, who fervently worshipped pagan idols and then just with the same intensity worshipped Christian Gods. Here existing piety is presumably redirected to new goals. “He had a wife called Ludmila, ...And as she was equal to him in the pagan delusion, sacrificing to idols, so she with just the same fervour imitating him in the faith of the Christians, but even more so, she surpassed the virtues of her husband, becoming truly the servant of Christ”. (“Habuit eciam et uxorum nomine Liudmilam... Que sicut par eifuerat in errore gentilitatis, immolando siumlacris, ita et in religione Christiana imitando, immo precellendo virtutes sui viri, facta est vere Christi famula”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 1 [29, p. 24]). The narrative of holy “pairs” of a saintly husband and wife, is a theme appearing in other

hagiographic traditions. Perhaps there is a greater emphasis on the piety of Ludmila than on Bořivoj in the legend<sup>23</sup>. Pair saints can be seen also in other contexts such as for example in relation to Boris and Gleb<sup>24</sup>. Here the hagiographic story of Boris and Gleb and family opposition towards Christianity is related to our context. The two brothers Boris and Gleb are killed by the order of their third brother Svatopluk in 1015, and the story testifies to the authors’ knowledge of the legends related to Ludmila and Václav<sup>25</sup>. A political and hagiographical paradigm emerges, where the leitmotif begins to be propagated, which is the main goal of Christianity “identifying the good and the bad”. Christian rulers are good rulers, non-Christian are bad ones. It must have been obvious to all Christian missionaries that producing a reason for the acceptance of Christianity was pretty much difficult. A pedagogical device emerges for the ordinary folk to understand. Being a Christian means you are a good ruler. Bad rulers are automatically non-believers. The rationale for being Christian emerges on its own through the hagiographical story. Later a development emerges where the good ruler/Christian ruler is therefore the true “national” saint and guarantor of sovereignty.

**Pious versus impious women.** One of the most effective means of providing for a rationale in terms of legends and hagiography is to provide for a strong contrast between evil and good. Whether one is successful or not in producing arguments for Christianity one can always rely on a typographic example, the Christian rulers are good whereas the non-Christian rulers are bad. Thus, whether one understands Christianity or not, one can simply understand that evil equals paganism and good equals Christianity.

Bořivoj as the legend suggests was succeeded by his son Spythinev (Spitigneu), and then Spythinev by his brother Vratislav (Wratislau). Vratislav has a wife called Drahomíra (Dragomir), who was from an area called Stodoran (Ztodor), which was in the orbit of “pagan” Slavs (Sclavorum paganorum), who gave birth to the sons Václav and Boleslav (Wenceslau, Boleslau). From a narrative point of view Kristian sets the stage for a duality. Drahomíra is a pagan in contrast to the pious Ludmila and a description of her follows. Then another duality appears, Václav versus Boleslav, the former pious the latter a murderer

(even though his piety is not so much expressed in one way or another).

Ludmila is described as a pious/religious woman. “Igitur religiosa matrona Liudmila” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 30 [29, p. 26]). There follows a list of all her virtues, including sponsorship of Churches. She was “Pia atque mansueta in cunctis, omnibusque benevolencie fructibus repleta, in elemosinis larga, in vigiliis pernox, in oracione devota, in caritate perfecta, in humilitate profusa, in obsequiis servorum Dei succincta tantum” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 48–50 [29, p. 28]). That is, she “was pious and mild in all things and full of the fruits of kindness, ready to give alms, keeping constant vigils, fervent in prayer, in love perfect, profuse in humility, ready to help the servants of God”. This emphasis on kindness and humility and love of this female reminds us of the importance of mothers and women in Byzantium. One can mention the high Byzantine author Michael Psellos, who elaborates on the femininity combined with “piousness” of the women he discusses especially in his funeral orations. Little research of the degree of convergence between being holy and feminine has been done. Even at first glance reading the legend seems to go out of its way to emphasise this piousness and there is an implication that Drahomira is almost like a male principle (in terms of her cold bloodedness) [37].

Saint Ludmila in some thematic respects resembles the fate of the Byzantine Theodora. Theodora faces a conspiracy of her brother and son, and we are told by Skylitzes, “Finding her reproaches intolerable (and Bardas not deviating in the least from his goal), they decided to rid themselves of her too, so that in the future they could do whatever without let or hindrance. This she perceived (for she was able to observe and to conjecture), but she did not think, she should take any counter measures, because she had a horror of killing and bloodshed” (φόνους καὶ χύσεις αἱμάτων ἐκφεύγουσα) ([24, p. 96]; see also [26, p. 96]).

Further: “The empress Theodora was in the habit of going to the sacred church of the Mother of God at Blachernae both to worship and to bathe with her daughters”. On one occasion when the emperor and Bardas, his nephew, knew that she was visiting there, they sent Petronas (who as the narrative mentioned above, was her brother)

to subject her and her daughters, to monastic tonsure. For the time being they banished them to the palace known as Ta Karianou (καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὰ Καριανοῦ ἀνακτόρις τέως περιορίζουσιν), confiscated all the wealth they possessed and stipulating that henceforth they were to live as private citizens, not in imperial style. But Theodora departed this life not long after that: the emperor Basil subsequently her body and her daughters to remain in the Mamme monastery, which was renamed Gastria ([24, p. 97]; see also [26, p. 98]).

We are told by monk Kristian that Václav is given an education by Vratislav, in the “laws of God” and “writing” on the castle in Budeč (in lege divina litteris imbuendum tradiderat in civitatem, que Budecz) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 70 [29, p. 28]). Václav according to the legend is given over for further instruction to Ludmila (because he was not yet an adult). As it was said, Michael Psellos is here, perhaps, the most poignant author, who would emphasise the role of the mother in education [35, p. 59.5b]. The role of the mother, grandmother or any other female in terms of education is undoubtedly related to Byzantine thought. The implication in any event is that “you do not become a Christian out of nowhere”<sup>26</sup>, being good means being educated, in the Byzantine context instructed by a mother, grandmother or any other female.

Perhaps an intention of manufacturing an evil opposition to Ludmila, is confirmed by how the account speaks of the envy of Drahomíra (Dragomir) the mother of Václav against Ludmila, and her fear of intrigues by the latter against her. This is rather strange, since we can imagine that automatically the succession would go through the sons of Drahomíra, and it would be unlikely that Drahomíra would fear intrigues from Ludmila. Perhaps, the story betrays a deeper problem related to faith, where the division was not in terms of dynastic problems, but related to the Christian fraction (represented by Ludmila) against pagan traditions promulgated by Drahomíra. In any case the duality is emphasised by the stress on Cain and Abel, and evil women such as Jezebel. The role of Drahomira is also negative in the Second Slavic legend of St. Václav [21].

Václav has a dream which he himself interprets and sees the death of Ludmila through conspiracy. Importantly, he interprets his dream also to mean that “the priesthood given to our

protection will be sorrowfully chased out of the country, and that it will without reason lose its possessions by the actions of his mother, who hates the living faith” (cleri nostro inclusi tutamine miserabilem prefigit e regno expulsionem tociousque substancie non debitam amissionem. Enim vero execrabilis memorie genitrix mea secte vitali) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 155 [29, p. 34]).

The account specifies that he had wonderful interpretative abilities combined with prophetic abilities. “In his clever prediction/premonition his spirit knowledge able of the truth was not mistaken, but in complete accord with his interpretations, of the destruction of the said matrona, about the cruel expulsion of the priesthood, which has from various close areas gladly accepted his rule or rather his great generosity”. (“Hac denique sagacis coniectura predivinacionis mens veri conscia minime frustratur, sed ut interpretacionis congrua sonuerunt indicia erga iam scripte perempcionem matrone clerique longo adiacencium ambitu regionum in eius subieccionem”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 3, 166 [29, p. 34]).

Interestingly enough the account betrays that those priests expelled were from “neighbouring areas”. These could have included various missionaries from Byzantium (and other close areas) or anyone from a neighbouring region. It is also possible that since they were from neighbouring areas, their expulsion was not the result of an ideological battle, but simply from the fact that they were somehow uncomfortably set with some ruler or the new ruler. Perhaps, these aligned themselves too closely with the ruler and were expelled on account of this. They were attracted by his “generosity” and not because of some other ideological reason. The emphasis on the expulsion of clerics is also very interesting. In terms of expulsions of this type, we can state that the Bohemian/Moravian context is unique<sup>27</sup>. In any event, it is possible to speak of various phases of expulsions, from Bohemia, from Moravia and so on.

Needless to say, the kind of fluid and conflicting period of competing Christianity and paganism resembles other contexts such as for example, the Bulgarian one. Here a similar situation arises with Christianity being used or utilised in political calculations such as was the case in the period of Khan Boris (852–889).

The situation politically was similar, since just as in the southern context so in the

Bohemian/Moravian context, there were strong and powerful neighbours (Bulgaria – Byzantium, Frankish Empire), a process of centralisation and unification of various ethnic groups (in Bulgaria the Slavs and Bulgarians). T. Nótári offers the reasons for the acceptance of Christianity in the Bulgarian context “through, the clergy loyal to the prince he would be able to influence the population, and the centralised ecclesiastical organisation could be instrumental in driving back the Bulgarians; secondly, Christian religion seemed to provide a channel for merging the Slavs and the Bulgarians; thirdly, the Christian rulers wide power made known to Boris both in Byzantium and the Frankish Empire seemed undoubtedly tempting to the khan” [41, p. 446].

If we accept that pagan religion had its priesthood in one form or another, that there were possibly ethnic and national pagan religions, further a priesthood aligned with the local rulers, accepting Christianity in place of paganism would not make much sense. Paganism could have easily played a role as a unifying religion, a religion supporting the power of the ruler, a religion which unified various ethnic or rational groups, and as a unifying force in opposition to the pressures of neighbouring powers. These reasons therefore cannot explain the rapid or successful emergence of Christianity. Boris I was not in a similar position as Rastislav, since his neighbour was Byzantium itself, and thus we can understand that Boris I speculated at first and decided to accept Christianity from the Franks and not the Byzantines. Meeting Louis the German, the Eastern Frankish ruler in 862 in Tulln, he promised support of Bulgarian troops against the Moravians and expected Frankish missionaries in Bulgaria to begin work ([2]; cit. by [15, p. 119]).

We do not have the space to deal with the Bulgarian context, but we may mention that in the interaction between the Bulgarians and the Byzantines and the Latins, some ideas as to the role of Christianity for the Bulgarians emerged [42, p. 51]. For example, the letter of Patriarch Photios to Boris does mention that cooperation between state and Church is agreeable and can produce harmony (homonoia)<sup>28</sup>.

Whether this would be convincing or not is a difficult question. Does the state need religion as a partner? Perhaps we can argue that, for example, in pagan Rome, there was no need to form

partnerships between state and church because religion was more or less conflated with the state: state officials were at the same time priests and so on, the population preserved piety (*pietas*) as a precondition for success in the state. Instead of partnerships there was the relationship between God and Rome and not between Rome and the Church. Of one *urbs aeterna* taking and unifying all supported by Jove. The Roman ideas of unity seemed to avoid an overt emphasis on religion as a unifying force [6, esp. p. 434].

In relation to the troubles the Bulgarian ruler faced against him Pope Nicholas had no doubt that these were “on account of the Christian religion” (*propter Christianum religionem*) ([38, p. 593]; see also [49]). The Bulgarian ruler prevailed and in contrast to the Bohemian context the “Christian king” firmly established his rule. B.A. Todorov rightly states the importance of the emphasis on conversion of the entire Bulgarian people not only the king here<sup>29</sup>. In the Bohemian context, it would seem to be difficult to find a similar reference.

The prophetic voice of the ruler and his interpretative abilities, serve here to enhance the idea of the willingly suffering servant, “who knows” that he or she will suffer or die, predicts this and yet does nothing about it. It is possible to suggest that this willingness and full acceptance of one’s fate is typical for literary compositions of our context. Saint Vaclav’s willingness to die and to the last moment be passive about his fate is remarkable and needs to be stressed. Foreknowledge and prophetic interpretation in the political context of Byzantium do appear often in this regard. The historical works of, for example, Michael Psellos (especially the *Chronographia*) [34], Skylitzes or other authors betray an interplay of miraculous occurrences, God’s will, and divine interventions in the political careers of various Byzantine rulers. In the Bohemian/Moravian context prophetic elements in relation to political rule, combined with a kind of semi pagan/Christian context appear also in such later works as Kosma’s *Chronicle*. Kosmas has no problem associating even pagan prophecies or traditions with later good Christian rule.

A similar combination of pagan and Christian elements could be successfully combined in terms of providence, good fortune or prophetic contexts in relation to rule or military requirements as is also shown in, for example, a military manual

from Byzantium, from the tenth century<sup>30</sup>, written during the reign of Constantine VII (945–959), based on a lost work by a certain Leo Katakylas, a high ranking official under Leo VI Constantine’s father. The work recommends what kind of books the ruler should take on his campaign to Anatolia. These include a book on Liturgy (ἡ ἀκολουθία τῆς ἐκκλησίας), and an oneirocritical book (βιβλίον τὸν ὄνειροκρίτην)<sup>31</sup>. Undoubtedly both in the pagan and Christian contexts, dreams, prophecies were important factors. Here there is perhaps a difference since, in the Bohemian context, foreknowledge does not result in changing the course of one’s behaviour but a “pious” acceptance of one’s fate.

On the other hand, in another text of a military nature from the 10<sup>th</sup> century also, called *Constitutiones Tacticae*, by Leo VI, we read: “Nothing about dreams seems reliable to me. But, in time, of war, it is useful and even necessary, to fabricate (them) and to persuade the soldiers to believe your dreams that promise victory”. And father: “For, thinking that the dream that you narrate is a portent from God, they will attack the enemy courageously, and steadily, and their bravery will be doubled by their eagerness” ([30, col. 1061A]; see also [33, p. 426]). This latter realism would perfectly sit with the *realpolitik* of the Bohemian/Moravian areas.

In the next chapter of the Kristian legend, the “servant of Christ” Ludmila also foretells the future and called the priest Paul to serve a liturgical service (literally: *Prescia vero Christi, memorata famula futurorum*). As we have stated above, the paradigms here are interesting in themselves, since the Christian “good rulers” presumably know, how to predict future, they know something bad is going to happen “yet they submit to the will of God” so to speak. She “expects” fully what is to come and is “fully reconciled”. The Holy woman attended a service with the said priest, confessed and partook of *the blood and the body of Christ* (“*se corporis et sanguinis*”). This sufficiently unexplored remark (in the sense of liturgical context) by scholars betrays a clear idea of the type of Liturgical service conducted on that occasion and the liturgical situation of that period (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 4, 15 [29, p. 36]). Ludmila is killed, fully accepting her fate by the hands of the killers. We may remark that the emphasis on the humility of Ludmila and saint Václav can

betray a later date of the legend, since an idea of a too succumbing ruler who gladly accepts his Christian duty to die is perhaps a theme developed later or at least emphasised in contexts, where Christianity was already strongly present, and it was only necessary to “fine tune” the idea of self-sacrifice.

After the death of Ludmila<sup>32</sup>, the account states that the perpetrators of the crime, after a brief period of joy, fell into disaccord. Discord is thus portrayed as the consequence of evil (“discordiarum”). The devil is the prince of discord (“principe disordiarum dyabolo”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 4, 75 [29, p. 39]). Later a miracle happens at the site of the tomb of Ludmila, where a scent (suavissimi odoris) arose from her tomb, and this was seen by the “woman ruler who murdered her”. The murdered woman built a basilica over the tomb and the house of Ludmila dedicated to the Archangel Michael, so that the miracle would be attributed to the relics of the saints held in that church and not to Ludmila.

#### **Saint Václav: power of powerlessness.**

Apart from contrasting or offering dualities, a possible avenue of any hagiographical apology is to show that accepting one’s fate can lead to liberation. A defeat is actually a victory. In a sense this does resonate with pagan mentalities, since the idea of “sacrifice” is present in pagan thought. However, in the Christian context it is radically transformed.

Václav is juxtaposed with the humble Ludmila, his election was sanctioned by God. “In that time this was happening, the blessed Václav, who was *elected* through Christ’s inspiration as a ruler... Deep in his memory he held that which he was taught by his teacher of writing, was eager to fulfil in deed what he learned by hearing”. (Hi is ita gestis annuente Christo olim electus dux beatus Wenceslaus... cunctaque, que a pedagogo apicum sibi tradita fuerant, alta memoria revolvens, animo estuanti opere implere cupiebat, quod aure perceperat). The passage is interesting since it links education with conduct. Education leads to proper and virtuous conduct. A mention of the “election” of Václav is also very interesting, since it betrays the manner how he received power. It is rather strange that the election is mentioned here, when there is a discussion of the youth of Václav and presumably his unpreparedness to rule due to age<sup>33</sup>.

Did this election happen before he reached maturity or was this reference a note from the writer mentioned a later event? In an event, the testimony regardless of the date of the legend would confirm to the general perception of the period as a period of fluid governance, with no clear strong central control. A situation of various semi-independent rulers fighting for control and loose political structures, with elements of elections must have been a problem for the effective defence of the regions involved. The centralised monarchic structures, which were forming in the West at that time, posed a great challenge and danger for such areas. The theme of “disunity” or “mutual disagreements” is unsurprisingly prominent also in relation to the hagiographic sources elsewhere.

The political instabilities and other issues that we would expect to lie behind the problems are hidden by a simple Christian dialectic of evil versus Christian values and rulership. The real problem is not politics here, but simply the monkish aspirations of Saint Václav as we are told by the legend.

Thus, the account continues stating, that his mother counselled with some other people: “What will we do, to what shall we turn! Because our ruler, who was raised by us to the throne, was corrupted by priests and became almost a monk, does not permit us to continue with our steep and habitual road of foul ways”. (“Heu, quid agimus, quove nosmet vertemus? Princeps siquidem noster, qui a nobis in regni fastigio sublimatus est, perversus a clericis et ceu monachus factus, per abruptam et avetam viciorum nostrorum semitam nos gradi non sinit”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 5, 10 [29, p. 43])<sup>34</sup>.

The account describes how the various monks and priests of Václav were persecuted and how they were subsequently restricted from reaching him. “Since these godless people attempted to kill his priests and some monks, through whose education he was strengthened”. (“Si quidem et clericos eius et quosdam religiosos, quorum doctrina pise pascabatur, insidiis assiduus impii appetentes”). Interestingly the word “some” (“quosdam”) appears here in the connection with the monks. The context could suggest that we are not speaking here of an opposition against Christianity as such or towards Christian clerics, but to “some” clerics/monks. This could mean

that either there was a conflict between various Christian groups or beliefs, or there was a political reason, where there was opposition to some Christian figures, who were on the wrong side of the barricade. As we have implied perhaps monk Kristian is interpolating an all too simplistic situation here of Christianity versus paganism or evil, whereas the reality could have been more complex. It is more likely that there was a conflict between strands of Christian culture and Václav belonged to one strand whereas his mother and others belonged to another, not speaking of the possibilities of political issues involved. Further, we are told that Václav was forced to hide his little book, “Codicellulumque” (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 5, 30 [29, p. 44]). One is tempted to speculate that this little book, perhaps, contained Slavic letters.

Monk Kristian uses the perceived piety of Václav to argue that his beliefs resulted in him rejecting the powers of his Mother and others. Václav is on a conflict path “because of his beliefs”. As the account continues, this situation evolved into Václav called for his mother and rulers and told them that he would no longer listen to them or be subjected to the irregency. The kind of conflict in terms of regency reminds us here of the Empress Irene and Constantine VI. A conflict emerges between the protagonists, between the various sides, and Václav decides to send away his mother until things settle down.

Importantly, monk Kristian writes: “There was a great discord among them for this matter (Václav’s desire to serve God), but also for other things, among those who remained at the side of the pious ruler and the others, who supported the evil side of the godless female ruler. The counsellors and important men of the country were divided among themselves and the thorns of discord had grown forth till blood was shed. But the side of the just, even though very small, had prevailed above the side of the unjust, as always not unified”. (“Orta est postmodum pro eiusdem rei causa variisque rebus aliis dissidio pergrandis viros inter Ipsos primarios, qui later ducis religios inherebant, et inter reliquos, qui partes nequissimas domine impie iuvabant. Divisique sunt consiliarii in invicem et primates terre, discordiarumque inter eos spine pullulaverunt ad sanguinis usque effusionem. Verum pars iustorum, licet minima foret, prevaluit

tamen adversus partem multimodam, ut semper, iniquorum”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 5, 47–54 [29, p. 44–46]).

Here in this very important paragraph, we see the main argument of monk Kristian. Being against God, being godless automatically results in being in discord and disharmony. Monk Kristian betrays himself in the first line, because he states that the great discord which emerged among them was also because of “other things” and therefore could not have been solely the result of issues of religion (if religion played any role at all for that matter). Possibly, we are simply speaking of a common conflict among rulers or about pressures from succession battles. Monk Kristian, however, sets all solely in the context of a battle between Godlessness and piety. There can be no doubt for those thinking about the role of Christianity, Christianity is here to offer harmony and accord and unity. The smaller side will prevail, Christianity will give the power to prevail, just as it did for Constantine the Great or any other ruler, who will put the cross on his banner.

The result is the exile of the mother of Václav. This perhaps highly political context is garbed by monk Kristian into theological language, claiming that the exile of his mother was an inspiration by the Holy Spirit, which came to Václav: “all this was going on with the help of God”, and his mother was exiled with the most utter embarrassment from the country for her role in the killing of Ludmila. The same theological reasons then lead (the commandment to respect one’s parents) Václav to recall her back from exile, without however restoring her to the former power.

She was exiled to settle issues down and to restore Christian unity and peace. “Since, the mentioned ruler Václav, being conscious of the necessity to establish peace, was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and decided feeling the necessity, to exile his mother, who was the cause of all the anger, so that this exile of hers, and also her godless supporters would serve to calm down the excessive strife/wickedness and to establish peace in the church of Christ, so that all would achieve in knowing the one and the same Master, and possess and learn the true teaching of Christ, and once all was established and would be perceived to be congenial to the peace in all the principdom, and if after the exile and expulsion of the sons of discord, peace would be strengthened, he



would again send for his mother with respect” (“Nam semper memoratus dux Wenceslaus, sollicitus de nanciscenda pace, Spiritus ibi sancto in spirante, corde consilium captavit, quo genitricem suam, que causa tocius nequicie inerat, perturbaret e patria, quatinus ea propulsa cunctisque consentaneis eius viris impiis invicem furor discordiarum sopiretur paxque ecclesie regni accresceret, unum eundemque Dominum cuncti possidentes veram Christi doctrinam perfectissime addicerent, dispositisque cunctis, que ad pacem regni pertinere cernebantur, proturbatis et expulsis filiis discordie, composita quiete, matrem rursus cum honore ad propria revocaret”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 5, 55–70 [29, p. 46]).

This statement appears as a political cry for unity under the banner of one religion. In any event, the sentence “so that all would achieve in knowing the one and the same Master, and possess and learn the true teaching of Christ” (“unum eundemque Dominum cuncti possidentes veram Christi doctrinam perfectissime addicerent”) is strange, suggesting various areas, which were loosely united to each other with no common denominator or unifying, here, religious principle. As if there was no knowledge of the others among the independent or semi-independent regions and their rulers, knowledge would otherwise logically emanate from a unity of faith. Unity of faith means peace. The statement is a strong confirmation that Christ gives a common goal, a common denominator for all otherwise loosely united fractions. The mother of Václav was exiled with all her godless supporters. Therefore, there is a tendency to promote a unified religion and principle and perhaps also unity in the Church itself. Prosperity means one Church, one true Orthodoxy, the destruction of heretics (although here in the context of Bohemia all were somehow unknowledgeable of Christ and therefore the discourse was not Orthodox versus heretics as much as simply Godless versus God followers).

Here, perhaps, lies the prime motivation for the acceptance of Christianity, which in contrast to varying pagan traditions of various tribes and so on, was more useful for any unification process. This, however, meant the unification of Christianity itself. The situation is analogous to Constantine the Great's situation, where his enthusiasm for Christianity was met with the reality of internal discord in Christianity itself,

which must have been a blow for Constantine who expected a unified religion for a unified empire.

The legend continues with the story of the killing of saint Václav, his piety is emphasised. Monk Kristian goes out of his way to show the remarkable Christian behaviour of Václav, who even repents, if by chance he drank too much during a feast. Monk Kristian writes: “You read this story, graceful bishop, and you are in extreme wonder, how one man being from the laity, who was also at the same time at the helm of his nation, a nation being held due to its characteristic as especially fierce, had accomplished most dutifully that which even as you are aware of people<sup>35</sup> established from the grace of the Most highest God of the church would accomplish in great difficulty”. (Legis hec, pontifex alme, et que vix ipsos summi in ecclesia gracia Dei viros (vix) implere potuisse noveras, layci ordinis virum et eundem ducem et prepositum unius gentis, que et gencium ferox ipsa natura habetur, adimplese tenuissime miraris”) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 7, 64–69 [29, p. 68]). The ruler here subsumes the church, he embodies it. The church is not alienated from the state or ruler, but the ruler literally embodies it, much more so than its own clergy. A contrast appears with a nation being especially fierce. Václav becomes the sacrificial Christ. We may wonder, whether this theology is not indicative of a later mediaeval topos, since it betrays a sophisticated theology of sacrifice linked to a pious ruler, who does not defend himself. We may argue that given the other contexts mentioned (Bulgarian and others), this kind of reasoning could have been indicative of later theological hagiography, but this remains an open question dependent on hagiographical comparisons.

The murder by his brother Boleslav is placed into a context of a feast, where Václav is invited by his brother, after which Václav was to be killed. During the feast, Václav is warned by a person that he should escape, but Václav remains. The feast functions as a kind of image of the Last Supper, where Christ somehow knows about his forthcoming fate, yet remains not escaping anywhere. Boleslav kills his brother, who more or less accepts his fate (very sophisticated Christian reaction on behalf of Václav, a sophisticated theology for its period indeed).

Here we may state there is a little problem, since there is no climactic happy ending on the political front. For Kristian there is a problem here. He emphasised that belief in God leads to unity, harmony, victory of truth, but with Václav the results are tragic. The ruler has been killed just as Ludmila before and we wonder what following Christ is worth. Monk Kristian answers this by implying that regardless of this death, Václav prevails and becomes a national hero and saint, which in the end truly unites and harmonises people, who bad or good flock around him, perhaps also uniting and confirming the dynastic power. There is an indication that even his brother just as Drahomíra before regarding Ludmila realises his mistake/sin or at least sees the wonders, associated with the saint.

**Education and Christianity.** One of the most important points of comparisons between Byzantine sources and other contexts lies in education. The overall import of all Cyrilo-Methodian culture for central Europe has traditionally in scholarship and popular culture often been associated with “education” and enlightenment in the context of central Europe. Cyril and Methodius brought culture and illumination to central Europe. As we have implied above, however, we have to also take into account that comparisons between contexts related to education must take into consideration the state of education in a given area. Here we may ask, was Byzantium in the period of saints Václav and Ludmila marked by an emphasis on education? If so, did this educational policy promote itself also in the regions of saint Václav? Or we may postulate that the legend of Kristian in its comments related to education in fact does not draw from the Byzantine context as much as from a western scholastic tendency as seen in the Germanic area.

As we have mentioned one of the main arguments for Christianity, as shown by many writers, is the fact that it is related to education and civilised life. Christianity supports education and vice versa. Of course, for a context such as Bohemia or Moravia, an argument had to be presented as to why education is so important. In the case of Václav we may have the feeling that the others simply did not understand his desire to “learn” here intimately associated with Liturgical reading and life. Explaining to a “barbarian” the necessity

to learn (here always associated with liturgical life) is another task. It is not sufficient merely to state that education/Christianity is good for you.

As we know the Byzantines stressed education and some rulers stressed their own education. In the context of Anna Comnene, we read: “I, Anna, the daughter of two royal personages, Alexius and Irene born and bred in the purple. I was not ignorant of letters, for I carried my study of Greek, to the highest pitch, and was not unpractised in rhetoric; I perused the works of Aristotle, and the dialogues of Plato, carefully, and enriched my mind by the “quaternion” of learning. (I must let this out, and it is not bragging, to state what nature, and my zeal for learning have given me, and the gifts, which God, apportioned me at birth, and time has contributed”. (“Ταῦτα δὲ διεγνωκυῖα ἐγὼ Ἄννα, θυγάτηρ μὲν τῶν βασιλέων Ἀλεξίου καὶ Εἰρήνης, πορφύρας τιθηνιμά τε καὶ γέννημα, οὐ γραμμάτων οὐκ ἄμοιρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐλληνίζειν ἐς ἄκρον ἐσπουδακυῖα, καὶ ῥητορικῆς οὐκ ἀμελετήτως ἔχουσα καὶ τὰς Ἀριστοτελικὰς τέχνας εὖ ἀναλεξαμένη καὶ τοὺς Πλάτωνος διαλόγους, καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς τετρακτύος τῶν μαθημάτων πυκάσασα, (δεῖ γὰρ ἐξορχεῖσθαι ταῦτα καὶ οὐ περιαιτολογία τὸ πρᾶγμα, ὅσα ἢ φύσις καὶ ἢ περὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας σπουδὴ δέδωκε, καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἄνωθεν ἐπεβράβευσε καὶ ὁ καιρὸς συνεισήνεγκε”) ([1, p. 4]; see also [12, p. 25]). Even if a ruler from Bohemia or Moravia received such a high education as Anna, emphasising this amongst his compatriots would probably not make much sense in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Kristian legend also mentions education in the Prologue. Monk Kristian exclaims that he has no education. “Even though my insufficiency and inability are enormous and even though my education, if compared with the education of educated people, ceases to be education...” (“Sed quia in epcie nostre simul et pigricie maximesunt, studia que nostra, studiis scholarsticorum comparata, studia esses desistunt, non desperans de venia ob enormitatem criminum, prout vires suffecerint”). (*Kristiánova Legendá*. Prol. 1, 25 [29, p. 8]). He does not boast of education as Anna does.

However, Annas aspirations are also unique in a sense. It is interesting enough that, regardless of the importance of education, Skylitzes mentions the terrible state of “secular education” (“τὰ πολιτικὰ”) in the period of Bardas coinciding with the period of our context, and

notes that a positive move on the behalf of Bardas was to reorganise and renew secular education. “Bardas was, however, also a devotee of secular learning, the pursuit of which had, over a period of many years, become seriously dilapidated, shrinking away almost to nothing: ‘thanks to the boorishness and ignorance of those in power’ (‘τῆ τῶν κρατησάντων ἀγροικία καὶ ἀμαθία’). He assigned a location for each discipline – whatever was available for most subjects, but for philosophy (this being superior to all other disciplines) a place was designated within the palace itself at the Magnaura” ([24, p. 101]; see also [26, p. 102]).

In Byzantium it seems the support of learning was strongly dependent on Imperial patronage. Without support from the Emperor learning existed, but most probably, could not develop in a more institutional way. In this context N. Gaul observes that the networks of education were before the year 900 closely associated with imperial ideology, sometimes propaganda, and patronage. According to the historian, “this is not to say that litterae and paideia were not available in spaces outside court, such as monasteries in the West or lay schools as well as monasteries in the East”<sup>36</sup>. However, N. Gaul stresses that learning was mainly accumulated in the Imperial centre and among an educational elite within this Imperial centre. In the opinion of N. Gaul, the initiatives in this sphere are associated with, e.g., Charlemagne (r. 768/800–814) (see [7, esp. p. 28–33]), Theophilos (r. 829–842) and his brother-in-law, the Kaisar Bardas († 866), Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos (r. 913/945–959), or caliphs from al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775) to al-Mamūn (r. 813–833). There the learning was commonly marked by individual arrangements, personal patronage, and was distinguished by a lack of institutionalisation. Thus N. Gaul implied that “the portrayal of an institutionalised”, “court academy” and “palace school” was “an illusion”, as G. Brown wrote about *Charlemagnes scola palatii* [19, esp. 239]. In his turn P. Speck concluded about the school of Bardas: “[E]s besteht kein Anlaß hier von der Gründungeiner Institution zuspprechen, die unabhängig von der Person des Stifters oder von den vier geförderten Gelehrten (auch nach deren Tod) fortbestehen sollte” [53, S. 8]. N. Gaul correctly implies that regardless of imperial patronage, or higher patronage, this

does not necessarily mean that a school was truly “institutionalised” and functioning as a true institution. Even schools with patronage did not necessarily have order or compactness.

These observations relate to our context also, since just as with Byzantium it is not so easy to reconstruct the exact dynamics of education in the court of Václav, Bořivoj, Svatopluk. The stories of proper education, of reading, of teachers of Christian instruction in the Bohemian or Moravian contexts have to be studied through a prism of other contemporary contexts in order to assess their historical value.

**Conclusion.** In our short analysis, we have drawn attention to the Kristian legend in the context of its Christian ideology associated with the nascent development of the Bohemian/Moravian context or state. As we have demonstrated greater in depth thematic and comparativist study of the legend in the future will surely yield more information on the date of the composition.

The context of the stories related to Kristian can be seen elsewhere in Europe at that time. The legend describes the situation of growing centralisation and unity in Europe, of national or political dynastic construction. Of course, the movement to unity and empire building in Europe is nothing new in the historical context of the world. The process was going on elsewhere for centuries with similar paradigms of infighting political rivalries and so on. Here we may state that there is sometimes a flaw in historical reconstruction in the sense of denying the historical validity of a fact, just because it similarly appears elsewhere or in other contexts. For example, some motifs are remarkably similar between the Bohemian/Moravian contexts and the Bulgarian events, or Frankish/German events. This however does not immediately entail dependence or interdependence but simply can be the result of “paradigms” and “archetypes” common to all. This can be of help to a historian, because it can help to assume or reconstruct at least some elements in an otherwise incomplete narrative. Similar hagiographic elements appear elsewhere suggesting a nascent paradigm of sacrifice emerging. But this is hardly convincing for a general reader. The task of the legend author is to show how the Christian ruler is necessarily good.

What is interesting about the European context is the role of Christianity in this process

of unity and kingdom building. As we have seen monk Kristian has multiple themes and perhaps goals. But perhaps he is just simply interested in offering a hagiographic story of an interesting saint. Whatever the case, he must in one way or another show why Christianity is a true religion or useful in an area of Bohemia and Moravia. He must have been from a context where there necessarily was no opposition between Eastern or Western traditions of Christianity, since he does not appear to stress any particular tradition.

As we have seen, the “primary offer” for pagan rulers or pagans generally was that Christianity brings education/civilisation/governance and not least political alliances. But more concretely Christianity offers the ruler *way to unity, harmony, legitimisation of one’s dynastic aspirations and rule, posteriority, power*. However, the paradox is that Kristian just as any other author struggles with his main offer. As we have seen being Christian – Václav, Ludmila, in the end brings suffering but also disunity. Being a Christian does not guarantee that one prevails and all is well. There is an internal tension in Kristian’s legend, because in contrast to the other legends of Václav this one, perhaps even more so has an agenda to demonstrate how Christianity can go hand in hand with governance and in fact must do so. Besides, this story is actually telling us that being a Christian ruler or Christian means being killed, dethroned, banished, and exiled.

If Kristian wants to promise us that all will go well in the state if Christianity is promulgated, he is not really successful at his goal. Further, historically speaking scholars often demonstrate that Christianity, indeed, offered unity, political stability and so on, but it is often forgotten that paganism offered this also, and further that the church is not necessarily important in all this. As we have seen by comparisons with the Byzantine concepts, it was almost impossible to adapt the Byzantine political models to a situation such as was happening Bohemia and Moravia. The legend betrays a situation of internal disunity, of loose tribes of loose morals and other problems making adoption of high Byzantine models and contexts almost impossible, without significant adaptation.

Monk Kristian resolves his internal “schizophrenia” where he denies in the end what he proposes or offers in a functional way. In a way we may argue that his hagiographical theology would

be more suitable for a much later date of a kind of medieval feudal sacrificing chivalry, especially if this is contrasted with the brutal realism of areas such as Bulgaria, where there are no qualms about how the ruler should enhance Christianity (no self sacrificing Václav there). The Kristian legend demonstrates in the end that Christianity does in fact offer unity and harmony, because even though Václav is killed, or Ludmila, these become a source of unity and harmony, become a referential point of people uniting behind their miracles, of dynastic legitimisation. Paradoxically self-sacrifice humbleness means victory. The sainthood of Václav and Ludmila become a source of new unities and ideological references.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Scientific editor is Yu. Ya. Vin.

<sup>2</sup> There is no reason to repeat the well-known process of discovery and long term scholarship on the subject of the sources, related to our period. Apart from the controversial legend of Kristian there are other important sources on our topic, which include also important western sources. Here suffice it to mention the *Crescente fide*, written in Latin describing the life of Václav (possibly end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), perhaps from the area of Regensburg (Bavaria), the very important work of Gumpold the bishop of Mantovia (flourished at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), who importantly received an “order” by Oto II (Otto II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) to write a life of Václav. In terms of the Slavic context of Václav and Ludmila A.Ch. Vostokov stimulated research by his find in 1827 of one of the oldest paleo-slavic sources of Czech origin, the so-called “First Slavic Legend of St. Václav” (literary “Ubienie svjatago Vjačeslava, knjazjačes’ka”, i.d. “The Killing of Saint Václav, the knize of Czechia”), contained in the so-called *Torzhestvenik* (a work gathering liturgical feasts, with saints’ lives and homilies on various feasts), itself being from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Vostokov further, in his later list of manuscripts of the Rumyantsev museum [9, p. 454–456], brought attention to shorter legends of Sts. Václav and Ludmila, which are testified in the Prologues to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of September (feast days of Sts. Ludmila and Václav) and to the Prologue legend of the *translatio* of the relics of St. Václav located in the Prologue to the 4<sup>th</sup> of March (feast of the relics of St. Václav). These Prologues related to Sts. Václav and Ludmila had circulated in Rus for some time, since they were part of a widely distributed Prologue (they were also being incorporated into liturgical prints (the *Minea* of Metropolitan Makarios). Further I.I. Sreznevskiy and I. Kupriyanov brought attention in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

to the canon of St. Václav (manuscripts of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries). N.K. Nikol'skiy discovered the so-called Second Slavic legend of St. Václav (a modified translation of the Latin legend of the mantovian bishop Gumpold) [40]. Later Czech scholarship began an important discussion on the possibility of the existence and form of some kind of official “Vita et passio St. Wenceslai” from the 10<sup>th</sup> century serving as a basis for other works, but also of St. Ludmila.

<sup>3</sup> V. Karbusický writes: “First of all Kosmas utilises literary characteristics (Kosmas compares: Lubošais ‘*ut Chumea Sibilla*’, Kazi ‘*ut Colchis Medea*’, Tetka ‘*ut Aeneae Circens*’), while he designates them with the terms ‘*phitonissa*’ (prophetess), ‘*venefica*’ (sorceress), ‘*malefica*’ (evil sorceress), and through the distinction of functions he goes into further detail: Kazi was responsible for fate, herbs and oracles – therefore the content of the ecclesiastical ‘*magia*’. Tetka rejected myths and taught the pagan cult – ecclesiastical ‘*idolatria*’, Luboša prophesised and foretold future – ecclesiastical ‘*divinatio*’, their substance and classification were in harmony with theological distinctions of pagan sinful infidelity, since they distinguish between sorcery, idolatry, and the foretelling of future: *magia* (Kazi), *idolatria* (Teta), *divinatio* (Libuše)” ([28, p. 16]; see also [8, p. 11–12]).

<sup>4</sup> All references to the Kristian legend will be from the edition *Legenda Christiani* [29]. The rediscovery of the legend is associated with the famous Bohuslav Balbín, who in 1664 found the manuscript in the Augustinian cloister of Třeboň. Perhaps the work had been, however, already discovered by Jan Tanner in 1659 (in a different manuscript, so-called Dražický, G 5 manuscript, a fact, which was already noticed by Dobrovsky. As noted by R. Urbánek, the work was especially important in the anti-reformational era of the Baroque. Balbín calls the legend “pretiosissimum istud primumque historiae patriae monumentum” and its author was called “primus, quadsciamus, in Bohemia scriptor” [63, p. 7].

<sup>5</sup> J. Ludvíkovský automatically translated the Latin Adalberto into Vojtěch in his translation, at the beginning of the legend, which is, perhaps, a little problematic.

<sup>6</sup> As R. Urbánek writes: “The positive result of the discussions led to the question, whether in Bohemia of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there existed some kind of official ‘Vita et passio St. Wenceslai’, which Gumpold at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and Kosmas still at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century knew as being the most important source for the history of St. Václav, and which was known not only in its own manuscript tradition, but also found access to Breviaries and in this way found wider circulation in clerical circles, in fact so much so, and was known to such an extent that Kosmas disregarded the necessity of repeating its contents” [63, p. 7].

<sup>7</sup> The most famous advocate of the early date of the composition is the well-known scholar J. Pekař. He calls people like Dobrovský, who criticised the legend as being hypocritical and “erasing centuries of history” (J. Pekař uses a formulation, adopted by V.A. Svoboda in a different context – *Jahrhunderte entvölkern*) by their over critical approach. J. Pekař goes on to say in this work that the legend is not only not a falsum, but a work from the 10<sup>th</sup> century [45]. J. Pekař did not deny that monk Kristian utilised older sources (such as, for example, the very important bishop Gumpold, *Crescente fide*, the Latin legend “Fuit in provincia Bohemorum”), but stated that he originally compiled his work using such sources [29, p. 121] as the Latin legend “Fuit” see Note 23.

The discussion of the date of the composition is strongly dependent on how we understand the Prologue of the work. The prologue, and first two chapters describe the Byzantine missions, Slavic liturgy, the baptism of Bořivoj at the court of Svatopluk, became the controversial points regarding the legend. As Ludvíkovský summarises: “It is trully difficult to harmonise Kristian’s message about them oravian beginnings of Czech Christianity, with the Fuldans, which state that Ludvig the German in the year 845 baptised fourteen Czech rulers (XIII ex ducibus Boemanorum) upon the irrequest with their people (perhaps in Regensburg), that is around twenty years before the coming of the mission from Moravia” [29, p. 119]. This again could be, on the contrary, understood as a testimony to the ancient provenance of the legend. The baptism of the fourteen Czech rulers did not necessarily have any serious or practical consequence for Bohemia. F. Stejskal importantly emphasises the quick canonisation process of the saint in his valuable study of the cult of the saint. Stejskal reminds us that the canonisation process was not yet the prerogative of the Roman Pope, (up to Alexander III, 1159–1181), and that local bishops could have decided about this [56].

<sup>8</sup> R. Urbánek has already realised the need for comparisons of theme and content. He wrote some decades ago: “If it will best ill necessary to compare carefully the exact formal and narrative relationship between the slavic legends of Sts. Václav and Ludmila, with similar Byzantine ones – we can at first glance state that there is a great simplicity in the slavic ones, which is related to the developmental stages of the church slovanic culture of the period in Bohemia and its linguistic means – a similar task, will be related to the Latin legends and the legends of neighbouring Germany, especially in the Bavarian orbit” [63, p. 7, 33].

<sup>9</sup> Liudmila (Latin), or the term in the Bodecensky manuscript – Luitmila, Liutmila (Latin).

<sup>10</sup> Вѣцеславъ, Venceslaus (Latin), Wenzel (German).

<sup>11</sup> Vęceslavъ, Venceslaus (Latin), Wenzel (German). ‘Beatus’ is translated as ‘Blahoslovený’ into Czech-Slavic; and the Greek term ‘μακάριος’ is, perhaps, the closest equivalent, although we believe that some Slavic terms began a “life of their own”. For the sake of consistency, I will utilise the Czech terms and names Ludmila and Václav.

<sup>12</sup> A study, regarding the passion aspect of the Sts. Václav and Ludmila, is recently published by E.H. Saggau [51].

<sup>13</sup> Here we can note a fact, not noticed by scholars, that strangely enough Emmeramm (Emmerammus) was also the name of the son of Prokop the abbot of the Sazava monastery. Whether this was a coincidence or not or betrays a reliance on tradition remains a mystery and not noticed so far.

<sup>14</sup> For example, V. Chaloupecky believes that the patriotic tone of the prologue means, that the prologue was rewritten with patriotic references around the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries [60, p. 271, note to 103–104]. However, as Ludvíkovský notes that patriotic tinges can be also found elsewhere in the work, for instance, in its description of Strojimir, who was disregarded by his supporters, because he forgot to speak Czech, when living abroad [29, p. 133].

<sup>15</sup> A. Papaconstantinou writes in relation to the Coptic environment: “The emphasis on torture and suffering, however, served another purpose. ...The Coptic Church needed to promote its indigenous character, and thus the continuity with its most distant past, both in territorial and in ethnic terms”. See [44, p. 78].

<sup>16</sup> A.I. Rogov writes in this context: “The Sázava monastery, established, perhaps, around the year 1033, was also interesting since it was a family cloister, built by the expenses of the hermit Prokop, ‘originating from Bohemia, from the village Chotouň’”. According to the testimony of the Chronicle of the so-called monk from Sázava, preserved in manuscripts of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Prokop, was “very much educated in the slavic script, which was invented sometime by, and canonically introduced from by most holy bishop Cyril, who was very educated” [50, p. 11–12].

<sup>17</sup> As we have noted above, F. Stejskal reminds us that the canonisation process was not yet the prerogative of the Roman Pope (up to Alexander III, 1159–1181), and that local bishops could have decided about this. F. Stejskal mentions the manuscript from Verona (number 87), from the period of Saint Wolfgang († 994) and Otto III (coronated as the Roman king in 985). F. Stejskal remembers other evidence, which we will not mention here. In the calendar from the Verona manuscript here we have I. Makl. Octobris Sancti Vuenkizlai martyris et sanctae Libae virginis. F. Stejskal continues: “There is no doubt that during Saint Wolfgang the canonisation of saint Václav was

already made, even if we do not know when; we can assume it was made by Vojtěch or Dětmar, both bishops of Prague, if not earlier” [56, p. 143].

<sup>18</sup> Generally, in terms of Augustine and his influence on the political ideology of the medieval age, H.-X. Arquillière observes: “il reste, écrit-il, encore beaucoup de recherches à faire pour préciser son influence exacte (de l’augustinisme) sur les grands papes qui se sont succédés jusqu’à la fin du Moyen Age...; il reste à déterminer la force des contrecourants” [5, p. 49].

<sup>19</sup> The critical edition of the Church Slavonic version of Gregories XL Homiliarum in Evangelia Libri II see [61; 62].

<sup>20</sup> It is interesting enough, that there is a discussion on seating also in the letter 99 of Nicholas Responses to the question of the Bulgars. Here the discussion is centred on the fact that no one sits with the king. The Pope replies stating, that all should be like brother and sisters and be humble: “You state that when your king sits down in his throne (*sedilis*) at the table to eat, on one, not even his wife, may recline with him; rather you sit far away on stools and eat on the ground; ...we exhort you, not so much commanding as persuading that you pay attention to those, who observe the Christian religion as leaders and after considering the evidence of their humility...” (Asseritis quod rex vester cum ad manducandum in sedili sicut most est, ad mensam sederit nemo ad convescendum etiam, neque uxor ejus cum eo discumbat, vobis procul in sellis residentibus, et in terra manducantibus... licet bonos mores satis, impugnet, non tam praecipientes, quam suadentes, hortamur, ud ad Christianer eligionis cultores principes attendatis, et humilitatis, eorum considerantis fastigium) ([39, col. 996]; see also [49]).

<sup>21</sup> M. Spinka possibly, basing himself on the Slavic sources for the Chronicle, emphasises that the ruler was instructed in the Christian faith. The Greek term (ἐφωτισθη) speaks of “enlightened”. See *Chronicle of John Malalas*, Book 17, 9 (412/413), translated from the Slavic version by M. Spinka and G. Downey [55, p. 121]. See also [54; 10].

<sup>22</sup> Skylitzes does not mention other issues here such as the relationship with the Papacy and Boris.

<sup>23</sup> The popularity of Ludmila in Rus is another important feature well commented. We may perhaps enquire why Ludmila was so popular, which is a task for another paper. R. Jakobson has mentioned that in the Russian chronicles about Olga, the Patriarch of Constantinople turns to her with the words, which almost exactly repeat the words of the Latin homily of saint Ludmila, which emerged in Bohemia (Homily which emerged at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with Factum est) [25, p. 44]. This position is also supported by F. Dvorník ([14, p. 332]; see also [57, p. 556–558; 60, p. 161–167]). However, limiting the

popularity of Ludmila to cultural or literary contacts and exchanges would seem too superficial for our understanding as to why she gained such prominence elsewhere. Perhaps her “piousness” combined with “rulership” was the primary motive for her gaining popularity in the Rus region. We will not enter here into the discussion of the existence of a general legend about saint Ludmila, the subsistence of which is established through the prism of the Slavic Prologue legend about saint Ludmila, and the Latin legend “Fuit in provincia Bohemorum” (“There was once in the land of Bohemia”, which is also known in Czech as “The suffering of Saint Ludmila and Václav”) [57, p. 467–481].

<sup>24</sup> That, there was an intention of manufacturing dualities of one kind or another, can be supported by V.I. Lesyuchevskiy [31, p. 238], although Boris and Gleb did not always form a duality.

<sup>25</sup> N.N. Il’in mentions direct parallels between the story of Boris and Gleb and the First Slavic legend of St. Václav and also the Prologue legend of St. Ludmila [22, p. 52].

<sup>26</sup> It is interestingly enough that we may mention here that the Second Slavic legend of St. Václav has a very theologically profound introduction, where education is understood as a return to substance, it enables us to discover our inner being. This kind of more sophisticated reflection would be undoubtedly more difficult to grasp by the general public. See [40].

<sup>27</sup> There is extensive discussion on the dynamics of mission in Moravia and the existence of ecclesiastical structures in the context of Moravia before the Byzantine mission. Fr. Dvorník, as other have addressed this issue. But regardless of these discussions the specifics of the ecclesiastical expulsions and dynamics remains a mystery. If we accept the existence of other priests in the region of Moravia or Bohemia before the mission from Byzantium, and more importantly the unsettling nature of the ecclesiastical structures after the Byzantine emission, this creates more questions. Fr. Dvorník writes about the period before Byzantine emissions: “The bishop of Passau is said even to have held synods in Moravia with his own priests and priests from foreign lands. It has now been established that some rudimentary ecclesiastical organisation had been introduced by him to Moravia” [16, p. 1110].

<sup>28</sup> Photios, Epist. 8, 652–656 [47, p. 22]. See also: Photios, Epistolarum Liber I. Epist. 8.31 [48, col. 665]. For a broader overview see also [13].

<sup>29</sup> B.A. Todorov, quoting the chapter 17 of the “Responsa” of Pope Nicholas I (see [38, p. 577]), writes: “Such a vision of the events is confirmed by the implicit rhetoric in some of the sources closest in time to the conversion of 865 AD. A number of them stress the revolutionary and coercive character of the

act. According to the Balši inscription, Boris-Michael equated his own baptism with the baptism of the entire people given to him by God to rule. He wrote to the same effect to the Pope, who quoted in chapter 17 of the ‘Responsa’: ‘You made your whole people receive baptism’ (Populum vestrum baptizari omnem feceritis)”. See [58, p. 189].

Photios Encyclical Letter to the patriarchs spoke about the conversion not only the king alone, but more generally about the conversion of the Bulgarians as a people, describing the event as “against all expectations (paradoxos)” [47, p. 41]. When addressing the Papacy, Boris-Michael supported his claims to have converted the country, by offering to St. Peter the arms, with which he had subdued the rebels ([58, p. 189]; see also [2, p. 63]).

<sup>30</sup> This particular writing of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos is titled: “Ὅσα δεῖ γίνεσθαι τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ὑψηλοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων μέλλοντος φουσατεῦσαι” (“What should be observed when the Great, and High Emperor of the Romans, Goes on Campaign”). It is one of three military treatises found in the manuscript *Lipsiensis Rep.*, 117, which also contains Constantine’s treatise “De Ceremoniis” and therefore are an addition to this work or were simply added to the manuscript as an appendix. The Leipzig manuscript is the only manuscript, which contains all these works in one composition. For a further study of this issue see ([18]; see also [33, p. 426]).

<sup>31</sup> M. Mavroudi does not believe that this work is that of Artemidoros, we would perhaps imagine [33, p. 426].

<sup>32</sup> According to *Legenda Christiani*, Ludmila dies on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, on Saturday, on the first night vigil (in the 61 year of her life) (*Kristiánova Legenda*. 4, 75 [29, p. 39]). Here J. Ludvíkovský comments: “Only two manuscripts of the Kristian legend speak of the death of Ludmila (*T* and *FP*) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. All the other texts of the Kristian legend, indicate the 15<sup>th</sup> of September as the time of death of saint Ludmila (XVII. Kal. Oct.). For the 16<sup>th</sup> of September there is also evidence in the form of the mentioned Paleo-Slavic Prologue of saint Ludmila and the church tradition testified to from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Most manuscripts would then have a recorded mistake of their writer. The corresponding day for the year 920, the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, would be Saturday, so the murder of Ludmila would be on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 920. Pekař would also suggest the date of the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 921, which is indicated in the breviary of the Abatyss Kunhuta from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The age of Ludmila 61 is indicated also in harmony with the addition of the manuscript K also by the Prolog legend of St. Ludmila and the legend “Fuit”. She was born in 859 or 860. The birth of St. Václav, is given by J. Pekař, as the year 907

and 908, and V. Chaloupecky suggests a date until the year 904". As to datum, offered by J. Pekař, see the latest of his work in Svatováclavský sborník [46, p. 24, note 74]; as to V. Chaloupecky see [46, p. 63]. See also [29, p. 146].

<sup>33</sup> The education and linguistic skills of Václav especially in the context of the other legends on this saint is again a source of controversy among scholars. But it is perhaps true that various authors of the legends would offer an ideological statement by claiming, that Václav knew Greek or Slavic or Latin.

<sup>34</sup> J. Ludvíkovský writes on this subject: "The Christian piety of the young Václav is described mostly in accord with the legend *Crescente fide*, being also in harmony at some areas with its Czech version, which was here as it seems, interpolated from Kristian. The following discussion of the conflict and bloshed between the Christian side of Václav and the pagan side of the mother is the work of Kristian, who however does not go into further detail" [29, p. 146].

<sup>35</sup> The Czech translation directly mentions "priests of God" here, but this concrete identification seems problematic in the Latin.

<sup>36</sup> Here N. Gaul cites N.M. Kalogeras, namely [27, p. 145–155].

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### Information About the Author

**Václav Ježek**, Senior Lecturer in Byzantine Theology and History, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Prešov, Masarykova St, 15, 08101 Prešov, Slovakia, vaclavjezek111@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9521-7963>

### Информация об авторе

**Вацлав Йежек**, старший лектор по византийскому богословию и истории, Факультет православного богословия, Прешовский университет, ул. Масарикова, 15, 08101 г. Прешов, Словакия, vaclavjezek111@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9521-7963>