Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia. The life and ideas of Milicus de Chremsir (+1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia

Moree, P.C.A.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)
It was the Czech artisans and shopkeepers who flocked to hear Milč preach in their own language at St. Giles' in the Malá Strana, and their sons whom he instructed in Latin about the art and duties of a preacher at St. Nicholas' in the Old Town. When Milč preached that the wars and pestilences of his own day, the division of nations, the avarice and self-indulgence of clergy and laity alike were all signs that the abomination of desolation was already set in the holy place, that the Antichrist was at hand and that the year of the prophet Daniel had already come, he was merely stating in apocalyptic terms the historical fact that he was living in an age of revolution and that the ecclesiastical and moral order designed for an agricultural, feudal, non-nationalistic society was breaking down into the new commercial and nationalistic society in which he and his listeners were living.¹

Those are the words of Professor R.R. Betts probably written shortly after the Second World War.² He was one of the few non-Czech scholars who devoted himself to the history of Bohemia and Central Europe. Betts was mainly interested in the Hussite period and the so-called predecessors of Johannes Hus, in particular Matthias de Janow. Due to the Second World

²The selected Essays in Czech History stem from the years 1939-1957. The date of the first publication of the paper quoted here is not mentioned.
War, Betts was unable to publish his general study on the Hussite reformation and therefore, his ideas survive only in articles.³

As far as the current inquiry is concerned, another Elijah, i.e. a man overflowing with the spirit of Elijah, was needed, who broke the long silence over the last coming of Christ and Antichrist. And if you accept the many archival materials that were presented to me as evidence, this man was Milicius, the honorable priest and preacher, who was mighty in word and deed, whose words burned like torches.¹

Matthias de Janow wrote this in his *Regulae veteris et novi testamenti* at the beginning of his short biography on Milicius. The quotation primarily reveals the degree to which R.R. Betts was influenced by his favorite predecessor of Johannes Hus. The image the twentieth-century scholar has of Milicius is not very different from the one Matthias offered us just a few years after the preacher's death. Of course, it is Betts' assessment of apocalypticism as a sign of the end of one era and the start of another which makes him a scholar of our times. His modern skeptical understanding of religiously colored pronouncements such as the Last Judgment and the coming of the Antichrist attributes them to the feeling of crisis and uncertainty of that time. In Betts' writing, however, Matthias de Janow's image of Milicius is still present. Moreover, most of the keywords in Betts' short description of Milicius are taken directly from Matthias, as a thorough reading of the *Narracio* will reveal.

Matthias' depiction of Milicius has basically dominated through the ages as we see in the case of Betts. However, we do have a second biography on Milicius which has a much more complicated history. The author of this work entitled *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis* is unknown. The biography is quite extensive and portrays Milicius as a very pious and even saintly person. A quick comparison of Matthias' *Narracio* and the *Vita* reveals one important difference. The *Vita* does not challenge Matthias' depiction of Milicius as Elijah, rather it is more or less a long enumeration of his venerable works and life. This may be one of the reasons why Matthias' view prevailed historically and why it was adopted by a twentieth-century scholar like R. R. Betts. Now, we will first survey the

¹ On Betts' life see the Memoir of G.R. Potter in the *Essays."

² "Quantum ad praesentem inquisitionem attinet, alius Helyas i.e. vir habundans spiritu Helye requiratur, qui diutinum rupit silencium de adventu Christi ultimo et Antychristi. Et si wltis accipere, quantum noticia gestorum mihi asserendum inducit, ipse est Mlyczius, venerabilis presbiter et predicatior, potens in opere en in sermone, cuius verbum tamquam facula ardebatur." *Narracio de Mlyczyo de Matthia de Janow*, in: *FRB*, p. 69, footnote 1.
Narratio, then the Vita and finally, we will try to paint a chronological overview of Milicius de Chremsir’s life.

1. The Narracio de Myliczyo

As we have seen, the Narracio de Myliczyo is part of the main work of Matthias de Janow, Regulae veteris et novi testamenti. Matthias can be considered a disciple of Milicius. He was the son of a lower nobleman and studied at the university in Prague in the early 1370’s. He continued his studies in Paris, which is why “Parisiensis” was added to his name. In 1381 after personally applying for the position of canon and being granted it by Urban VI, Matthias returned to Prague. It was this practice of reservations and provisions which Matthias criticized heavily in his later works. He advocated allowing laity to receive frequent or even daily communion. This led him into a severe conflict with the majority of the clergy in Prague. In 1388 a synod in Prague agreed on the measure that forbid lay people to receive the Holy Communion more than once a month. The next year, a second synod forced Matthias and some of his fellow preachers to withdraw their teachings on daily communion and stripped Matthias of his priestly functions. This conflict, which was one attempt by major groups within the Prague clergy to minimize the influence critical preachers and followers of Milicius had over the laity, continued till 1392 at which time Matthias promised to turn himself over to the Archbishop of Prague Johannes de Jenštejn. Matthias died on 30 November 1394 and being a titular canon, he was buried in St. Vitus Cathedral.

Matthias wrote his main work Regulae veteris et novi testamenti between 1384 and 1394. It has a typically scholastic structure as it is divided...
into five books, with the third book containing the *Narracio.* Several of the books are divided into subdivisions and treatises. Every part is written in the form of the classical scholastic university *disputatio* with its *questio* and answer. It is not easy to give a one-line characterization of the work because it contains the author’s many different notions on subjects outside church, theology and even society. František Palacky’s translation into Czech, however, might offer the best summary: *Books on True and False Christianity.* The titles of the five books, which are preceded by a prologue, give more insight into the content:

I. On the distinction of spirits and prophets according to the rules handed down for that, here in the Old Testament;
II. On the distinction of spirits in the prophets and the gospel;
III. The Thirteenth main rule;
IV. On the Body of Christ (or the question whether each Christian saint should be permitted to receive the sacrament of communion daily, i.e. the body and the blood of Christ);
V. On the Body of Christ.

Matthias seems to be searching for rules for leading a Christian life under all circumstances and finds his answers in the Scriptures. In his Prologue he even states that he did not use the answers given in the writings of theologians, even though he did learn a lot from them. Here he uses only the Bible as a source. One of his main questions is about frequent or even daily communion for the laity, which brought him into conflict with Prague clerics. Other issues deal with the church, its need for reform and its relation to the state. The tensions between church and state and the overall social

---

9 I. De discrecione spirituum et prophetarum secundum regulas traditas ad hoc in Veteri testamento;
II. De discrecione spirituum in prophetis et evangelio;
III. Decima tercia regula principalis;
IV. De corpore Christi (sive Questio, utrum omnibus et singulis sanctis christianis licet coddidi communionem, id est corpus et sanguinem Christi, sacramentaliter manducare);
V. De corpore Christi.

Josef Tříška, *Literární činnost předhussitské university* [The Literary Activity of the Pre-Hussite University], Praha 1967, p. 89-90.
situation bring Matthias to the question of Antichrist, who is one of the subjects in the third book.

Like the first and the second book, the third book — which is the most extensive — has several subdivisions or tractates:

I. On rule itself;
II. On witnesses to the truth;
III. Rulings by the holy doctors for daily or frequent communion of the sacrament of the altar by the Christian people;
IV. On the unity and universality of the church;
V. On Antichrist;
VI. On abomination in a holy place.

The *Narracio de Myliczyo* is found in the fifth treatise on Antichrist where it forms an introduction to the next part, the *Libellus de Antichristo* or “The Book on Antichrist,” which is one of Milicius’ writings. From the beginning of the work, it is clear what Matthias is up to when he describes his memories of Milicius.

In this, Milicius, whose name in Latin means “the most beloved,” I saw him overflowing with every love and fondness of mercy to everybody, even to his enemies and persecutors, that there was no one except those possessed by the spirit of Antichrist who, when he had to speak or deal with him, did not draw on the love, grace and kindness of spirit from him; and no one left him unconsolated. He revealed himself in everything to be a second Elijah: incessantly weakening his body by fasting, flogging and penance, as well as many austerities, he tried hard in everything, continuously working for the well-being of the people, so that, according to the opinion of any observer, whatever his works transcended every human power and strength of the body. He was continuously hearing confessions, visiting the sick, the imprisoned and the sick, consoling and converting the sad and the sinners.

Matthias presents Milicius here as a perfect spiritual and religious person whose love and dedication toward other people knew no limits. His pastoral care for his flock never ended and his responsibility for the spiritual welfare

---


"In quo quidem Myliczyo, quod nomen Latinum in sermonem translatum sonat carissimus, ego vidi eius omnem dileccionem et viscera miseracionum et ad omnes homines eciam ad inimicos et persecutores reducere, ut nullus erat nisi forte spiritu Antychristi agitatus, qui cum ipso habet lacui uel agere, qui amorem et graciam atque suavitatem spiritus ab ipso non hauriret; nullusque non consolatus ab eo recedebat. Iste veluti alter Helyas in omnibus se prorsus exhibuit: nam inedia, cilicio et cinere multiplex austeritate incessanter corpus atterrens, laboribus continuos in salute populorum insudabat in tantum, ut secundum cuiuslibet spectantis judicium labores sui omnes valenciam hominum et robur carnis excedebant. Nam continuos erat in confessiones audiendo, in visitando infirmos et in carcere et infirmatos, mestos et peccatores consolando et convertendo." Emler, p. 431 ff.
of believers caused him to lead a very austere lifestyle. Because of this constant involvement with his community, Milicius is a second Elijah according to Matthias. The perfection which Milicius achieved in his work goes beyond human possibilities and must therefore be of an eschatological kind. Matthias warns that everyone must accept this image of Milicius and those who are unable or unwilling to do so are possessed by the Antichrist’s evil spirit. This was a warning sign for those clergy who opposed Milicius’ work and accused him of heresy. Or even more pertinent to Matthias: it was a warning to those who were persecuting preachers and other followers of Milicius. In the very first lines of his biography on Milicius, Matthias establishes Milicius as a role model. Matthias used the example of Milicius in his own struggle with church officials and many clerics who doubted Matthias’ own faithfulness and orthodoxy. The Narracio de Myliczyo which we read in the life-work of Matthias de Janow is in the first place an apologia pro vita auctoris, an attempt to justify his spiritual path and teachings.

Matthias’ struggle with church authorities was very bitter. This might be one of the reasons why Matthias frequently used the eschatological vocabulary in the Regulae and in particular in the Narracio. In his opinion, the struggle with the clergy started with Milicius who was one of the first to criticize the church and its members. He was one of the first to voice the need to liberate the church from the evil forces of sin and Antichrist. Due to his activities, a new force of preachers arose who took up the struggle for the church. Their struggle is the final one since the purity and unity of the church and the faithful are at stake. Matthias might have held those views, causing him to present Milicius as the “first,” like Elijah the prophet who it is promised will come at the end of time when the final struggle is about to be fought.\[12\]

Matthias elaborates on the apology he wrote for Milicius by pointing out more details from his life. Although Milicius had a good reputation at the chancery of Charles IV where he worked, he decided to leave behind everything he had, “benefices and honorable offices,” to follow perfectly in the path of Jesus Christ. Rather than dwelling in the houses of the rich, he wanted to be humbled in the House of the Lord. To Matthias the richness and wealth of the powerful of the world was one more sign of the Antichrist. He wrote: “I confess that a short time before this I was afflicted and covered by the spirit of the Antichrist, full of cupidity and pernicious ambition, very

\[12\] Malachi 4.5.
much longing for the wealth, glory and honors of this world." In Matthias' perspective, Milicius had taken the same step as he had in leaving the environment of Antichrist.

One of the basic concerns of Milicius according to Matthias was for single women, ex-prostitutes and widows. Milicius wished to offer everything he had for the well-being of souls and received in exchange a miraculous gift of mercy from Christ. Within a very short time, he convinced about 200 prostitutes to repent their sins, and numerous pious women all over the country started to live in the love of Christ thanks to Milicius' preaching.

This again seems also to be an aspect of Matthias' struggle with the clergy. Matthias' opponents complained that such pious women were only concerned with their personal redemption, and thereby neglected their social duties in the household. Matthias, however, encouraged this attitude among the women. Frequent or even daily communion was in his eyes only acceptable if the person receiving communion was preparing himself (or herself) in a proper way by doing repentance. In the meantime, the number of Beguine houses in Prague increased rapidly bringing together pious women without any official rule. This caused concern to the archbishop and the Emperor Wenceslaus IV who believed these communities could be nests of the Beghard heretics and should therefore be looked upon with caution.

To Matthias this concern was unfounded which he tried to illustrate with the case of Milicius. He points out that Milicius himself helped single women to start a new life, liberating them from prostitution by buying them everything they needed. He was a "careful father, full of mercy." In this context, Matthias makes a comparison which exceeds the image of Milicius as Elijah, comparing him to Christ and the apostles: "This Milicius, the son and image of the Lord Jesus Christ and a rather true and clear similitude of the apostles, supported those penitent women by his own means." When he had no money, he sold his books, borrowed and begged from the rich, and took care of the women till the end of his life.

The second aspect of Milicius' life was preaching. Here again he is compared to Elijah who struggled with false priests and evil princes. Preaching criticizes those who live according to Antichrist and his law. Milicius

---

13 Quoted by Palacky, Předchůdcevé, p. 87.
14 Smahel, 2, p. 207.
15 "Ipse vero Mylycius filius et ymago domini Ihesu Christi, apostolorumque ipsius similitudo prope expressa et ostensa, predictas meretrices penitentes suis sumptibus fouit." Emler, p. 432.
struggled with false prophets, monks and clerics, daily defending the truth and the Law of Christ. Here we find the famous reference about Milicius who allegedly characterized the Emperor Charles IV as Antichrist.

He admonished courageously high prelates, archbishops and bishops for what they obviously were doing wrong. And dressed with zeal like an armored knight, he came forward, pointed at the aforementioned emperor with his finger and said to him in front of everyone that he is the Great Antichrist, because of which he was imprisoned for a long time.¹⁶

Although it makes quite a heroic impression on us when we imagine Milicius as an undaunted prophet revealing the true nature of the emperor as the Great Antichrist while in his presence, there are serious reasons to doubt Matthias’ narration. In the first place, it is unlikely that Charles attended Milicius’ sermons at all since he presumably did not attend the sermons of Milicius’ older fellow preacher Conradus de Waldhausen.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the emperor does seem to have sympathized with Milicius’ work. As we will see in the second biography on Milicius, Charles financially supported his work with former prostitutes. Although Milicius was certainly very critical of the powerful, he never doubted their legitimate place and function in society. Whenever he refers in his sermons to the emperor, he seems to express a certain sympathy for him as is the case in the Libellus de Anti-christo, the main source of Milicius’ ideas about Antichrist. Antichrist, he states here, will bring disorder to the world which is already the case in large parts of the Roman Empire. If the emperor could not rely on the stability of Bohemia, he would be without any support, Milicius concludes. This suggests that in his attempt for order, Charles was a victim of Antichrist rather than his potential ally.¹⁸

It seems more likely that Matthias is twisting the image of Milicius again to support his own criticism of and struggle with contemporary authorities. In 1376 Charles IV died leaving behind an immense oeuvre on politics.

¹⁶“Hic prelatos summos, archiepiscopos et episcopos corripuit viriliter pro hiis, in quibus visi sunt aberrare, his indutus zelo quasi toraci imperatorem predictum aggressus digito indicauit et dixit sibi coram omnibus, quod ille sit magnus Antychristus, propter quod carcere et vincula diutine est perpessus.” Emler, p. 433.
¹⁷According to Conradus Charles and he were not in a direct contact, although the emperor himself invited the preacher to work in Prague. See Konstantin Höfler, Geschichtsschreiber der husitischen Bewegung, II, p. 37, and Smahel, 2, p. 186 and 193.
¹⁸“Discessio ab Imperio perfecta, ex quo ita distractum est et tota die distrahitur, quod dominus Imperator non possit ex eo panem habere, nisi habeat de Boemia, et quoniam in plura regna et imperia divisum est Imperium Romanorum.” Libellus de Antichristo, ed. Kybal, Matthiae de Janov Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti, III, Praha/Innsbruck 1911, p. 378. See also p. 140 in this study.
society, church and culture. The reign of his successor Wenceslaus IV came nowhere near to replicating the great achievements of Charles, who was perhaps the last medieval emperor to follow in the tradition of Charlemagne. Wenceslaus was unable to realize his ideas and impose his will in the political arena and soon became a ruler characterized by strong words and unimpressive deeds. He was unable to cooperate with the Bohemian aristocracy, nor could he resolve the ongoing civil war in Hungary or take a leading role in the schismatic conflict in the church. He showed instead a very selfish attitude, which might have been the result of his spoiled upbringing. Eventually he even gave up his involvement in imperial matters because he was unable to resolve them. Soon a profound uncertainty infected the whole empire and Bohemia which led to his deposition as emperor in 1400.

Matthias developed a very critical view on the question of power in his day. He writes in the *Regulae*:

For truly there are in Christendom many kingdoms, principalities and duchies without mutual respect, harmony or unity, in this age in regard to which that vision of the Beast is fitting. Indeed they are more divided from each other on account of their disregard for government and their disobedience and dissension.  

Or, a few chapters earlier he symbolically depicts imperial power as a woman sitting on the back of the Beast.

Indeed that woman, that is the multitude of hypocrites, is seen seated upon the Beast. This Beast signifies the secular, that is the imperial and military powers with all the kingdoms of Christians who are in the flesh.

Certainly, Matthias had no reason to sympathize with the emperor or any other lordship. As we have seen, in his case both the church and the secular authorities were trying to undermine the effects of the increase in lay spirituality, which had been the work of Matthias and his fellow preachers. It seems reasonable that Matthias in the same way as he defends his own cause in the *Narratio de Myliczyo* by using strong eschatological images of Elijah

---

19 For an evaluation of the reign of Wenceslaus IV see Jiří Špěváček, *Václav IV 1361-1419, K předpokladům husitské revoluce* [To the Preconditions of the Hussite Revolution], Praha 1986, p. 583 ff.


and even Christ, is paying off a score with Wenceslaus IV. Of course, it would be impossible to directly refer to Wenceslaus as Antichrist, but he might get away with an indirect accusation. To the careful reader of Matthias' writings the message was clear: our current emperor is *Antichristus Magnus*.

Matthias' idea of Antichrist concerns not only secular powers but also the church hierarchy. Matthias writes that Milicius went to Rome to preach to bishops and priests that Antichrist had come and that they were members of Antichrist because "they act against Jesus Christ." This statement led to him being again imprisoned. Later, when he finally spoke to the pope and his cardinals, he told them again "just as courageously that Antichrist is raging against God's holy men." Once again, he did not receive recognition for his honesty according to Matthias, because he "was rejected again and laughed at and devoured by the teeth of Behemoth and Antichrist."

In this case we have a limited possibility to verify Matthias' story. He is referring to Milicius' speeches and texts about Antichrist that were connected to his visit to Rome presumably in 1367. The aim of the trip had been to warn the pope of Antichrist, which is why Milicius wrote the *Sermo de die novissimo*, or "Sermon about the Last Day" in which he summarized his ideas about the coming of Antichrist and the end of time. The text is probably a sermon which Milicius delivered at the papal court or even in St. Peter. Only one part of the sermon speaks explicitly about the church hierarchy and its corruption:

According to the Gloss, the Lord will not come to judge until there is a separation, i.e. until the nations separate themselves from the Roman Empire, or a separation between the churches and the spiritual obedience. This separation is already visible among the powerful, namely cardinals, archbishops, the regular as well as the secular clergy. Kings are already without mercy, judges without justice, prelates are already armed, priests are seducers, and therefore what is said by St. Paul will be fulfilled (2 Thess. 2,8): "And then will be revealed the lawless Antichrist, when those predictions have been fulfilled."

---

22 "Et quod ipsi hiidem, quia contrarie Christo Ihesu faciebant, sint membra Antychristi." Emler, p. 433.
23 "...iterum fuit abieetus et deritus deoratusque a dentibus Behemoth et Antychristi." Emler, p. 433.
24 "Secundum Glosam non veniet Dominus ad iudicium, nisi prius venerator discessio i.e. nisi prius gentes descendunt a Romano imperio, vel discessio ecclesiarum a spirituali obediencia. Iam enim in potencionibus scilicet in cardinalibus, archiepiscopis, sacerdotibus et multis ecclesie tam a spiritualibus quam a secularibus discessio videtur. Iam reges sine misericordia, iudices sine iusticia, iam prelati pilati, sacerdotes seductores; et ideo imelebitur, quod predicatum est, ut dicit Paulus [2 Thess. 2,8]: "Et tunc revelabitur ille iniquus" Antichrist, quando hec
A second text called *Libellus de Antichristo*, probably written shortly after the *Sermo*, gives more explanation about Milicius’ concept of Antichrist. He wrote the treatise as an elaboration and defense of his view to the Roman inquisition which imprisoned him because of his preaching about Antichrist. The preacher clarifies here on the basis of the apocalyptic texts from Daniel 11,12-13 when Antichrist will come. He goes on to identify Antichrist and his character. Milicius sees the corruption of the church and the negligence of the clergy as the *abhominatio desolationis*, or “the abomination that makes desolate.” These are the signs of the coming of Antichrist. Who is Antichrist, is the next question.

Antichrists are many and who does disjoin from Christ and denies him, he is Antichrist. And how do they deny him? When they keep silent and do not have the courage to confess his truth before the people who suppress the truth and justice of God.

Milicius’ idea about the identity of Antichrist is closely connected to injustice and sin. Prelates and clergy belong to him if they live a corrupt life, thus separating themselves from God’s holy people. Milicius’ judgment, however, never unconditionally designates concrete persons from any particular background in church or society as Antichrists. It is left up to the audience or the reader to answer. Here we see a significant difference from the story of Matthias de Janow. According to him, Milicius specifically identified bishops and prelates in Rome to be Antichrists and was therefore imprisoned. Matthias takes the last step of answering the question of who is Antichrist, which Milicius in his sermons and *Libellus* leaves for everyone to decide personally. Matthias radicalizes Milicius’ notions in this sense, changing their direction to apply them to his own argument. With the help of Milicius’ story, Matthias states without any doubt or reluctance that the hierarchy of the church in Rome (and elsewhere) belongs to Antichrist. Matthias pursues his own aims with Milicius’ biography, by slightly but significantly changing its content and language. He is clearly not telling simply the bare facts from the life of his master. He presents his own opinions by putting them in Milicius’ mouth, thereby lending them added


See also p. 136 and 157.
authority. In Matthias’ *Narracio*, the foremost task of the character Milicius is to defend and justify Matthias.

In the subsequent part of his biography, Matthias concentrates on the activities Milicius engaged in after his first visit to Rome. He came back to Prague — the capital and imperial city — which he characterizes as being spiritually close to Babylon because of its corruption and sins. These two evils represent the dragon and the Whore of Babylon from the Apocalypse (17,3 ff). Thanks to Milicius’ zealous struggle with all injustice and vice, Prague escaped from becoming a second Sodom or Gomorrah — the two cities full of sin and iniquity from Genesis 18, which were exterminated because of their degenerate state.

But now because of the mercy of Jesus Christ and due to the merits and labour of Milicius, Sodom returned to its former dignity and Prague went from being Babylon to becoming a spiritual Jerusalem now overflowing in the word of Christ and the life-giving teaching. Because the horrible vices, especially the public ones, are defeated and ‘cast behind the back’ [ls. 38,17], the virtues are agitating in the souls of those who belong to Jesus Christ and lifting up their heads, they continuously and daily become stronger in number and value, while the crucified Jesus makes them grow gloriously.\(^2\)

The main reason for this victory over evil powers is the foundation of a community with a school and a church by the name of Jerusalem at the place of a brothel named Venice. “Up till today,” Matthias writes, this foundation has a great reputation in Bohemia and in Prague. The most holy Lord and God will fulfill this mission that Milicius began by the Holy Spirit who works in the many preachers and followers of Milicius.\(^2^8\)

The message is again clear: the activities which were initiated by Milicius and continued by his followers and preachers like Matthias transformed Prague from a Babylon-like city of corruption into a holy place, equal to Jerusalem. It is through their preaching, of which the “social home” for former prostitutes was an integral part, that the presence of the apoca-

\(^27\)“Ast nunc Christo Ihesu propicio per meritum et laboro Mylyczii Sodoma rediit in antiquam dignitatem et de Babylonie spiritualiter facta est Praga iam Iherusalem habundans omni verbo Christi et doctrina salutari. Nam viciis horrencis presertim publicis iam expugnatis et post turgum projectis, virtutes in Christi Ihesu animabus iam pulsant, caputque erigentes continue atque coddie invalescunt secundum numerum et gradus, Ihesu crucifixo ipsi prestante gloriosa incrementa.” Emler, p. 434.

\(^28\)“Ad designatum illud, quod iam nuper est vocatum, quod dominus Ihesus per Mylyczium saltet quo ad primordia de Praga babylonica et confusa ciuitate ac funesta Jerusalem perfect lucidam ciuitatem supra montem constitutam et amplius perfectet piissimus omnem et deus fideli, quamvis, ut supra dictum est, modo et successio, per suum omnipotentem spiritum in predicaboribus, cuius spiritus inicia karissimo presbitero Myliczio in plenitudine sunt donata.” Emler, p. 434-35.
lyptic threats were removed. Preaching and preachers are able to drive away anti-Christian figures reminiscent of Babylon, which have been brought into the city by the corruption of the hierarchy and those in power. Matthias’ activities — being a continuation of Milicius’ work — are represented by the image of Jerusalem, the Holy City and center of Christianity.

The idea of preachers expelling evil spirits and cleaning a place from sin is also found in Milicius’ writings. Many times he speaks in his sermons about preachers being the ones who have to fight against the devil and his forces. They are like exorcists who use the Word of God in their struggle, i.e. preaching is their sword by which they have to triumph over their enemies. The preacher is in Milicius’ view a messenger and representative of the coming era when sin and corruption will be exterminated.²⁹

Matthias’ biography continues giving special attention to Milicius’ preaching and postils. Although he was originally a “simple priest and writer at the court of the king,” he became a wise and learned preacher who preached even five times a day — three times in Czech, once in Latin and once in German. He accumulated a large amount of knowledge from the Bible and the church fathers, which gave him new thoughts and ideas.

It is likely that Matthias wanted to draw his readers’ attention to Milicius’ non-academic background. This might be the reason why he speaks about the simplex presbyter who nevertheless became a great preacher. As far as we know, Milicius never did study at a university. As we will see, however, his sermons are highly scholastic and do not appear to be written by an unlearned author. It is unlikely that Matthias wanted to put down the value of the academic study since he himself studied for a long time at the Prague and Paris universities. Possibly his point was that to be a proper preacher one does not have to study at a university, but rather follow examples like Milicius.

Anyway, Milicius wrote a new sermon everyday, which was evidently not a difficult task for him. He bound those sermons together in books, which were then copied many times.

All those things were considered to be of minor significance when it is taken into account that he, next to all his labor, confessions, pastoral care, his great hospitality as a priest and his tireless sermonizing, composed large books and wrote them by his own hand, giving them to a multitude of clerics, two hundred or three hundred daily in such a way that what he wrote today, was totally copied by the writers by tomorrow. So he had to compile everyday what about two hundred writers would copy tomorrow. The books which he assembled in this way

²⁹See p. 159 ff.
are numerous, e.g. the sermons, which he called *Abortivus* out of humility, and the postils on all Gospels on the Saints and the entire cycle of feast days, which he entitled *Gratiae Dei*. Every reader can see in those postils and sermons that they do not contain his ideas but rather those from the holy writings, the Bible and the Fathers. How useful are the books to faithful preachers and listeners! I want to point out by referring to the books themselves and their users rather than by recommending them in so many words.\(^5\)

Despite all his merits, Milicius did not gain everyone's sympathy. His fellow Christians in Prague made his life difficult with their threats and persecutions and he was forced to leave Prague. Finally he died in exile in Avignon. Even after his death he was persecuted, "especially from the side of the religious and priests and other church authorities, who had nothing more against him than good works."\(^3\) In Milicius' fate the prophecy of Mt. 23 is fulfilled, warning scribes and hypocritical Pharisees. "Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,\(^3\)" Matthias quoted. In fact, this quotation is the last line of Matthias' biography about Milicius, putting Milicius in the ranks of saints and the faithful who died as martyrs.

In this last paragraph we see again Matthias' tendency to understand Milicius' story as his own story. We know that Milicius got into a big conflict with the mendicant clergy at the end of his life. In the inquisition process which then ensued, he chose to defend himself at the papal court, which was residing in Avignon in those years. By the time the investigations were finished, Milicius had died. His death happened just before the final judgment — an acquittal — was made public. We therefore have to think that Matthias' words about the exile are exaggerated and certainly not

---

\(^5\) "Sed adhuc ista parua esse estimabantur, si cum hoc pensetur, quod cum hiis uniue rsis laboribis, confessionibus, sollicitudinis et pro magna hospitalitate ut presbiter et cum sermocinacionibus taliter indefessis continue magnos libros comortabant et propria manu conscribent eosdem multitudini clericorum uel ducentis uel trecentis coddicis exportant ad scribendum, et hoc sic, quod hodie conscribent, hoc mox in crassinum tulum scriptores copiabant, et ita omni die, puta pro omni die crastino colligere scribendum bene ducentis oportebat; libri vero illi, quos sic collegit, sunt maxime quantitatis, scilicet sermones, quos *Abortivus* propter humilitatem vocitauit, et postille omnium euvangeliorum, scilicet de sanctis et de tempore per tum anni cirkulum, quibus *Gracie dei nomen* imposuit. In quibus postillis et sermonibus quilibet legens videre paterit, quod non sensu suo habuandum sed pocius scripturis sanctis, biblily et doctorum. Qui libri quam sint vitiles fidellibus predicatortibus et auditortibus, magis hoc volo ad ipsos libros et ad illos, qui ipsis utuntur, remittere quam sermonem commendare." Emler, p. 435-436.


\(^3\) Mt. 23,34-35.
completely true as far as Milicius is concerned. The following sentences of the biography can offer an explanation for Matthias' manipulation. Even after Milicius' death the persecutions did not stop, Matthias wrote. As we have seen, he and many other followers of Milicius were suspected of heresy and brought before an inquisitional court in an attempt by the mendicants to regain their influence and benefits. Some like Matthias had to renounce some of their teachings and were not allowed to practice their priestly office for some time. To Matthias this was an attack on truth and true faith by church authorities and the emperor, thus revealing their anti-Christian character. He concludes that the end of time must be near because the faithful are persecuted by the church itself. Therefore, he ended his biography about Milicius with the quotation from the “small apocalypse” of Mt. 23. The prophets and wise men from this biblical text are those fellow preachers and followers of Milicius who are in severe conflict with the church hierarchy.

As became obvious from the previous parts of the *Narratio de Myliczio*, Matthias is deliberately emphasizing key moments in Milicius’ life to use in his own defense. It is not in Matthias’ interest to mitigate the tensions which may have existed between church authorities and Milicius, or even to put them in the right perspective because his own conflict still existed. Matthias presents Milicius as a martyr and a victim of evil forces that are at work even inside the church, because he considers himself to be a victim of his opponents in the church. He identifies himself with the persecuted prophets from Mt. 23 and expects his reader to recall this passage. The conclusion of the text from which he quotes is: “Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation” (vs. 36). The life-work of Matthias de Janow, the *Regulae veteris et novi testamenti*, is an apology for the teachings and views of its author, drawing the line between good and evil, holiness and corruption, Christ and Antichrist. For this aim Matthias used his beloved master Milicius, thus making him an apocalyptic preacher or even Elijah, the last prophet. Matthias succeeded in what many biographers would dream of achieving: he determined the image that generations for hundreds of years would have of Milicius. His biography became the leading guide for any study on Milicius in modern historiography. It is highly fascinating to see the immense influence which the mystification of Matthias de Janow has had on subsequent understanding of Milicius de Chremsir.
2. The *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicici, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis*

We have a second biography about Milicius de Chremsir which is much more extensive and detailed than the *Narracio* of Matthias. It is known by the title *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicici, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis*, “The Life of the Venerable Priest Milicius, Prelate of the Prague Church.” According to most of the scholars who studied Milicius, the *Vita* is of an earlier date than Matthias’ biography, but it is not possible to date it exactly nor to determine its precise origin since we do not know who the author was. Probably it was written by someone close to Milicius, because it contains a large amount of concrete details about the life of Milicius. F. M. Bartoš is of the opinion that Stephanus de Chremsir, a relative of Milicius and one of his followers, wrote the biography.

Although it seems most likely that the core of the *Vita* stems from soon after Milicius’ death and was written by a person from his inner circle of friends, we cannot be sure what was its exact original content and what alterations and additions were made later. The *Vita* survived namely only as a part of the larger work of Bohuslaus Balbinus, a Jesuit historian from the seventeenth century. We do not know of the existence of any separate manuscript of it, which causes considerable indistinctness.

Balbinus was born in Hradec Králové in 1621, shortly after the Battle of White Mountain, which became known as the beginning of the re-Catholization of the Czech Lands after the Hussite times. He was only fifteen years old when he joined the Jesuit order and started to study philosophy at the Prague Klementinum, the order’s main residence in Bohemia. In 1646 he began his study of theology and was ordained a priest in 1649. Till 1661 he taught at several Jesuit colleges all over the country, which led him to write several books on rhetoric. His new assignment was to write the history of the Jesuit province of Bohemia, which is not very surprising since he had shown great interest in historical questions. Some of his publications were, however, criticized and several times censored because of their strong

---

3 Published by Josef Emler in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum I*, Praha 1873, p. 403-430.
5 F. M. Bartoš, *Původce života Miličova* [The Author of Milicius’ Biography], Praha 1956.
6 In Czech his name is written: Bohuslav Balbin. We choose here again the Latin spelling which Balbinus himself used as well. He published only in Latin.
patriotic bias. Balbinus became known as a defender of the Czech language, which he propagated in his book *Dissertatio apologetica pro lingua slovenica, praecipue bohemia*, "Apologetical Study of the Slavonic Language, Especially Czech," which was not published until 1775. In 1679 he published his largest work, *Miscellanea historica Regni Bohemiae*, "Historical Miscellanea from the Kingdom of Bohemia," which also obtained Milicius’ *Vita*. He died in 1688 and became known as the first modern Czech historian who collected and studied sources on Bohemian history. Later Czech nationalist historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries found it difficult to acknowledge his significance in terms of the continuity of the Czech nation since he was a member of the Jesuit order. To those historians the Catholic Church and especially the Jesuits were the oppressors of the Czech nation.

The *Vita* of Milicius appears in the fourth volume of the first decade of the *Miscellanea historica*. The work as a whole — Balbinus did not finish it — was supposed to survey every aspect of Bohemian society and deal with geography, nature, regions, clergy and the church, estates, rulers and kings, the university, the administration, etc. The volume that is of interest to us is entitled *Bohemia sancta* and contains a discourse on 134 Bohemian saints and martyrs. We find here also a biography of the most important Baroque saint of Bohemia, Johannes Nepomucenus, who was canonized in 1729. It is precisely this example which gives us reason to be somewhat cautious concerning the veracity of the *Vita Milicii*. We should take into account the aims and involvement of Balbinus writing about Bohemian saints and their piety.

As we have seen, Balbinus came into conflict with the Church authorities after publishing his writings because he was considered too patriotic. His aims have to be understood within the context of the position of Bohemia in the seventeenth century and during the ongoing re-Catholisization. From 1620 on, after a long time of prevailing Protestantism, the Catholic Church with the help of the Hapsburgs reimposed the catholic faith as the only legal religion, frequently by force. Many Protestants left the country or

---

38 Fully: Dec. I, Liber IV, Pars II, 44-64.
39 See Kucera, o.c., p. 134 ff.
40 Also Jan Nepomucky or Iohannes de Nepomuk.
died. Balbinus himself was a typical representative of the new generation of catholic clergy who spread the faith through education and reinterpreting history. The seventeenth century witnessed a boom in catholic activities and publications that tried to draw people again to the “true faith.” Those efforts were very successful when we consider how quickly Bohemia was recatholicized. Balbinus, however, lived in a period in which competition with the Protestant opponents was no longer an issue. His first concern was not to defend the catholic faith against the Reformation and to defeat Protestantism, since what was left of the Protestants was not of any threat to the Catholic Church. Balbinus’ main aim was to rehabilitate his country in the eyes of the Hapsburg Empire. His oeuvre on Bohemian history was an attempt to defend the piety of the old Bohemian Catholic religion against outside criticism that the Czechs were a heretical nation. He wanted to bring his country back onto the stage of the Hapsburg Empire as a full and honorable member of the Catholic community. Balbinus therefore saw the Middle Ages as the zenith of his country’s history, especially in the fourteenth century and throughout the reign of Charles IV when Bohemia was respected in Europe as an outstanding and leading country of a true Catholicism. In this period there existed no suspicion of heresy or deviation from the true faith, but rather the glory of a pious and peace-loving emperor.

It is this effort which is the motivation behind Balbinus’ writings on Bohemian saints in the Miscellanea historica. It brought him to write the biography entitled “The Life of St. Johannes Nepomucenus: Priest, Martyr and Canon of the Metropolitan Church of St. Vitus” in 1670-71, which was published in the edition Acta Sanctorum of the Bollandists in 1680. Two years later, he published the biography in the Miscellanea as well. It became a decisive factor for initiating the canonization process of the medieval priest Nepomucenus, who became a symbol of the immaculate state of the Bohemian Church, which had its climax in 1729. Balbinus stated in his

41 See for this Kučera, o.c., p. 193 ff. and Josef Petraň, Obraz Karla jako hlavy státu v dějepisectví šesti století [The Image of Charles as the Head of State in the Historiography of Six Centuries], in: Carolus Quartus, p. 87 ff.

biography that he wrote it on the basis of a study of many manuscripts about the saint, even mentioning where he found them. Many scholars already in the years before the final canonization searched for those sources, but did not find any. Their conclusion, therefore, is that Balbinus at least partly made up his story about Johannes Nepomucenus in concordance with his ideas of the Bohemian Church and its needs. He must have been deeply convinced that by a “pious lie” he was serving higher values than historical reality. Balbinus succeeded in his effort, even when there where many doubts about the truth and historicity of the new saint during the canonization process. Johannes Nepomucenus was canonized with enormous pomp in Prague Cathedral and became the best known Bohemian saint ever throughout the world. Balbinus’ legend was translated many times and returned Bohemia to the ranks of the countries of an undoubted Catholic nature.

As in the case of the biography of Nepomucenus, Balbinus says in the introduction of the *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii* that he based his work on an older manuscript. He found his source in the library of the monastery at Třeboň in Southern Bohemia. Balbinus stayed in this library in the summer of 1644 in order to select and copy important manuscripts for the Bohemian history, which was an effort he devoted himself to during his whole life. In the writing of his historical works he used those copies, however, without an exact reference to the source, place and content of the original. So it is unclear which manuscript Balbinus used to write the biography of Milicius. As in Nepomucenus’ case, scholars have tried to locate the source, but were unsuccessful. The library of the Třeboň monastery was closed by Emperor Josef II in 1786 and the property of the library was transported to Prague, where it became a part of the former Jesuit Klementinum library.

The uncertainty surrounding the source Balbinus used leaves room for some speculation. In the first place, it is possible that Balbinus made up the whole story. In this case his statement that he is simply offering a copy of the manuscript he found in the library is a falsehood. He just knew some of the basic facts, probably from the *Narratio* of Matthias de Janow, but basically wrote his own work about Milicius, thus eliminating the apocalyptic orientation of Matthias’s writing and adding to it his own ideas. This possibility is, however, not very likely. As we will see, the *Vita* gives many
details about the life of Milicius which we do not find in the Narracio. It is also not very likely that Balbinus added those details himself since they are very concrete and refer to persons from the direct environment of Milicius, which as we know from other sources really did exist.

A second and more convincing possibility is that Balbinus rewrote a manuscript he found in Třeboň and made some additions to it, thus bringing its aim into line with his own opinions. After all, we know of two manuscripts containing Milicius’ two postils originating from Třeboň which were then transferred to the Prague Klementinum. They are among the richest postils in the collection as far as the Klementinum National Library is concerned. Balbinus gives us his own general idea about Milicius in his introduction to the Vita. According to him, Milicius was falsely appropriated by the Hussite heretics, for whom it was useful to impute to themselves everyone who reproached priests with their faults. Milicius was pressing for an inner renewal of the church, not a separation from it, and deserves, therefore, to be remembered as almost a saint. As we will see, the Vita proposes the sanctification of Milicius. This would be in concordance with the general approach Balbinus had towards Bohemian history, i.e. the rehabilitation of it in the new paradigms of the Catholic Baroque. Bohemian history has to be deprived of its heretical image by drawing attention to its fine and pious representatives.

Our conclusion in light of Balbinus’ involvement in Bohemian history has to be that when reading the Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis we should regard it as an historical work dating from the time of the Baroque reinterpretation of history. We should be aware of the efforts and aims of this movement of which Bohuslaus Balbinus was a leading figure. From this context we can understand the opening of the Vita:

Now I am about to write the life of your servant to the glory of your name, as far as you may give it, Lord, through whom you wanted the church of our times to reflourish in the splendour of the former apostolic grace and virtues, I invoke your love as my helper, which has stimulated me to this long ago. Who would not act and zealously work from your love, in whatever moment of life he is, seeing the testimony of your glory so clear and so faithful, shining uncommonly to the world in our times, who would not do whatever he can in order not to hide from anyone the light lightened by you? But how can a human hand write down that which you

---

44 National Library Prague, Abortivus: I D 37 and Gratiae Dei: XIV D 5 (pars hiemalis) and XIV D 1 (pars aestivalis).
yourself unveil and praise in a much better way through the power of works so as to make it shine to everyone present in your house?\footnote{Scripturus vitam servi tui ad honorem nominis tui, prout tu dederis domine deus, per quem ecclesiam nostri temporis in antiquum apostolicae gratiae et virtutis decus voluisti reflorescere, cum invoco adjutorem, quem jam olim habeo incensorem, amorem tuum. Quis enim de amore tuo, quantumunque spiraculum vitae habens et videns testimonium gloriae tuae tam praeclarum et tam fidelem temporibus nostris mundo insolitum effussisse, non agat et satagat, non det operam, quantumcumque poterit, ne lumen a te incensum tuorum quempiam lateat? sed quantum humano stylo fieri potest, quod melius ipse tarnen per virtutem operum facis manifestum et exaltatum, velit, ut luceat omnibus, qui sunt in domo tua?} Emier, Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum I, p. 403.

The sol justitiae, “sun of justice,” was darkened by clouds and the earth was covered by the shadow of death, when suddenly a splendid light broke through, driving away the rulers of darkness. Those who were struggling with the darkness saw the brightness of Christ’s truth, which could not be annihilated by its enemies.

And behold this most lucid beam, not hindered by any cloud of error, the excellent preacher Milicius, priest of the diocese of Olomouc, from Chremsir, not from sublime parents, but innocent in deeds and pure of heart, full of gifts of mercy from heaven, whose preaching rose like the light up to the full day and illuminated those who were in the darkness and shadow of death.\footnote{“Et ecce radius lucidissimus, nullo erroris nubilo praepeditus, praedicator egregius, scilicet Milicius presbyter Olomucensis dioecesis de Cremsyr, non sublimium parentum existens, sed innocens manibus et mundo corde donisque coelestis gratiae referens, cujus inititis praedicatione quasi lux procedens crevit usque ad perfectum diem, et illuxit his, qui in tenebris et umbra mortis erant.” Emler, p. 403-404.}

The first fact of Milicius’ life in the Vita is set in Prague where he had the “high office” of archdeacon. There is no mention of Milicius working at the imperial chancery as in Matthias’ biography. Milicius fulfilled every condition of the holy and apostolic life already from the time he served as deputy to the archdeacon, in which role he visited the pastors under his jurisdiction. He gave of his own property to the clergy he visited or did repentance all the time wearing nothing more than sackcloth. In his zeal to follow Christ fully, however, he resigned from this position and accepted total poverty. Archbishop Arnestus then asked him to help care for the laity.

“Lord Milicius, what better act can you do than to help the poor archbishop in grazing the flock which is entrusted to him?”\footnote{“Domine Milici, quid melius potestis facere, quam ut pauperi archiepiscopo sibi gregem commissum pascere juvare velitis?” Emler, p. 404.} Milicius did not answer this request directly, but went to Horšovský Týn, a small town in Southern Bohemia which was under the jurisdiction of the archbishop. There he started to preach and was immediately tempted by the devil. The garden of
the house he lived in was full of delicious fruits which would only distract him with the pleasures of the body. Therefore, Milicius, recalling the first sin in Paradise, never returned to the garden.

The emphasis on the role of the archbishop in Milicius' conversion in the *Vita* is one of the many traces of Balbinus' editing hand. It is fully in accordance with the spirit of the re-Catholisization of the seventeenth century to draw the attention to the hierarchy and its decisive role in the church. According to the *Vita* the archbishop interfered in Milicius' life several times, always at moments critical to his future or that of his later disciples and community.

After half a year, Milicius returned to Prague and started to preach in the St. Nicholas Church in the Lesser Town. This activity was obviously successful, and so he expanded his practice to the Main or Old Town where he preached in the St. Giles Church. Many people including even his friends, however, criticized his preaching "because of the incongruence of his colloquial speech" and because of his forgetfulness in matters of holy days. Despite this, Milicius continued in his work recalling that Christ too was laughed at because of his preaching. His decision seemingly proved justified when soon many people came to listen to him and praised God's mercy in sending Milicius to them.

One of the typical characteristics of the *Vita* is Milicius' attitude and relation to women. We hear about rich and proud women attending his sermons, which had such a great impact on them that they took off their luxurious clothes, hats and precious stones. At another place the *Vita* tells about women coming to see Milicius outside of his pastoral duties. He avoided being with them in private and always asked them to keep a proper distance from him. He never shook hands with a woman and refused to make eye contact with them. He asked them to limit their talk to what was vital to discuss. The *Vita* also mentions other people who comprised his audience:

---

9Both the St. Nicholas and the St. Giles churches maintained connections to the reformist movement and the later Hussite movement after the death of Milicius. Part of the St. Nicholas Church was also a school. After the Battle of White Mountain the church was given to the Jesuits who totally reconstructed the buildings. St. Giles was built by two significant bishops of Prague, Johannes IV de Dražic and Arnestus de Purdubicz, and was transferred to the Dominican order in 1626. Today the church and the adjoining cloister are the main seat of the order in the Czech Republic.


51"Quandocunque vero mulier aliqua ad eum pro aliquo consilio, rarissime ad commucum suum, licet multis secum manentibus, tamen invitus intromisit, et publice in domo, in qua
prostitutes, usurers, and artisans “who could not do their job without sin.” They all were converted by Milicius’ words and left their evil practices. Obviously, the audience belonged to both the Czech and German populations of the city, since somewhat further on the Vita states that Milicius also preached in German despite his poor knowledge of the language. The third language he used was Latin when preaching to students and other literate persons.

The biography gives us an image of a zealous preacher who never interrupted his sermonizing. The more he delivered sermons, the holier he appears to have become. Usually he preached twice a day, but often even four times daily. Once he even preached five times in a day according to the Vita — in the morning at St. Giles, immediately after that at the Church of The Holy Virgin in front of Týn, that afternoon again at St. Giles, the fourth time then at the house for former prostitutes and finally at St. George’s at the Castle to the nuns living there. Et ibidem primo prandium suum fecit, “and only then did he have his meal.” Preparing such sermons did not take more than about two hours, often only one hour. The duration of a sermon generally lasted two hours, sometimes even three. Obviously he wrote down those sermons because, as the Vita states, Milicius read them or had them read aloud while he ate breakfast. Then he prepared himself by saying devotional prayers because he did not trust himself to remember the sermon even though he had a very good memory. After his sermons he provided pastoral care to those who needed it, not making any distinction between the rich and the poor.

For two years Milicius continued in his efforts and he assembled a collection of sermons for all Sundays and holy days (de tempore et de sanctis). Copies were made by students and others. The archbishop ordered a survey to be made of the collection to check for errors, however, no flaws were found. The Vita is obviously talking about the collection Abortivus here, the

manebat, et non in occulto loco, neque prope ei consedit, et de salute, in quantum melius valuit, informavit. Et si aliqua mulier sibi loquens corpori suo approquavit, et hoc propter: suam simplicitatem, statim rigide dixit: carissima, nescis remotius stare? Et sicut moris est a se hominibus recedentibus, quod manus sibi invicem porrigunt, nunquam alicui mulieri manum porruxit; et quandocunque mulieri alicui loquebatur, et quandocunque habebat de suo commoco ad alicuam mulierem exire, licet tunica simpliciter sarta et lata erat indutus, tamen raro sine pallio voluit alicui mulieri adstare, vel ei considere, et invitus cum eis longos sermones pertractatabat; et si aliqua diffusi sermonis erat, ipse vero instruebat eam, ut brevibus verbis materiam, de qua locutura erat, explanaret.” Emler, p. 407.

Emler, p. 408.

first postil of the two Milicius left. It got its definitive form two years after Milicius started to work as a preacher in Prague, which was presumably in 1363. The *Vita* indicates that *Abortivus* was ready in 1365, which corresponds with the dating in the framework of our study.

The *Vita* portrays Milicius as having led a very strict and ascetic life. When walking through the streets of Prague, apparently he did not pay attention to anything around him. He rejected all honors which his clerical colleagues tried to bestow on him. He is said to have not spent one moment of his life in vain, “thus always exercising God’s deeds of justice.” He avoided gossips and gluttons. He never rested after a meal or took a walk for health reasons. Not a mundane word passed his lips, but he exhorted people who used empty words which he said came from frivolous minds. He gave his possessions to the poor and bought students paper for copying books. If he saw a half-dressed woman, he ordered his fellow preacher to give her his coat, because Milicius himself did not wear anything extraneous which he could take off and give away. His attitude toward clothing was one of the basic characteristics of the apostolic life and was based on Christ’s words (Lk 3,11): “He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none.” He was very restrained in his consumption of meat and wine because he believed it distracts one from penitence.

The *Vita* presents Milicius as a person who does not belong to any order or specific church. He was rather independent from all institutions. He delivered his sermons in several churches thus, in a sense, forming his own community. We are, however, told that Milicius once seriously considered joining an order. He doubted his mission and capabilities, the *Vita* says, and asked himself whether his lifestyle would not be more perfect if he was a member of some religious order. This “more perfect” life would mean carrying his own cross, crucifying his body, denying himself, serving God and repenting. Finally he decided not to because everybody told him that he would have to give up preaching. This episode indicates that although many of the aims of monastic life were in accordance with Milicius’ ideas,

---

54 Milicius resigned from his position as member of the St. Vitus’ sacristy between 21 August and 23 December 1363. See Loskot, p. 28, and Kaňák, p. 17.
55 See p. 108.
57 “Inter haec vero indignum se judicans verbum dei populo dei seminare, cogitare coepit, quod perfectius esset, mundum totaliter relinquendo religionem aliquam debere in atrum et crucem suam tollere et carmen crucifigere et relinquere et abnegare se ipsum, et ibi temporibus vitae suae deo serviendo poenitere.” Emler, p. 411.
he was not willing to abandon preaching. Here, we have to understand preaching to include pastoral care, which the *Vita* states is an integral part of the “preaching life.” We have to be aware of the fact that the biography presents an image of monastic life which already in the fourteenth century was partly out-of-date. New orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans existed in Milicius’ time which emphasized an active and practical life that included preaching. These differed from the classical orders based on the Benedictine idea of contemplation and isolation. As we will see further on, Milicius came into conflict with both types of orders. By referring only to the classical idea of monastic life the *Vita* may want to express its basic sympathy to it, while pointing out that its forms are insufficient. In general the *Vita* depicts Milicius as having been an obedient member of the church who respected the hierarchy and its rights, but who criticized the corruption of primarily the new “modern” orders of the twelfth century.

As the *Vita* continues, it introduces another episode in Milicius’ life that took place in Rome.

Milicius quit his preaching activities for a long time in order to prepare himself for “deeper” preaching, which begins a new episode in the *Vita*. Then it “comes to his mind” to go to Rome and preach the Word of God. The vocabulary of the *Vita* is very similar here to that of the *Libellus de Antichristo*, which suggests some interdependency between the two texts. The next lines confirm this idea when in both texts we are told that Milicius stopped preaching for one month, prayed and fasted like Daniel, and often “offered the sacrifice of Christ.” The similarities between the texts are obvious:\(^\text{58}\)

---

\(^{58}\) *Vita*, Emler, p. 411; *Libellus de Antichristo*, Kybal, p. 370. According to a footnote in his “Předchůdcev husitství v Čechách” (in: *Dílo Františka Palackého*, vol. 3, p. 81) Palacky also noticed the similarities, but did not draw any conclusions from them.
volens per orationem devotam
et abstinentiam magnam melius
in animo progredi.

Et tunc coepit jejunare jejunium Danielis
panem desiderabilem non comedendo,
in oratione instanter
sacrificium Christo frequenter offerre
et poenitentiam agere in cinere et cilicio.

The similarities may be obvious, but the differences are as well. The *Vita* and the *Libellus* both agree that Milicius fasted like Daniel and that he did penitence. The *Libellus* also states that the author prayed and offered the Sacrifice of Christ — being the Eucharist — frequently, whereas the *Vita* says that Milicius offered the sacrifice to Christ in prayers frequently. There is reason to believe that the preacher believed frequent communion belonged to a pious life. Therefore, the *Libellus* might be a correct reflection of Milicius’ ideas and attitude, while the *Vita* changes the text for its own aim. The *Vita* avoids referring at all to the serious conflict between Milicius and church authorities and presents Milicius as a very pious and holy man of prayer and meditation. This may be the reason why the *Vita* spiritualizes Milicius’ effort towards a frequent communion. At another place, however, the *Vita* allows for the idea of daily communion but strictly in the context of a life of prayer. Anyhow, at this point the *Vita* speaks not about the Sacrifice of Christ, but the sacrifice to Christ, which is done through the mind by praying and by no means acted out in reality. Thereby, the saintly Milicius is made more accessible to the average believer, which may indicate that Balbinus had a hand in writing this edition of the *Vita*.

Pope Urban V had still not arrived in Rome even after Milicius had been there one month. The *Vita* says that Milicius for this reason considered going to Avignon. Urban’s goal was to return the papal court to Rome, thus terminating the “Avignonese exile.” In Avignon the papacy had become a target for all kinds of political tactics by secular powers. Rome would
restore dignity to the papacy and with it to the church as a whole. This was certainly in line with Milicius' aims, however, again something "comes to his mind." He envisions that he has to hang on the door of the St. Peter's Cathedral an announcement promising that he will preach about the coming of the Antichrist. His sermon has to warn both the clergy and the laity that they should pray for the pope and the emperor that they may "lead" the church in spiritual and material matters into an environment where the faithful can serve God peacefully. Again the similarity between the *Vita* and the *Libellus* is striking:

**Vita**

Et cum jam desperasset de adventu domini Urbani V papae in urbem Romanam, tunc praeparavit se, volens iter arripere versus Avenion. Et in tantum venit sibi talis cogitatio in mentem:

vade, intima publice per chartam, quam affiges ostis ecclesiae sancti Petri, sicut solitus fuisti intimare in Praga, quando eras praedicaturus, quod velis praedicare, quod Antichristus venit, exhortaberis clerum et populum, ut orent pro domino nostro papa et pro domino nostro imperatore, ut ita ordinent ecclesiam sanctam in spiritualibus et in temporalibus, ut securi fideles deserviant creatori.

**Libellus**

Et cum iam desperassem de adventu domini nostri pape, tunc preparavi me, iter volens arripere versus Avinionem.

Et interim irruit in me spiritus ita, ut me continere non possem, dicens mihi in corde: Vade, intima publice per cartam, quam affiges hostis ecclesie sancti Petri, sicut sollitus fuisti intimare in Praga, quando eras predicaturus, quod velis praedicare, quod Antichristus venit, et exhortaberis clerum et populum, ut orent pro domino nostro papa et pro domino nostro imperatore, ita ut ordinent ecclesiam sanctam in spiritualibus et in temporalibus, ut securi fideles deserviant creatori.

This is the only place in the *Vita* where the word "Antichrist" appears. It is certainly not in the interest of the orthodoxy of Milicius to emphasize his view on the Antichrist and his role in church and society. Too much attention to Antichrist might raise suspicions of heresy since the idea itself was an integral part of the ideas of many Hussite theologians. In this light, it is not surprising that the only mention of the Antichrist in the whole *Vita* is a quotation — although not introduced as such — from the *Libellus de Antichristo*. The author of the *Vita* knew the *Libellus*, used some of its information but did not follow its intentions.

---

"Vita, Emlet, p. 411; Libellus, Kybal, p. 371."
The story goes on with a quite dramatic scene. Immediately after having fixed his note on the door of St. Peter’s, Milicius was arrested by an “inquisitor from the Dominican order,” even though he was quietly praying in the church at the time. The inquisitor put him in a prison at the Franciscan monastery in the Lateran where he was maltreated. He then maintained a strict fast which even endangered his life. Thanks only to the care of a widow and his pupil from Prague named Theodricus, who had also been imprisoned, was his life saved. Finally, he wrote the sermon he wanted to deliver in St. Peter’s, which made a great impression on his warders. He began to preach regularly to them while remaining in prison. Cardinal Albanensis, who arrived in Rome with the pope, marked his definitive liberation from prison. According to the Vita, Milicius’ enemies were stripped of their dignity and property and begged him for forgiveness. The conclusion of the Roman episode in the Vita is basically similar to that in the Libellus. The latter, however, does not mention the mendicant orders and their brutal treatment of Milicius, but succinctly states that Milicius intended to wait for the pope’s arrival before delivering his proposed sermon. It goes on to say that the inquisitor, however, was interested in Milicius’ ideas and asked him to write them down.

Back in Prague, Milicius engaged even more zealously in his life of piety. The Vita concentrates mainly on his religious activities like praying and saying mass. Day and night he recited prayers, often texts from the Psalms. Whenever he passed a church, he entered it. The most interesting notion in this section is about Holy Communion which Milicius took every day. “Whenever something kept him from holding the divine service, that day he was very much upset and said very anxiously: whenever I am not refreshed by the most holy bread, that day my soul does not receive any comfort from refreshment; but whenever my soul is fed by this holy food, that day all the bigger adversities are turned into ashes.” In this case the Vita does not try to disguise Milicius’ great emphasis on the Eucharist which is here connected to his devotion to prayer and meditation.

Milicius made another visit to Rome which the Vita does not mention. After his return to Prague, he began to work at the Church of the Holy

---

62 Quocunque vero die propter aliquod impedimentum divina non peragebat, eo die nimium turbabatur, et nimium anxius dicebat: quandocunque isto pane sanctissimo non reficior, illo die anima mea nullo consolationis refrigerio potitur; sed quandocunque hoc cibo sanctissimo anima mea pascitur, illo vero die omnes majores adversitates, quasi in favillam mihi rediguntur.” Emler, p. 415.
Virgin in front of Týn, where his older colleague Conradus de Waldhausen was preaching. Conradus, who came from what is today Austria, was invited by Charles IV to come to Prague as a popular preacher. He began his activities not long before Milicius' conversion in 1363, which gives reason to speculate on the influence he may have had on Milicius' decisions. He died in 1369. Milicius was one of his successors at the church in the main square of the Old Town, where he delivered sermons in German. In the meantime, he preached at St. Giles for about three more years, according to the *Vita*. Obviously, the second sermon collection called *Gratiae Dei* dates from this time. The *Vita* says that Milicius wrote down his sermons for Sundays and holy days together with quotations from the Holy Fathers and had them copied by students and others. This implies that *Gratiae Dei* dates from about 1372, which is in accordance with our findings.

Another important event in Milicius' life took place in 1372. Several prostitutes were converted by his preaching, the *Vita* says, and lived at first in a house which a Moravian woman by the name Catharina gave Milicius. Milicius received permission from the archbishop to build an altar in this house where twenty to eighty women lived. Some of these women eventually found proper jobs, others married or returned to their parents. Altogether about three hundred prostitutes abandoned their former lifestyle under the care of Milicius. With the help of the emperor and others, Milicius managed to build a community called Jerusalem which consisted of three houses and a chapel (devoted to St. Mary Magdalene) and whose center was the former brothel Venice. It was a community without a rule, as the *Vita* comments:

> Whatever kind of pious works they did in their penitence, they were not under the rule of some order, neither under the obedience of some new order, but they devoted themselves voluntarily to penitence; neither were they required to wear a particular religious habit, but whatever the Lord provided for them was worn humbly as well as repentantly without any finery." Emler, p. 420.

Under the leadership of Milicius, they lived a life of severe and sometimes austere discipline and penitence. Their piety was no less rigid than that of Milicius. Male persons who were priest or pupils of Milicius also began to live in this community. They also did not live under a specific rule, habit

---

53See p. 109.

44"Quidquid vero talium piorum (operum) in sua poenitentia faciebant, non sub aliqua regula aliquidus ordinis, nec sub aliqua obedientia ordinis novi, sed sponte ad poenitendum se offerebant, neque habitus erat spiritualis pro eis deputatus, sed quidquid dominus administrabat illis simpliciter, tanquam vere poenitentes sine alique palliatione utebantur." Emler, p. 420.
nor a special name, but lived a life faithful to Christ. It were precisely these communities which were suspected of heresy by church authorities in the fourteenth century, as we have seen was also the case of Matthias de Janow. They were basically not subject to church control since they did not accept any officially recognized rule. Their members were at least partially lay people with their own specific forms of religious practice and devotion. According to the *Vita*, however, the archbishop knew about Milicius' community and agreed with it. He gave permission for services in the chapel where each day at least two masses — sometimes up to sixteen — were said.\(^{65}\)

The *Vita* compares this community to the first Christians, whom St. Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians described as prophets glorifying God. But the enemy did not sleep. Prelates, pastors (*plebani*) and religious people began to rage against Milicius, prohibiting him to preach and calling him a heretic, Beghard, hypocrite and sodomite. Milicius suffered their defamations and accusations with great patience as the *Vita* extensively describes in moving words. His suffering meant to him a sacrifice for Christ and truth. His opponents finally formulated twelve articles against him which they sent to the papal court to Master Klenkok who would be in charge of the last trial against Milicius. When the pope heard the accusations, he sent a letter to the Prague archbishop commanding him to put a stop to Milicius' activities. A trial against the preacher was now inevitable, but Milicius chose to appeal to the papal court and so "he fled to the Apostolic See, to whom it has been given to judge spirit and writings."\(^{66}\)

The *Vita* very much defends Milicius while describing the accusations and the trial itself. According to it, Milicius remained a holy and devout person who never forgot to pray or give alms, not even on his way to the papal court in Avignon (the *Vita* neglects to mention this change in location). It strongly suggests that everyone judging Milicius and his activities must conclude that he was a very faithful, orthodox and holy man. That is

\(^{65}\) Ita quod fere praedicatio quotidie ex licentia domini archiepiscopi vigebat, multoties vero diebus festivis quinque vicibus in eodem loco praedicabantur, in teutonico, latino et vulgari sermone. Duae vero missae, una mane de b. virgine et alia de die in cantu omni die perficiebantur, aliae vero lectae sex, aliquando 8 et aliquando 16, et sic fere omni die divinum officium usque ad horam meridiei fiebat." Emler, p. 421.

\(^{66}\) Quod ille videns tantae eorum vesaniae locum dedit et facta appellatione sub publica manu coram generali vicario d. archiepiscopi et coram officiali et d. inquisitore et publice in ecclesia s. Aegidii et in ecclesia s. Galli majori populo ad sermonem conveniente ad sedem apostolicam confugit, cui datum est probare spiritus et scripturas." Emler, p. 425.
also the conclusion Master Klenkok quickly reached when he stood face to face with Milicius and stated that he could not find anything wrong with him. Milicius, who was used to preaching to prostitutes, was then invited to preach to cardinals and eat with them. When a short time later Master Klenkok died, Milicius sent his regrets to the emperor in a letter lamenting the death of his opponent. However, the *Vita* does not forget to characterize the arguments of Milicius’ enemies in Prague, whose representative at the papal court was Master Klenkok. It gives “the tenor” of the letter:

*I announce to Your Highness that one of those who wanted to blacken me while defamating the scene of all virtue and the nature of the beauty of the Bohemian Kingdom has passed from this light, Master Johannes Klenkok, God have his soul.*

In the view of the *Vita* the attempts of Milicius’ opponents to get rid of him damaged the image of Bohemia itself in the end. Milicius’ case is the case of Bohemia. The country is one of virtue and faith thanks to the efforts of Milicius and his fellowmen, but it is in danger of losing its good reputation because of the activities of unholy men like some Prague clergy. This is very much the line of thought Balbinus upheld when he rehabilitated important parts of Bohemian history. It might not be too presumptuous to attribute this quotation to the Baroque historian.

Not long after Klenkok’s death, Milicius died. According to the *Vita*, the Lord wanted to give him the sleep of a precious death and bring him to his eternal peace. The *Vita* does not mention the place of his death which is rather strange. In other instances, it does not hesitate to give precise details and numbers, but here the final resting-place or even an indication of it is missing. Shortly before his death, Milicius dictated some letters one of which was addressed to Cardinal Albanensis, his protector at the papal court. According to the *Vita*, the cardinal was very moved by this letter and commented: “My brother, Pope Urban, may become bright from miracles; however, I judge that this Milicius should be canonized before my brother.”

The text seems to suggest that Pope Urban V is still in office and that the cardinal believes he should canonize Milicius. At the time of his death, Milicius dictated some letters one of which was addressed to Cardinal Albanensis, his protector at the papal court. According to the *Vita*, the cardinal was very moved by this letter and commented: “My brother, Pope Urban, may become bright from miracles; however, I judge that this Milicius should be canonized before my brother.”

---

67 “Et tenor in eisdem literis est talis: Serenitati vestrae significo, quia unus ex illis, qui scenam omnis virtutis et pulchritudinis formam regni Bohemiae infamando in me obtenebrare volebat, ab hac luce migravit, videlicet magister Johannes Klonkoth, cujus deus animam habeat!” Emmer, p. 427. Emmer used the spelling “Klonkoth,” others use “Klenkoth.” Today “Klenkok” is generally used (see Šmahel, 2, p. 185).

death, however, the successor of Urban V (pope from 1362-1370), Gregory XI, occupied the Holy See.

At any rate, the *Vita* has reached its conclusion: Milicius should be recognized as a saint. Immediately after the cardinal’s exclamation, a summary presents the arguments in favor of this canonization.

According to its tenor [i.e. of the letter addressed to cardinal Albanensis — PM] the careful reader could certainly learn at least partially about his blessed heart, how much the tranquility of his mind was in the ruins of his body, how much the serenity of his soul, the loveliness of his spirit in the offering of the host of salvation — which he till his last moment hardly forsook — sustained his members with the vigor of his spirit, meanwhile offering himself as an acceptable sacrifice to God with the fragrance of loveliness. In his infirmity he did not cease his pious works, and whenever he received anything from devout people he ordered that it be given to the poor.

Milicius should be canonized because of his absolute spiritual devotion, his sense of sacrifice and his enduring care of the poor. These are the exact characteristics of Milicius’ life that are constantly emphasized in the *Vita*, leading to the cardinal’s final verdict — this man was among the finest spiritual treasures of Bohemia and therefore deserved to be canonized.

The last part of the *Vita* again gives some reason to question its origin and history. Firstly, we read that the path of “you, the most beloved father” has ended. Here Milicius is addressed directly. On St. Peter’s Day in 1374 (29 June) he was taken away from the sorrows of this world to the glory of the Eternal Kingdom. Then, the *Vita* closes with the regular trinitarian formula as in scholastic sermons. This conclusion is, however, not definitive, but the text goes on with a very moving elegy.

He was a father and what kind of a father! It seemed as if our own father had passed away, and yet a father of the whole world. (...) You were a perfect example, the appearance of virtue. “You are the exaltation of Israel, you are the great glory of Jerusalem,” an olive tree full of fruit, an abundant vine, a blooming palm, a voluminous cedar, an exalted maple, a select vase, a vase of honor in the House of God.

---

69 “Ex cuius nimirum tenore possit diligens lector beatum illius vel ex parte alique pectus agnoscre, quanta illi in ipsa sui ruina corporis tranquillitas mentis, serenitas ammi, svavitas spiritus in oblatione hostiae salutaris, quam usque ad excessum ultimum vix aliquando intermissit, artus sibi vigore spiritus sustentabat semetipsum pariter offerens acceptabilem hostiam deo in odoem svavitatis [reference to Phil. 4,18]. In ipsa vero infirmitate a piis operibus non cessabat, quia quandocunque ab aliquis devotis sibi aliquid dabatur, pauperibus impertiri jubebat.” Emler, p. 429.

68 “Pater erat, sed qualis pater! Qui vidcbatur abire nobis quodammodo proprius, tamen toti mundo communis. (...) Tu perfectionis exemplar, virtutis forma. Tu gloria Israel, tu laetitia Jerusalem [parafrase of Judith 15,10], oliva fructifera, vitis abundans, palma florida, cedrus multiplicata, platanus exaltata, vas electionis, vas honoris in domo dei.” Emler, p. 430.
It seems fairly safe to suggest that this second ending was added at a later date, most likely at the moment of its final edition by Balbinus. The rich and exuberant vocabulary in the second ending, of which we have quoted only a fragment, is in strong contrast to the first conclusion with its rather liturgical setting.

The appearance of the two endings of the Vita confirms the already existing idea that the Vita as we read it today is the work of Bohuslaus Balbinus from the seventeenth century. He has given the work its final style and tone. The Vita reflects Balbinus’ language which aimed at rehabilitating Bohemian history and which attempts to demonstrate that many of the great historical figures in it are excellent and faithful Catholics whose deepest motivation was the cause of the church. The large number of detailed facts, however, indicates that Balbinus must have referred to some sources or even larger texts which he then simply reworked. The numbers and persons which Vita mentions, e.g. in the case of the community Jerusalem, are too exact not to have come from other sources. We have identified the Libellus de Antichristo as one of those sources.

We should therefore conclude that the Vita as we know it certainly does not stem from the time immediately following the death of Milicius. We can reach a similar conclusion from a different angle. We know that after his death the community was closed down and the buildings were handed over to the Cistercian order. Many of Milicius’ pupils subsequently got into trouble with church authorities and were forbidden to preach. Matthias de Janow was one such example, but trial reports indicate that there were more. As his writings demonstrate, Matthias saw the hand of Antichrist at work in these events. His view was certainly shared by many followers of Milicius. It seems justified to suggest that some of the roots of the austere eschatology and apocalypticism of the early Hussites lay in the works and influence of Milicius’ community. It would be impossible not to write shortly after his death a biography about Milicius that reflected the spirit of eschatological feelings. The Vita, however, misses almost every opportunity to make an eschatological reference and presents Milicius simply as a pious and holy man. Bohuslaus Balbinus, architect of the Baroque rehabilitation of Bohemian history, obviously had a decisive influence on the final edition of the Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii, praelatii ecclesiae Pragensis.
3. The Life of Milicius de Chremsir: A Reconstruction

Everything we know about Milicius is profoundly influenced by the biographies of Matthias de Janow and Bohuslaus Balbinus whose aims colored both their writings. Matthias wanted to defend his own ideas which brought him into conflict with church authorities by citing Milicius as his predecessor and model. Balbinus’ intention (as the final editor of the Vita) was to rehabilitate figures of Bohemian history by emphasizing their holiness. Many of the dates of both texts seem to be reliable, but some are changed according to the aims of the specific author or editor. Let us recapitulate what we can know about Milicius’ life.\footnote{Many data from other sources like Vatican documents, papal correspondence and bulls, trial documents, etc. have been collected and, as far as Milicius is concerned, worked out by the following authors: F. Palacky, Über Formelbücher zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte. Ein Quellenbeitrag zur Geschichte Böhmens und der Nachländer im XIII. und XV. Jahrhundert, Praha 1842-1847; J. Klicman e.a. (ed.), Monumenta Vaticana res gestas bohemicas illustrantia, Praha 1903 ff.; F. Tádra (ed.), Soudni akta konsistofe pražské [Process Acts of the Prague Consistorium], Praha 1893-1901; František Loskot, Milič z Kroměřížu, Otec české reformace, Praha 1911; Miloslav Kaňák, Milič z Kroměříže, Praha 1975.}

We do not know exactly when Milicius was born. Both Loskot and Kaňák suggest that he might have been born around 1320. Loskot deduces this from the observation that Milicius must have been of a ripe age when he began to preach in 1363 after having held many responsible positions.\footnote{Loskot, p. 15-16.} Kaňák uses more detailed arguments derived from his hypothesis about Milicius’ origins. The preacher was probably born from a noble family that owned property near Tečovice, not far from the present town of Zlín in Moravia. His parents were Bohunko and Rychka of Theczowyc (Tečovice), who had two other sons Raczko and Bohunko. They both married before 1350. We know that their third son, Milicius, was already a priest in 1348. It is possible that Milicius began his career as a priest and soon became a member of the chapter of Chremsir (Kroměříž) in whose documents his name appears also in 1353. It is therefore likely that his date of birth was shortly before or after 1320.\footnote{Kaňák, p. 11 ff. Kaňák bases his theory mainly on J. Pilnáček, Moravští rodové [Moravian Families], 1930; G. Wolny, Kirchliche Topographie von Mähren II, Brno 1857; and P. von Chlumecky e.a. (ed.), Moravské zemské desky, Kraj Olomoucký [Moravian Land Documents, District of Olomouc], I, Brno 1856.}

We also know nothing about Milicius’ education and activities before he arrived at the Prague chancery. Some suppose that he might have studied in
Italy, but no documents are available to confirm this. He obviously did not study at any university since he did not have a degree. Most likely he was educated at the Latin school of Olomouc Cathedral and then became a priest in this diocese. He might have worked in the town of Chremsir where the bishop of Olomouc had his summer palace and a part of his chancery. In this environment Milicius could have obtained his connections to Prague, especially to the chancery of Charles IV. The bishop of Olomouc Johannes Oczko de Vlašim became one of the main advisors to the emperor and often accompanied him on his journeys. In 1364 he became archbishop of Prague. It is possible that Milicius entered the Prague chancery thanks to the intervention of this former bishop of Olomouc. In any case, Milicius is documented to have been an employee of the emperor’s chancery from 29 June 1358. From that date till 18 February 1360 he was the registrar (registrar), then till 17 September he was a corrector (copy editor), and finally a notarius (scribe) from 10 November 1360 till 7 October 1362.

From the surviving documents we further learn that Milicius visited Nürnberg in the autumn of 1358, Wroclaw in February 1359 and again Nürnberg in January 1362. These journeys were obviously connected to the visits Charles IV himself made to those destinations shortly before Milicius or at the same time. The emperor was, for example, in Nürnberg in June and July (and briefly in September) in 1358, in Wroclaw in November of the same year — where he among other things strengthened his links to and influence on the diocese — and stayed again in Nürnberg from September 1361 till April 1362.

At the chancery he worked under the guidance of Johannes Novoforen-sis who was the chancellor of Charles IV from 1354 till 1374 and at the same time bishop of Litomyšl, a small town in Western Moravia. Spiritually this man belonged to the movement known as Pre-Humanism. Johannes studied in Italy where he encountered the new thinking and spirituality

74 See Emler in the introduction to the volume I of Fontes rerum bohemiarum, p. XXXII.
76 Alfons Huber (and Johann Friedrich Böhmer), Regesta imperii VIII. Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Kaiser Karl IV. 1346-1378, Innsbrück 1877-1889.
77 Huber, nr. 2800 ff. See also Loskot, p. 19.
79 In Czech "Jan ze Středy" or in German "Johann von Neumarkt."
presented by figures such as Dante and Petrarca, with whom he corresponded regularly. He became a strong promoter of the Order of the Austin Hermits which also promoted the ideas of the new spirituality. Those reformist ideas strongly emphasized the importance of personal piety and perfection in spiritual matters. The attention on the individual and his illumination was combined with a renewed interest in rhetorics as a means of spreading those views. Johannes himself founded two monasteries for the Austin Hermits in his own diocese of Litomyšl.80

In January 1361 Milicius was granted a benefice by papal provision which had to be connected to some function in the administration of the Prague diocese. In documents dating from 1363 Milicius is cited as a canon of the St. Vitus Cathedral, where his duty was to guard the church and the tomb of the main Bohemian patron, St. Wenceslaus.81 He was the holder of some agricultural property in Tmaň. In his position at the cathedral he had many practical responsibilities concerning the maintenance of the cathedral building and the masses celebrated there. In 1362 he quit his work at the emperor’s chancery, where he is mentioned for the last time on 7 October of that year. It is possible that he left this job in order to be able to take on a new function in the Prague diocese. Probably in the autumn of 1362 Milicius was appointed as vicar-archdeacon of Johannes de Marolio, who was archdeacon of Prague from April 1362 till at least 1367.82

We do not have direct proof for these last events but are forced to piece together information provided to us by some other sources. In the first place the *Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii* tells us that Milicius for some time held the position of archdeacon.83 It is, however, certain that not he but Johannes de Marolio who did not live in Prague was appointed to this office. This was not unusual in the fourteenth century when above all the honor and

---

the income of the function and not the work itself was of interest to the nominee. Therefore, deputies were appointed who actually carried out the activities required by the function. From 1360 till 1362 the cleric Wenceslaus, who was a pastor at the St. Giles Church, held the deputy position. Milicius obviously became his successor and stayed in this office for about one year, which required him to visit local parishes and clergy. It was Milicius’ task to evaluate the morality of the Prague diocese and to take steps to correct or improve it whenever necessary. Anyone in such a function had to experience many situations in which members of the church hierarchy appeared to be people of dubious morality.

We know that by the end of 1363 Milicius resigned from his functions at the Prague Cathedral, because his successor is mentioned for the first time on 23 December of that year. Now we enter the period on which both the Narratio of Matthias de Janow and especially the Vita give many details. Probably in the same year or a few years earlier, the second famous popular preacher of fourteenth century Prague Conradus de Waldhausen started his activities in Prague. In any case Milicius got to know his future colleague at this time, as becomes obvious from the events connected to Conradus’ death in 1369 when Milicius took over his responsibilities at the Church of the Holy Virgin in front of Týn. Conradus could have played an important role in Milicius’ decisions around 1363, when he radically changed his life. The Austrian preacher, who came to Prague on the invitation of Charles IV, was a typical example of the many popular preachers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Der Haupttenor seiner Bestrebungen war immer wieder: Belehrung und Aufklärung der Unwissenden, der Laien wie der Mönche, die um des Profits, der aus der Dummheit zu ziehen ist, oder auch nur aus Nachlässigkeit von jenen, die es besser wissen müßten, in ihrer Unwissenheit belassen werden.

---

84 V.V. Tomek, Dějepis města Prahy [History of the City of Prague], V, Praha 1905, p. 131.
85 An idea of this is given by the edition of the only surviving visitation protocol from the fourteenth century: Ivan Hlaváček, Zdenka Hledíková (ed.), Visitační protokol pražského arcibiskupství pražského arcibiskupa Pavla z Janovic z let 1379-1382 [Visitation Protocol of the Prague Archdeacony of the Prague Archdeacon Pavel de Janovice from 1379-1382], Praha 1973.
86 The exact year of Conradus’ arrival in Prague is not certain. Some suggest that he started in 1358 (so: Václav Vladivoj Tomek, Dějepis města Prahy [History of the City of Prague], III, Praha 1893, p. 286ff.), others date the beginning of his preaching in 1363 (so: František Loskot, Konrad Waldhauser, předchůdce mistra Jana Husa [Predecessor of Master Johannes Hus], Praha 1909; or Heinrich Felix Schmid, Konrad von Waldhausen, 1961).
Preaching was approached as a form of education that had to be brought to the illiterate and sinful in order to convince them of the correctness of the church's faith. In Conradus’ case — like in many cases of popular preachers — this education also implied a severe criticism of the lifestyle and attitude of many members of the clergy and the mendicant orders. The ideal of apostolic poverty, which such preachers supported in their sermons, was a source of austere reprimands addressed to many practices of the church hierarchy.

Conradus may have inspired Milicius. After leaving his offices at Prague Cathedral, Milicius stayed in the small town of Horšovský Týn in Southern Bohemia, which was under the patronage of the archbishop, for about half a year. This stay was possibly a period of reorientation and preparation for things to come, since afterwards Milicius started his career as a popular preacher. Probably after six months Milicius returned to Prague where he began his activities at the St. Nicholas Church in the Lesser Town and soon also at the St. Giles on the other side of the river in the Main Town. In this period Milicius began to compile his first postil *Abortivus* which is ordered in its arrangement of Sundays and holy days in a way that largely follows the year 1363. He added the finishing touch to the postil in 1365. Central to his sermons is the idea of reforming the moral life of the church and its hierarchy through preaching. In the corruption of the clergy Milicius sees the face of evil forces led by Satan, which unveil the *eschaton* or the end of time. Although his criticism is severe and without compromises, Milicius' ideas about the church, the papacy and the relations between church and society are rather traditional in a medieval light. The origin of the first sermon collection already at the very beginning of Milicius’ preaching activities leads to the conclusion that from the outset he understood himself and his preaching from within the tradition of the preachers’ movement of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Both this movement and Milicius considered preaching to be the main instrument for educating people in the right faith.

Probably in the Spring of 1367 Milicius went to Rome to submit his views to the pope and his court. The pope was Urban V, whose civil name

---

88 The German name for this place still refers to the archbishop’s patronate: Bischofteinitz.
89 See p. 108.
90 See ch. IV.
91 See ch. III.
was Guillaume Grimoard and who was allegedly a very pious man. When he was chosen pope in 1362 he was not a member of the College of Cardinals but abbot of the Benedictine monastery of St. Victor in Marseilles. The main issue during his papal reign became his relation to the cardinals and to the French rulers. During the Avignonese exile the College of Cardinals had become a very powerful body with extensive rights which in a serious way limited the ability of the pope to dictate his own policy. Ten years earlier at the election of Innocent VI, the cardinals had used this nomination to fix and strengthen their position by agreeing on a document about the rights of the college, which had to be respected by the future pope. Many of the measures of Urban V, who himself had not been a member of the cardinals' college, made him quite unpopular among the cardinals. For example, he forbade them to wear shoes with a sharp toe, which was a symbol of the rich and part of the modern fashion of this period. He also took many steps to counteract the misuse of church properties. His aim was to give back to the church its authority and credibility, and he understood very well that in order to reach this aim, he had to improve the education of the clergy and its moral level in matters of simony, concubinage and greed. For this same reason he wanted to liberate the church from the captivity in which it was held in Avignon by the French rulers. The papal court lost its independence and authority in a political sense as both the English and many Italian rulers had profound doubts about the significance of the papacy. Instead of the strong influential body it once was, it became a toy in the political game between the powerful states in the fourteenth century.

All those circumstances led Urban V to the idea of a return to Rome, still officially the property and seat of the papacy. The city, however, had been devastated during the time when the papal court found its safety in Avignon and was therefore no alternative for the cardinals who were used to their pleasant life in the Provence. Moreover Italy was divided among many local rulers and warlords making a safe return to Rome almost impossible. Nevertheless, Urban was determined to realize his aims and was backed by the Emperor Charles IV and also Petrarca, who urged him to return to the capital of Christendom. Finally in April of 1367, the pope left France by boat from Marseilles, accompanied by only five cardinals. The core of the administration remained in safety at Avignon, distrusting their own leader.

After a long and complicated journey, Urban arrived in Rome on the 16 October 1367 guarded by a strong army of Italian noblemen. Despite his strong will the pope did not succeed. Forced by his main Italian enemy Visconti, the ruler of Northern Italy, and by the outbreak of a war between England and France, he was forced to flee back to Avignon in September 1370. A few months later he died a broken man.

Milicius obviously had many reasons to trust Urban V since his intentions of reform and emphasis on moral life were largely similar to his own views. Urban's departure from Avignon may have been the immediate reason why Milicius went to Rome. When the preacher arrived there, Urban was still on his way to the eternal city. From the *Vita* and the *Libellus de Antichristo* we know what happened. When Milicius made public his intentions to preach in St. Peter's he was arrested by the inquisitor and imprisoned. In a sermon preached during a private audience led by the inquisitor, he explained his ideas about the main reason for his visit to Rome: the coming of Antichrist. This sermon, which survived under the name *Sermo de die novissimo,* says that though many are unable to see Antichrist because of their blindness, the great enemy of truth is about to come. The corruption and injustice in the church led by prelates and in the world under the rule of kings and princes was evidence of this coming. The sermon presents some ideas about the origin and activities of Antichrist common to the fourteenth century. Antichrist will be born from the tribe of Dan in Babylon, the place of confusion, and will seek power over the world as a snake during a battle that will last for years. Finally, he will reign three and a half years and the Jews will take him as their Messiah. He will persecute and kill faithful Christians. Elijah and Enoch will appear to strengthen the remaining believers. He will burn all books that present the true faith and finally, he will be venerated and worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem. When he tries to ascend to heaven — the parody of the life of Jesus has to be completed — he falls back to earth because of the weight of his sinful body and then he will be killed by the Archangel Michael. Antichrist's followers will, however, have the possibility to do penance before the Judgment Day. Nobody knows exactly when this day will be, but it will be preceded by destruction and death. Milicius took this scenario of Judgment

---

93 See p. 36 and 51.
Day from the Book of Revelation (c. 8-11) where it is told that seven trumpets will sound on this day. Everyone will be judged three times: by God, his own conscience and his guardian angel. Finally, Satan and his demons will take evildoers to hell and the holy will enter God's eternal kingdom.

The ideas Milicius expressed in the *Sermo de die novissimo* are by no means original, but rather belong to the development of apocalyptic and eschatological views of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They are largely set in a context of reform and moral criticism, which lent the originally horrifying images an individual and historical nature. Some call this process "the banalization of evil," thus indicating the internalization of cosmological images in a historical and personal context. One source on Antichrist which might have been familiar to Milicius is the so-called *Velislai Biblia Picta* dated in Prague about 1350. Most likely the owner of the book was Velislaus who was *notarius* and *protonotarius* at the Prague chancery between 1341 and 1351. This edition of the Bible contains a story in pictures about Antichrist which is very similar to the story Milicius told in his sermon. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the *Velislai Biblia* is the absence of any detestable feature in the pictures of Antichrist. He does not appear in any way as a monstrous person but has a normal human body, and his face is very similar to the one commonly used to depict Christ. Only a devilish figure in the background makes it clear that we are dealing with Antichrist here. We are confronted with a human being whose story to a large extent is an imitation of the story of Christ.

This might confirm the impression that Milicius' image of Antichrist in his *Sermo de die novissimo* is in the first place that of a historical character. With the name Antichrist he did not imagine an ahistoric creature, but

---


someone who proved through his deeds to be Antichrist, i.e. someone in the service of Satan. Antichrist is in Milicius’ terms mainly a moral indication. Milicius’ second written work on Antichrist, the *Libellus de Antichristo*, gives the same impression. This work originates from the same visit to Rome and may have been written shortly after the *Sermo*. The sermon did not convince the inquisitor of Milicius’ orthodoxy and he asked him to write down his ideas. The *Libellus* is meant as defense of Milicius’ attitude and opinions about the church, but contains also some exhortations addressed to the pope on how to realize serious reforms in the church. It opens with a short description of the confusion in which Milicius found himself when contemplating Antichrist and the “desolating sacrilege” from Mt. 24,15. Considering this initially as a voice from the devil, he sought peace in meditation and prayer but did not find it and therefore decided to submit his vision to the pope. Urban V, however, had not yet arrived in Rome as we mentioned, and so Milicius’ confusion continued till he decided to announce his sermon at the entrance of St. Peter’s.

In the *Libellus* Milicius gave two possible years for the coming of Antichrist, both based on Dan.12,11-12 the classical text for foretelling the events connected to the end of the times. The first year is 1365, when the army of Charles IV went from Avignon to Germany, Milicius wrote. The second possibility is 1367, which is the very year the preacher visited the pope in Rome. Once again he points to the clergy’s laxity, avarice and indifference as signs of Antichrist’s work. Those prelates who refuse their vocation to preach and communicate the delicious gifts of the faith. The genealogy of Antichrist in *Libellus* is similar to the one in the *Sermo*, although the *Libellus* elaborates less on this subject. According to Milicius, there are many antichrists, which is a description of everyone who denies Christ by his deeds. He does not know, however, who the Great Antichrist is since God’s Spirit will not reveal the identity of this final enemy of Christ.

He wanted to speak with the pope about all these ideas and give him advice on how to lead the church in the direction of reform. Once more, he mentions the signs of Antichrist’s influence: heresies, sects, brotherhoods of murderers, Beghards and Beguines etc. Also he notes that the empire is in a deep crisis as all rulers are divided against one another and the emperor is losing his power. Only the pope can take action to bring both the church and society back into a state of salvation by sending out preachers to separate the good seed from the weeds or to reveal Gog and Magog, i.e. the godless. Preachers will bring together the faithful before the arrival of the Judgment
Day. They will unite the church, healing it from its division of sin and corruption. To start this preaching campaign, he advised the pope to announce a general council in Rome where the bishops would be instructed on the *modus corrigendi*, “the ways how to correct.” The bishops then need to send preachers from a religious and secular background to preach to the people.

In the last part of the *Libellus* Milicius promised the pope that he would understand the nature of the situation of the church and society if he follows his advice. Then, the Scriptures will be revealed to him and unveil the Antichrist. But if he does not, then God’s anger will come over the world without any warning to those who are eating, drinking and living in sin. As Milicius said in his final sentences, he wrote his apology in prison waiting for the pope to initiate the liberation of Israel or the holy church.

Many of the themes from both the *Sermo de die novissimo* and the *Libellus de Antichristo* we find as well in the two postils *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei,* even though the figure of Antichrist hardly appears in them. The sermon collections present preachers as the ones who are finally uniting the church by separating good and evil, thus preparing for the Judgment Day. They consider the corruption of the church as a sign of the end of time, but are very reluctant to use the figure of Antichrist. We must conclude, therefore, that Milicius’ thoughts were concentrated on Antichrist as such only for about one year in 1367, after which the image of the final enemy lost its urgency for him. He, however, stuck to his view on preachers and their role in the context of the end of the age, which we describe as “immanent eschatology.”

When he wrote the *Libellus* Milicius was still in prison. Soon after the arrival of Urban V in October 1367 he was released, apparently because of a recommendation from Urban’s brother, Cardinal Grimaud, as the *Vita* recalls. We do not know anything further about his consultations with the pope after which the preacher returned to Prague. The next information we have on him is from a letter sent by Milicius to Urban V possibly in 1368 or 1369.98 The aim of it might have been to underline once more the necessity

---

97 See ch. IV and V.
98 Edited by Ferdinand Menčík, Milič a dva jeho spisy z roku 1367 [Milicius and two of his writings from the year 1367], in: Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk, Praha 1890, p. 318-325. Menčík proposed an earlier dating which is however not likely in the context of Milicius’ second visit to Rome. Amedeo Molnár placed the letter in another context, dating it before both the *sermo* and the *Libellus*. He suggested that Milicius wrote the letter from Rome waiting for the pope, who at that moment left Avignon. See Milan Opočenský and Jana
of moral reform in the church. Basically, Milicius repeated the views and proposals from the *Libellus*. He portrays the pope as the only one who can initiate this process of reform because he has a life-giving medicine at his disposal. Milicius extensively describes the bad situation in the church — the clergy not taking any action against sin, bishops neglecting their office as pastors of their flock, prelates practicing simony and injustice instead of preaching the truth, and canons and monks taking part in tournaments rather than singing in church and finally, all requiring money for their religious services. And meanwhile, the world is full of heretics and sects, Beghards and Beguines. The only way Milicius saw of returning to a state of holiness was by calling a general council to instruct the hierarchy to profoundly change their own behavior and enact moral reform in the church.

In contrast to the *Libellus* the letter to Urban V does not mention Antichrist or other controversial apocalyptic ideas. Only the two creatures Behemoth and Leviathan appear, taken from the Book of Job and commonly symbolizing the devilish origin of evil. We can only guess the reason for this difference. Possibly, Milicius wanted to convince the pope of the necessity for reform by using an argument with which Urban could agree. Therefore, Milicius omitted his thoughts on the coming of Antichrist and the true apocalyptic background of the corruption of the church for political reasons. Therefore, this letter could have been more acceptable to the pope than the *Libellus*. Another reason could be that after the experience of his first visit to Rome and his imprisonment, Milicius returned to a purer orthodoxy by leaving out austere notions of an apocalyptic nature. Possibly the inquisitor or the pope himself convinced Milicius that by stressing the coming of Antichrist and even fixing a date for it could mean that one day he would find himself on the other side of the border between orthodoxy and heresy. In that case, the preacher more or less renounced his views simply by restraining from referring to them anymore. In both cases Milicius’ decision to write only about the moral corruption of the church and the necessity of profound change while omitting any kind of apocalyptic ideas is a denial of his true philosophy; his letter to Urban V reduces apocalypticism to nothing more than a possible understanding of the nature of the crisis, which does not need to be voiced or brought up in sermons. Apocalypticism can therefore be omitted.

The letter could have been connected to Milicius’ second visit to Rome in 1369, while pope Urban V was still residing in the city. This visit was apparently very short according to the *Vita*. Milicius possibly had to return to Prague because of the death of Conradus de Waldhausen, his fellow preacher at the Church of the Holy Virgin in front of Týn. He took over the preaching practice of Conradus at least in part and began to preach regularly at this major church in the Main Town. This certainly implies that he had to preach in German as well since the inhabitants of this part of Prague were largely German-speaking. As we have seen, the *Vita* speaks about Milicius’ sermons being in three languages: Czech, German and Latin. After some time, Milicius began with the preparation of a second sermon collection which he called *Gratiae Dei*. This postil could be dated to 1371-1372\(^9\) and contains homilies rather than the scholastic sermones of Abortivus. The scholastic sermons were the common form in the fourteenth century but forced the preacher to preach thematically, extracting themes from the biblical text. Homilies like the ones in *Gratiae Dei* provided the preacher with much more freedom to interpret and comment on the biblical text. Obviously, Milicius preferred the less sophisticated form of the homily at this time and avoided the somewhat intellectual approach of the thematic sermon. *Gratiae Dei* seems to be better balanced than its forerunner *Abortivus*.\(^{10}\) The explanation for this could be that Milicius had become more mature in his preaching after almost eight years of practice.

On at least three occasions in those years Milicius was invited by the archbishop to deliver a sermon to a synod of the Prague diocese. Archbishop Arnestus convened a meeting of his clergy twice a year, on St. Vitus’ and on St. Luke’s Day (15 June and 18 October).\(^{101}\) Arnestus might have aimed to improve the knowledge and morality of the clergy by instructing them on those occasions. That would explain why he invited Milicius to deliver a sermon, since the preacher was known for his efforts in this field. The three Synodical Sermons we know today cannot be dated exactly, but we can fix some possible years of origin by excluding the years in which Milicius was unable to preach in Prague or was rather considered too controversial by

---

\(^{10}\) See p. 101.
\(^{101}\) Loskot, p. 43 ff. The sermons are edited by Vilém Herold and Milan Mráz, *Iohannis Milicii de Cremsir Tres sermones synodales*, Praha 1974, who concerning their dating conclude that it is impossible to date them more precisely than falling between the years 1364-1373 (p. 31).
many of the clergy. The year 1367 is not possible because Milicius was in Rome from the spring till autumn of that year. In the autumn of 1369, Milicius visited Rome again. The years after 1372 are unlikely since the conflict between Milicius and a larger group of the Prague clergy grew to serious dimensions. Therefore the three sermons most likely stem from the years between 1364 (Milicius came back to Prague in the autumn) and 1366, 1368 till spring 1369, 1370 and 1371.

In the sermons Milicius mainly analyzed the reasons for the moral corruption of the church, which are very much similar to the criticism he brings forward in the letter to Urban V. Many priests are hypocrites, seeking only money for their services but providing no pastoral care. They neglect their duties in favor of eating and drinking, gambling, dressing expensively and ostentatiously, going to brothels and practising simony. He recommends that the way to begin changing this situation is with an open and courageous criticism toward everyone who is damaging the church, regardless of his position. Then the clergy has to live according to the principles of their vocation, i.e. they have to look like shepherds after their people. Priests have to live a holy life like that of the apostles and the first Christians.  

One of the effects of Milicius’ continuous popular preaching was the conversion of some prostitutes who then formed a community. This group seems to have grown quickly and apparently also men and some of Milicius’ male pupils joined it. This led to the foundation of Jerusalem at the place of a former brothel named Venice. The Vita gives many details about the persons involved in the community. Before it broke up, it might have contained some twenty nine houses and a chapel that could hold up to eighty people. A total of three hundred people lived in the community for varying periods of time during those years. According to the Vita, both the archbishop and the emperor supported Milicius in this project, despite the fact that such a concentration of lay people must have evoked fear among the hierarchy. Lay communities were very quickly suspected of heresy as its members lived together without a fixed rule like monastic orders.

Jerusalem and Milicius’ preaching became the main points of an accusation formulated by several Prague clerics in 1373. We know, however, about earlier conflicts, possibly in 1368, when Milicius was accused by some

---

102 Herold, p. 20 ff.
mendicants. In his letter to Urban V he referred to this conflict and called his opponents “offenders of the evangelical truth.” A fragment of some interrogations that possibly took place during this case presents the responses of seven citizens of Prague who belonged to Milicius’ audience. They were asked what Milicius told them about mendicants and their authority and, according to the fragment, they all answered that Milicius instructed them to confess only to their own pastor and not to the mendicants who have no authority to hear confession, unless they have permission from the archbishop. In other words, those interrogated denied that Milicius acted libellously toward the mendicants.

The accusations made against him in 1373 were, however, more serious. In January of that year, one of Milicius’ followers had to face accusations that he slandered prelates by criticizing their moral behavior. Again in April, another pupil of Milicius was accused. Both were banned from preaching until such a time when the archbishop would pronounce a verdict. The first trial directly against Milicius was initiated by the pastor of the St. Stephanus Church not far from Milicius’ community. The issue was presented as a material one, the pastor claiming the right to receive an income from the houses of Jerusalem as he had before the community was founded. The result of the trial was that Milicius had to hand over his patronage rights on the community’s chapel to the vicar general of the archbishop. Milicius, however, was dissatisfied with this outcome and appealed to the papal court; however, he later rescinded his appeal at the request of the archbishop.

A decisive step against Milicius was taken by some of the Prague clergy together with some mendicants, probably before the end of 1373. They formulated twelve articles against the preacher and sent them to the papal court in Avignon. In 1370 Pope Gregory XI was elected. He would definitively bring the papal court back to Rome in 1377. He had the reputation of being a rather cautious pope in political matters who nevertheless in some respects continued on the path of his predecessor. The twelve articles con-

103 The only surviving fragment of an interrogation of some Prague citizens is edited by Ferdinand Menčík, Milíč a dva jeho spisy [Milicius and Two of His Writings], in: Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk, Praha 1890, p. 318-325 (the fragment we find on p. 317-318). Menčík gives no dating for the fragment.

104 Documents of the process are edited by Ferdinand Tádra, Soudní aktá konsistoře pražské [Process Acts of the Prague Consistorium], I, Praha 1893, p. 51 ff.

105 Also edited by Tádra, p. 65-66.

106 So Loskot, p. 93 ff.

tained the following accusations: 1. Milicius had preached the coming of Antichrist in 1366; 2. he taught that those who trade in money and real estate are damned; 3. he declared the income clergy received from owning houses was usury; 4. Milicius had ordered lay people to receive Holy Communion every day or even twice a day as a necessity for their salvation, which resulted in the demands of some lay people to receive communion as frequently as a priest; 5. he ordered some people to receive communion often or even daily as an act of repentance; 6. the community of Jerusalem had grown into an unofficial order with special habits; 7. Milicius had applied for permission to found a parish and order in Jerusalem, but when the Prague authorities refused his proposal, he abused the pope, cardinals and every other church authority; 8. when he was told that he could be excommunicated for founding a new order without permission, he claimed that the emperor would defend him; 9. he said that the study of the arts is a deadly sin; 10. he forbade modest dress and jewelry and even destroyed it; 11. he said that he had done much more than Christ himself and what he could not finish, would be finished with the help of the secular powers; and finally, 12. he preached that priests should not hold property privately but only in common.

Gregory XI was obviously shocked by these articles. They accused Milicius of attacking some of the very foundations of the church by building a new order without authorization, by criticizing the property of the clergy and by pinning the secular power against the church. On 13 January 1374 the pope sent several bulls to Prague and to other neighboring dioceses urging the bishops to immediately stop Milicius' activities. In a letter, he moreover asked Charles IV for his help in removing this "stain" from the Bohemian kingdom. We also have a short commentary on the twelve articles, probably written by a theologian at the request of the Prague inquisitor, which concluded that the sentences attributed to Milicius were indeed heretical in the way they were formulated.

Milicius, however, decided to appeal to the papal court instead of subjecting himself to a trial in Prague. This theological commentary might have convinced him that his chances in Prague were slim. We do not know

---


109 The commentary is also edited by Palacký in his Formelbücher II, p. 184-186
anything more about the journey or the inquiry in Avignon than what has come down to us from the *Vita*. No protocols or other sources survive. Johannes Klenkok was assigned Milicius' case.\(^{110}\) This man decisively and quickly concluded that Milicius was no heretic at all. Behind this surprising verdict might have stood Cardinal Grimaud, the same man who used his influence to liberate Milicius during his first visit to Rome in 1367. The cardinal invited Milicius to preach on Pentecost, 21 May 1374.

Soon after these events Milicius died. The *Vita* mentions St. Peter’s day which is probably 29 June (St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s). A second possibility is the day of St. Peter, 1 August. It seems most likely that once Milicius was cleared of all accusations, he would have returned to Prague as soon as possible. The weather conditions in June or July would have been favorable for travel. Milicius presumably became ill shortly after his last sermon and never recovered. This could be a reason to date his death on 29 June 1374.

Milicius’ triumph in Avignon did not have any effect on the events in Prague. The inquisition started to interrogate many of Milicius’ followers and fellow preachers. They were, however, not accused of heresy but lost their legal right to continue with their activities. On 17 December 1374 Charles IV declared that Jerusalem was to be given to the Cistercian order to serve as a college for their students. Jerusalem was renamed St. Bernard.\(^{111}\) The religious atmosphere in 1374 and in subsequent years is reminiscent of the conditions in which Matthias de Janow wrote his *Regulae veteris et novi testamenti*. In this light, it is easy to comprehend how Milicius came to be remembered as a saintly figure with, according to some sources, apocalyptic characteristics.

---

\(^{110}\) Both Loskot and Kaňák.