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.
IV

The Problem: Church and Society on the Brink of Collapse

In order to get a better understanding of the ideas of Milicius de Chrem-sir, 27 sermons were chosen for more thorough study on the basis of a global inventory of *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei*.

In the first place, sermons that appeared to contain some references to apocalypticism or Antichrist were selected. Secondly, the selection contains some sermons that present ideas about issues of the church and society. To this second group belong sermons on the hierarchy of the church and the poverty of the clergy.

The third group contains sermons about the Bohemian saints which were selected because here we might find Milicius' most concrete ideas about his own society. In general, local saints had a more concrete appearance and significance, evoking more personal interest and engagement than other, less well-known saints. Therefore, sermons on these saints were written with a greater sensitivity to contemporary circumstances.

The final selection for this study includes the following sermons:

from *Abortivus* (A), ms. I D 37 from the Czech National Library: Kathedra st. Petri, fol. 57 ra—59 ra,
These sermons express many worries about the situation of church and society. In Milicius’ eyes the presence of corruption and decay in the church was a sign of the threatening collapse of the world. Therefore, the age has an eschatological character, because everyone has now to decide on which side he stands. It’s a decisive moment in the struggle between good and evil. This chapter will analyse Milicius’ understanding of this situation, while chapter V will concentrate on his ideas how to change it.
1. The Church: a Threatened Unity of Salvation

In Milicius's eyes, the church is a holy body, which has to be sanctified and purified from the dirt that evil brings to it. Very often the shadow over the church that prevents it from shining is cast by those who are supposed to lead and guide the believers to a holy life. Therefore, clerics and prelates are looked upon in an ambiguous way. However, there is no sign of doubt in Milicius' words about the church and its hierarchy. The church structure headed by the pope has in no way lost its meaning and importance. The pope is the one who has to initiate reform in the church, freeing it from evil. It is not surprising that in this process of purification the preacher is seen to play an important role.

Two sermons have to be considered the main sources of Milicius' ideas about the church and its leadership. The first one is the *Sermo de kathedra st. Petri* from *Abortivus*. This is an extensive sermon on the qualifications of those who sit on a *cathedra*, an official seat or see. The second sermon is from *Gratiae Dei* for St. Peter's Day. This homily is an elaboration on Mt. 16,18 ("You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church") and is more about the foundations of the church. Both sermons do, however, contain many references to the actual situation and have to be understood as commenting on the actual leadership of the church.

Many sermons from both postils contain some remarks on the church as well. Most explicitly this is true of the sermons on All Saint's Day. In general, we can say that the focus of Milicius' work as a preacher is the church. His first concern is its well-being and its purity since it is God's community. He recognizes that the church is a mixed community, which brings together many different groups of people, therefore containing both good and evil. The church is gathered from all corners of the world. From the confusion of Babylon — the place of sin and lust — the church is brought together as a peaceful Jerusalem upheld by the love of God.

From many nations and the errors of the Jews the church is gathered, from the Babylonian confusion to the peace of the reconciling vision, which is signified by Jerusalem. This congregation is especially founded by the love of God, just as the dispersion from the church takes place because of a love of the world or cupidity.¹

¹"Ex multis gentilibus et iudaicis erroribus est ecclesia congregata, de confusione babylonica ad pacem visionis pacifice que per Jerusalem designatur. Maxime autem per amorem Dei hec congregatio fieri solet, sicud dispersio ab ecclesia per amorem mundi vel cupiditatem esse solet." Omnes sancti, A, ID 37, fol. 239 rb.
In the same sermon, Milicius points out the diversity of the church. Many saints were once great sinners but then delivered by the blood of Christ. In that the church has a firm and unifying base, since martyrs poured out their blood for the love of Christ.

Diversity within the church is not the only thing that can endanger its unity. Milicius knows that the church is a mixed community where good and evil live together. It is this division between good and evil that is the most dangerous line of separation in the church. Many times Milicius warns against this division, urging people to live “on the right side.” At the same time, he accepts it as a fact that the existence of this division is inevitable for the church on earth. Preachers have the task to unveil evil when it is hidden. They have to recognize where the borderline between good and evil in the church lies. The definitive separation, however, will take place on Judgment Day when the evil will be condemned. In a sermon on fishing (of men) Milicius says:

Then angels will go out and like fishermen will come to the shore of the heavenly homeland. Taking the good together with the evil, they will select the good in their vases, but the evil they throw out. For they “will separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.” [Mt. 13,49-50] Who else are those evil fish than members of the devil, whom Job chapter 40 signifies as the Leviathan or the sea monster?

The unity of the church is of great concern to Milicius. Sometimes he seems to anticipate the coming schism, which became reality only a few years after his death. He speaks about hypocrites who pretend to be good leaders but lead people in a wrong direction. They are even more dangerous than heretics, who everybody knows do not respect the church and its divine law. Hypocrites mislead believers on purpose, even when they themselves know what the truth is. Milicius describes them as the abomination that makes desolate, and like idols they occupy the temple and stand in the holy place where they should not be. Usurers and proud women, who to the shame of the death of Christ, are venerated like idols in the temple.

---

2 "Ecce unitas ecclesie per Christi sanguinem congregata. Quanti adulteri latrones et fures heretici et perfidi ac diversis erroribus involuti, penitentiam agentes et conversi facti sunt sancti." Omnes sancti, A, I D 37, fol. 239 va.
4 "Qui sunt desolatio abominationis, et quasi ydola occupant templum et stant in loco sancto, ubi non debent, utinam et usurarios et superbas mulieres, que in opprobrium mortis.
Milicius does not use the expression *abhominatio desolationis* (from Dan. 12) very often. The phrase has a strong apocalyptic connotation and mainly appears in the sections of his work that have such a context. Even then, this term appears mainly in quotations from patristic literature, especially from St. Ambrose. The homily for the Tuesday in Lent from *Gratiae Dei* speaks about Jesus driving out of the temple all who were selling and buying (Mt. 21,12), which is by no means a eschatological theme. Nor is this day a special occasion for sermonizing in such terms and words. Milicius makes this reference simply as a warning to clerics who work in the church, the *templum Dei*. Those clerics who are becoming rich at the expense of the church and the poor are just like the moneychangers, whose tables Christ overturned. The same is true for the bishops who do not act according to their mission. Such people change the temple of God into a “cave of robbers.” Every preacher and prelate has to critically inspect his own thoughts and deeds, and question himself whether he is really acting to drive hypocrites out of the church or whether he is behaving as one himself. He could himself be driven out and exterminated:

> Let the surveyors of the church, prelates and preachers, cry out against those who practice simony, against those who collect property and against the avaricious, that they may not exterminate the garden of the holy church. Let them not be exterminated with the exterminated.]

Hypocrites are not the only threat to the unity of the church. Differences of opinion, disagreements and arguments are more than apt cause for the church to disintegrate. In a homily on Lc. 11,14 ff. Milicius comments that a serious division always means the fall of a specific body. This can also be the case of the church because Christianity is divided. Division is the work of Satan, who sends *ditractores* and hypocrites to mislead Christians and to bring them into his power. Milicius seems to be alarmed by the struggle over influence and power that was going on in the church. The rivalry he himself experienced with the mendicants, various factions in the church, the leadership in Avignon and during the papacy’s struggle for greater independence from France all are echoed in his sermon on Lc. 11,14:

> As is said by Hosea 10,2: “Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt.” If the princes of a kingdom do not agree among themselves, the kingdom is dissolved. If inhabitants of one

---

house are divided against inhabitants of another house, the city is ruined. If members of a religious order discord among themselves, the order perishes. If masters discord among themselves, science perishes. If Christians are divided among themselves, Christianity perishes, not in the good religious orders and masters but in the evil. The kingdom of good Christians, however, stands always and remains for ever.  

To Milicius, reform of the church did not mean a modernization or modification of it. There is no sign of "aggiornamento" in his words, but rather a tendency towards conservatism. It is not the church and its structures or activities that have to change, but the people in it. All kinds of failures, deformations and deviations have to be cut off and the original shape must be restored. The church has to return to the previous state in which it was a true and unified church. In this church the hierarchic structure is of great importance, together with obedience to those who lead it.

The two sermons on St. Peter are clear examples of this conservatism. The first one, from Abortivus, is meant for the feast of the Kathedra st. Petri on 22 February. The sermon contains the opening text from Job 29,7 (“When I went out to the gate of the city, when I prepared my seat in the square.”) Elaborating on this reference to the "seat" — cathedra in the Vulgate — Milicius concentrates his thoughts on the position of Peter. He is the rock on which the church is built, states the prothema. This rock is very solid and reliable even in times of great danger and evil. It is a guarantee of truth and faith against all hypocrites:

Yet in many dangers and plagues he [i.e. the rock] has proclaimed this with all his power till death, teaching us to keep to our faith, the unchanging confession, not only by words, but also by works and truth, even if tyrants who take us away from the faith, are not present. Present are, however, hypocrites, demons and tyrants, who undermine us by drawing us to sin away from truth and justice, that we, by sinning, deny Christ the Lord.

---

"Sicut dicitur Osee decimo (v. 2): 'Divisum est cor eorum, nunc interibunt' [Note the difference between the Vulgate and the RSV]. Si principes regni dissentiunt, regnum dissoluitur. Si habitatores unius domus divisi sunt contra habitatores alterius domus, civitas desoluitur. Si religiosi inter se discordant, perit religiositas. Si magistri inter se discordant, perit scientia. Si Christiani inter se divisi sunt, perit Christianitas. Non in bonis religiosis et magistris sed malis, honorum enim Christianorum regnum semper stat et manet in eternum." Dom. III in XL, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 119 r.

"Tamen eam postea in multis periculis et plagis usque ad mortem viriliter est confessus, nos instruens, ut teneamus fidei nostre, confessionem indeclinabilem, non solum lingua, sed etiam opere et veritate, nam et si desunt tiranni, qui nos a fide avertant. Non tamen desunt ypcrite demones et tyranni, qui nos ad peccata trahentes a veritate et iustitia deflectere moluintur, ut peccando Christum Dominum abnegemus." Kathedra s. Petri, A, I D 37, fol. 57 rb.
Then the sermon continues by distinguishing between the three kinds of seats or offices that Peter prepared for himself in the church: the *cathedra predicacionis* (the authority on preaching), the *cathedra prelationis* (the authority over the clergy) and the *cathedra subiectionis* (the authority over everyone). Every office is linked to different texts and persons from the Old Testament. The first one is the throne of Solomon (I Kings 10), which was flanked by two lions. Those lions also guided St. Peter when he preached in many languages on Pentecost Day. This *cathedra* is conditioned by six grades of *differentia*, which make clear whether a person has the qualities necessary to preach. Those grades are fully in the jurisdiction of Peter, in whose place the pope must act today. He must decide whether a person is able to take up the seat of preaching and be a preacher. In the first place, he has to make a decision what is permitted and what is not permitted to preach. Secondly, he has to consider what is beneficial to say. Thirdly, it is his authority to fix what is ordained or not ordained to speak about in a sermon, and fourthly, what is opportune to discuss. In the fifth place, the pope must take into consideration what are appropriate moderate or immoderate means of convincing a person to join the side of the good. Sixthly, he has to discern what is useful to say when giving advice to people.

In the church, preachers are responsible to just one authority — the pope. This highest authority occupies the Holy See and is the successor of St. Peter. This image of the pope’s authoritative jurisdiction corresponds with some ideas from the two writings Milicius addressed to the pope and his cardinals at the end of his life. In both the *Libellus de Antichristo* and his letter to Urban V, he appealed to the pope to send preachers *cum tuba predicacionis et voce magna*, “with the trumpet of preaching and a great voice” in order to bring the church back in *statum salutis*, “the state of salvation.” The pope is the initiator and authority who is able to decide on

---

"Per gradus differentione designatur que fuit in Petro. Cum recte differeret quod cui et qualiter predicandum, istos enim sex gradus differentionis habit. Primo, divisit in eo quasi quod foret licitum et quod illicitum predicabat. Secundo, deliberat cum quod foret expediens et quod non expediens perolabat. Tercio, erat in eo dispositio dum quod ordinatum et quod inordinatum esset dicebat. Quarto, erat in eo dispositio dum quod opportunum et quod importunum esset distinguabat. Quinto erat in eo modificatio dum quod moderatum et immoderatum foret persuadebat. Sexta erat is eo distinctio dum quod utile et quod inutile esset hominibus consulbat." Kathedra s. Petri, A, I D 37, fol. 57 va.

"Postremo incepi attendere, quomodo esset de statu et salute Christianorum. Et stans in hoc stupefactus audivi spiritum in me sic loquentem in corde: ‘Vade, et dic summo pontifici, qui ab hoc Spiritu sancto electus est, ut reducat ecclesiam in statum salutis, ut mittat angelos sive praedicatorum cum tuba praedicationis et voce magna.’” Libellus de Antichristo, edited by
who will be preachers and what they will preach. Everyone has to obey him.
A second conclusion from this part of the sermon on the *Kathedra st. Petri*
is even more surprising and provocative: Milicius’ concept of the church
provides preachers with a separate status. They are an independent power
next to the clergy.¹⁰

The second seat, the *cathedra prelationis* is compared to the throne of
David. This one is occupied by wise men, who are divided into three orders
of wisdom and salvation: *incipientes*, *perficientes* and *perfecti* (beginners,
those who are becoming perfect, and the perfect). The opposite of this
position is the *cathedra pestilentie*, the seat of pestilence in which sit scribes
and Pharisees, who are like the sons of Eli (I Sam. 2,12ff). Both offices are
that of priests, but the latter have “no regard for the Lord.”

The sermon associates the third *cathedra subiectionis* to the throne on
which God himself sits, as is stated in Is. 6. It is the same throne that
St. Peter sits on to preside over the Holy Church. He became “the vicar of
Christ and his successor in the *cathedra* or throne to preside the holy church,
where he reigns the angelic spirits while sitting on earth.”¹¹ To this office
everyone, whether preacher, clergyman or lay person, owes obedience.

With this threefold division of seats Milicius is creating a division in the
church along the lines of vocation. He distinguishes between the clergy,
obedient to the *cathedra prelationis* and the office of preaching, belonging
to the *cathedra predicationis*. In this case the *cathedra subiectionis* is the
authority above everyone. St. Peter, and through him the pope, is the head of
every part of the church and every *status* is obliged to obey and honor him.
He is the key-bearer and deserves every respect. Moreover, in him the unity
of the church is rooted and symbolized. He is the rock on which the church
stands. Obeying the Holy See means being a part of the Holy Church and
being a part of Christ’s representation on earth. In consequence, everyone
who doubts the pope’s authority doubts Christ himself or even denies him.
Such a person is by definition a hypocrite and an ally of Satan. He belongs
to those who are a *pestilentia* to the church, like those who desecrated the
temple of God by trading there or by treating offerings to the Lord with

---

¹⁰ Ferdinand Menčík, Milicius a dva jeho spisy [Milicius and two of his writings], in: Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk, Praha 1890, p. 334.
¹¹ More about this is discussed in the chapter V, See p. 159.

⁶⁴ “...Petrus cum fuerit vicarius Christi et successor in cathedra sive trono, ut presideret ecclesie sancte, ubi sedens in terris etiam angelicis spiritibus imperabat.” Kathedra s. Petri, A, I D 37, fol. 57 vb.
contempt as did the sons of Eli. They deceive the church from the inside, shattering its unity.

This is not the only instance where Milicius draws very sharp lines between the good and the bad. Almost all topics he preaches about outline very clearly in black and white what he considers good and bad. Milicius is not a man familiar with doubt and insecurity, for he is very confident about what the right choice is. In his eyes the very bright spotlights of the messages of the Scriptures reveal every stain. Milicius' view and criticism of the affairs in the church come from a background of conservatism, as is clear from the first part of the sermon on the Kathedra st. Petri. According to him the sacred structure of the church, which was handed down by Christ himself to St. Peter, must be restored.

The second part of the sermon, *in quibus verbis*, opens with a second aspect of St. Peter's image. He is the holder of the key to the City of God. The sermon gives a description of six gates that lead into the city. This city represents both the church and also the Kingdom of God. They are the gates of grace, Scripture, truth, discipline, dignity and love of Christ. The last gate is for the flock that St. Peter feeds. Peter has the key to the gates, which is a symbol of hope because it reassures us that the reign of darkness is over. Keys are the symbol "by which the darkness of the devil is pushed backwards, that the light of Christ may come."2

The second part of this division tells the story of St. Peter's life, his visit to Antiochia and his death in Rome, which was in the spiritual sense Sodom or Egypt because of the rule of Emperor Nero. In this time the *cathedra* in Jerusalem was occupied by priests, the sermon says, referring to Acts 11. In the conclusion to this quotation Milicius takes some very interesting and remarkable quotations from Pseudo-Chrysostomus, which emphasize the moral imperative on the clergy. "Not the seat makes the priest, but the priest the seat, it is not the place that sanctifies the person, but the person the place. Not every priest is holy, but every holy is a priest."3 The same

---

2. "...per que referantur dyaboli tenebre ut lux Christi adveniat." Kathedra st. Petri, A. I D 37, fol. 58 rb.
quotation also appears in the so-called Synodical Sermons. According to the editors of the Synodical Sermons, Milicius was the first to fix this moral criterion, which would play a key role in the Hussite movement some 30 years later. In any case Milicius seems to aim for a more differentiated approach towards the established theological position known as ex opere operato. This says that the value of the work of a cleric is not dependent on his moral behavior, but only on his ordination and “professional” authority. Milicius does not doubt this claim, but underlines the implications the moral behavior of a priest can have on his office. According to his opinion, the value of the see occupied by the priest is dependent on the person who possesses it. The moral behavior of this individual can bring discredit to the office, because a man determines the character of the position. The focus is principally on the person and his behavior. Milicius’ approach is fundamentally suspicious of hierarchy and status. A person is not what his profession declares him to be nor what the titles and honors he has acquired claim he is. A man is what he does.

This strong moral principle is of course not totally surprising when we take into consideration Milicius’ way of thinking. In every sermon he very much stresses the moral question. The virtues of all believers, clergy or laity have to be proven. The church has to return to the holy life of the predecessors of the faith. It is the mission of preachers, who are sent by the pope, to lead and monitor this process of sanctification. According to the moral standards Milicius proclaimed, everybody is equal whether he be a bishop or a beggar. As a result, also the actions a person carries out in the name of his profession are to be judged by the same moral standards. It is not an individual’s office that justifies his actions, but his actions, done in accordance with correct moral standards, that justify his position.

It is this profoundly moral and democratic approach, which proclaims everyone to be morally equal, that made Milicius’ relationship with some authorities of the church tense. According to them, the value and authority of a clergyman is determined by the hierarchy, the backbone of the church. In none of his sermons does Milicius openly doubt this position. On the contrary, as we will see in the second sermon related to Peter, the homily

prelati ut bene viventes iuste iudicent et iniquitatem dampent.” Kathedra st. Petri, A, I D 37, fol. 58 rb - 58 va. The quotation is from Pseudo-Chrysostomus, Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum, Homilia 43, PG 56, c. 876.

from Gratiae Dei, he even defends this idea. Nevertheless, in the sermon from Abortivus he very strongly suggests that a priest living in an immoral way should ask himself whether he still can be priest. In the quotation of Pseudo-Chrysostom everyone living a holy and sanctified life is a priest. Priesthood is not seen here as a state determined primarily by hierarchy, but by virtue and morality. Hierarchy tends here to be an empty and inconspicuous quality, which gains significance and meaning only from the perspective of moral behavior. This is only one small step away from making morality a precondition to one’s place in the hierarchy; however, this is a step that Milicius does not take.

The last part of the sermon on Kathedra st. Petri tells how Christ appointed St. Peter as the foundation of the church. He is from this moment at the head of the church. St. Peter, however, had to do penitence and to fight against evil and sin. The sermon closes with St. Peter weeping after his denial of Christ. The tears of St. Peter were even stronger and more effective than a sermon, because by their substance they touched the listeners completely, not only in their thoughts but also in their feelings. Through this weeping then, St. Peter proved himself to be a good pastor and ruler of the church.

The homily in Gratiae Dei is titled “De S. Petro”, but in the upper margin of our manuscript “Petri et Pauli” is written in a later hand. Unlike the sermon from Abortivus, the homily is not explicitly about the Holy See and St. Peter’s significance to it. Gratiae Dei does not include a sermon for the Feast of the Holy See.

Nevertheless the homily is on Mt. 16,18, the most important text about St. Peter’s authority, declaring it to be the rock on which the church is built. The sermon opens in its protheme with the idea that just as Peter received his name from Christ and was thus an imitator of his Lord, so he followed Christ in his work, life, preaching and crucifixion. Many were and are unable to do as Peter did. They seem to be friends of Christ, but are really enemies since they do not possess the real love, but the false love of the flesh. Milicius appeals therefore to his audience — obviously preachers — to stay in the true love of Christ by preaching to His sheep: “Let us abandon carnal love and adhere to the divine love, preaching to the sheep of Christ and providing a meadow in unfeigned love.”

---

15 ”Relinquamus amorem carnalem et adhereamus caritati divine predicantes ovibus Christi et pascua vite ministrantes in caritate non ficta.” De s. Petro, GD, XII D 1, fol. 39 v.
The sermon, being a homily, follows and comments on the pericope of Mt. 16 about St. Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. In verse 17 Christ blesses Peter because of this confession. Milicius analyzes seven reasons for this praise, which seems to be not only meant for Peter personally but also for his successors. That at least is the suggestion of the sermon, which is based on the presumption that St. Peter presides over the church through the papacy. The seven reasons for Christ's blessing are:

First, to encourage people more to perseverance and love of faith. Secondly, to greatly encourage within the declared confession. Thirdly, to show the excellence of the clear faith of his confession and to show how it pleases Christ. Fourthly, to give a greater manifestation and an appropriate commendation of the faith of Peter. Fifthly, to show how Christ before the Father in heaven gives witness to those who constantly give witness to him. Sixthly, to show that just as one holds his mind toward God, likewise God does toward him. Therefore, the more fervent someone strives for God, the more effective God unites Himself to him. And hence the more he accepts and magnifies Him, especially if one is elevated to a high position or office, like Peter was. Seventhly, that the special primacy of Peter, placed over all, gets its origin and promulgation from the mouth of Christ.16

These reasons give a clear idea why Milicius accepts the pope as the highest authority in the church. His analysis can be divided into three steps, in which he briefly explains his "theology of the papacy." First he points out the unifying power of Peter's faith, which has to be maintained, accepted and acknowledged by everyone. It is a firm basis for the unity of the church because it has the ability to bring people together. The reason for this is that this faith pleases Christ and has his support and recommendation.

The second step takes into account the hierarchy of the church. This is not only a physical structure but also a spiritual one. Christ is with all who accept and remain in the faith of St. Peter. A person who holds to this faith is remaining in Christ. He is in the company of God. This is especially the case of those who are in an office, serving Christ and his church as priests or clerics.

16"Primo, ad magis incitandum omnes ad constantiam et amorem fidei. Secundo, ad maiorem confirmationem confessionis premisse (?). Tertio, ad ostendendum precelliciam fidei clare confessionis eius et ad ostendendum qua placens ex Christo. Quarto, ad manifestationem maiorem et condignam commendationem fidei Petri. (…) Quinto, ad ostendendum quomodo Christus coram Patre in celis confitetur eos, qui constiter confitentur ipsum [a reference to Mt. 10,32]. Sexto, ad ostendendum quod sicut mens se iabet ad Deum, sic Deus ad eam. Unde quanto ferventius quis tendit in Deum, tanto et Deus efficacius se iugerit ei. Et tanto plus acceptat et magnificat eum, et precipue si sit ad alium statum vel officium elevandum, sicut erat Petrus. Septimo, ut singularis presidetia Petro super omnes danda ex ore Christi suumet originem et promulgationem." St. Petrus, GD, XI D 1 fol. 40 r.
Finally, the presidency of St. Peter over everyone is establish in order to enable the gospel to be proclaimed. This presidency and its incumbent, the pope, are necessary to the church. Without the existence of this office and its doctrine, the church is no longer united. The explanation on verse 18a (“You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church”) has a similar tenor. A true servant of the church is at the same time also the servant of Peter and of Christ. What is in St. Peter is consequently also in Christ.

The second half of verse 18 (“The powers of death shall not prevail against it”) gives Milicius again an opportunity to identify the enemies of the church. They are the “princes of malice and errors” or “tyrants and arch-heretics,” who are altogether establishing the “college of the evil.” They are the “gates of hell,” by which a man enters the community of Satan and his demons. Those enemies have several tools with which to force someone to enter hell. In a reference to Rabanus, Milicius warns that Satan will try to prevail against the church and its true preachers by persecution and by the acts and words of the unfaithful.

Another group that is an instrument in the hands of Satan for bringing people to his side consists of “doctors of heresy and other perversions,” who deceive believers.

Like one enters through the good teachers as through the gates of Sion the heavenly Jerusalem, likewise one is allowed to enter the eternal confusion of hell through the evil teachers, through the gates of Babylon.  

All those evil powers do not have the ability to overthrow the church, because it is in unity with St. Peter. His confession and his presence in the hierarchy are a guarantee that the church will stay untouched through all the attacks of the enemy and his allies. Milicius uses a thought from Cyril when he states:

The church of Peter stays immaculate from all seduction, over all leaders and bishops and primates of the church in their pontificates and fullest faith and authority of Peter. And while other churches are ashamed because of their errors, this one keeps the stability, stopping all the mouths of heretics.  

---

17“Sicut enim per bonos doctores quasi per portas Syon ad celestem Jherusalem intratur, sic per malos doctores tamquam per portas Babilonic ad confusionem etiam infernum patet ingressus.” St. Petri, GD, XII D 1, fol. 40 v. This warning we know also from Abortivus, where it has almost the same wording: “Sicud enim per bonos doctores quasi per portas Syon ad celestem Jherusalem subintratur, sic sic per portas Babylon[is], id est falsos doctores, ad infernum patet ingressus.” Dominica V p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 155 va. See also p. 166.

18“Ecclesia Petri ab omni seductione immaculata manet super omnes prepositos et episcopos, et primates ecclesiarum in suis pontificibus et plenissima fide et auctoritate Petri. Et cum...
Obviously, the existence of the papacy is to Milicius a guarantee of the unity of the church. The pope is the symbol and instrument of the unifying bond of the church with Christ. He is the guardian of the faith, of the church and its members. Therefore, he has to be accepted and obeyed as well. Lack of obedience is a sign of heresy and a threat to the church and its unity. The pope has the authority, given by Christ to Peter, to lead the church in uncertain and evil times. His authority over the church is total, Milicius says. It is the authority to “lead souls to the eternal life.” This is a divine authority to forgive sins, Milicius adds after having quoted Pseudo-Chrysostom, which was given to St. Peter and his successors. Here we can conclude for the first time that Milicius is definitely not only speaking about Peter and his authority, but also about the pope and the church hierarchy.

Hear now that it belongs to God only to forgive sins by his own might. However, Christ promised to give this property, which was his alone, to Peter and his successors, that they also would forgive sins in their way. Not on their own, but by divine authority. God only, therefore, forgives authoritatively, but the priests ministerially.¹⁹

St. Peter, the church and its hierarchy are the chain through which God passes down his faith and grace. Clerics have the authority to administer the sacraments, of which the sacrament of forgiveness is the first. The others are e.g. baptism, penitence and the Eucharist. They have a power, which can clean, forgive and free a person. In this context, Milicius is finally defending the principle ex opere operato, which we discussed earlier. Because those powers are not ours but given by God, the sacraments do not lose their significance when a priest is living in sin.

Therefore, merits are not ours, but are given by God, because he only can work them, even though they do not cease to be our merits. When priests execute something in an ineffable way according to the power passed on to him, God only works it in them and through them and with them.²⁰

Even more than the sermon from Abortivus, the homily on St. Peter’s (and Paul’s) Day from Gratiae Dei is clearly an apology of the hierarchy

---


²⁰ “Sic ergo merita nostra non sunt nisi dona Dei, quia ipse solus ea facit, et tamen per hoc non desinunt esse merita nostra. Sic quidquid sacerdotes secundum ineffabilem modum sibi tradite potestatis operantur, solus Deus illa facit in eis et per eos et cum eis.” St. Petrus, GD, XII D I, fol. 42 v.
with the papacy as its head. St. Peter and his successors are a guarantee of the church's unity with Christ. The hierarchy is the channel through which faith, love and forgiveness flow and are poured out. Like in the sermon on the *Kathedra st. Petri* from *Abortivus*, Milicius considers the hierarchy to be a defense against heresy and division. Hypocrites and evil teachers are pernicious, because they try to destroy the unity of the church.

There is no sign of doubt about the role and authority of the pope. This is fully in accordance with the known writings of Milicius — the *Libellus* and the letter to Urban. Also Milicius' two visits to the pope, once in Rome and once in Avignon, emphasize the authority the pope represented to the preacher. In a sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis on John 4,52 ("At the seventh hour the fever left him"), Milicius suggests going to the pope in order to get advice and new strength. The most convincing evidence we have of his trust in the pope, the vicar of Christ, is contained in the following quote:

> The most fitting thing for us to do then is to go to the lord of the earth, i.e. to Christ and his vicar the pope or to someone else who is in the unity and faith of the holy church, and receive from him the grain that feeds the elect, grain, I say, of the principal of God, that they can come to the sevenfold reward.\(^{21}\)

Obviously, also members of the hierarchy can also be approached to get the necessary means for the fight against sin. They as well belong to the those “who are in the unity and faith of the church.”

There is, however, also a substantial difference between the two sermons on Peter. The one from *Gratiae Dei* barely speaks about the moral implications of being a cleric or priest. The confirmation of the *ex opere operato* principle at the end of the homily is therefore no surprise and is a logical conclusion. *Abortivus* on the other hand is far more lively and explicit on the question of morality. Priests are supposed to live a life of high moral standards. Their priesthood is empty when they live in sin and evil. They can remain a priest, Milicius does not deny that, but the content of the position is undermined. The stress on the moral attitude of the hierarchy brings Milicius to state in quoting of Pseudo-Chrysostomus, that everyone who lives a holy life is a priest. In *Abortivus*, Milicius proclaims that morality is primary, and it seems even to bring him into conflict with the hierarchic

---

\(^{21}\)"Quid ergo faciendum nobis incumbit, nisi ire ad dominum terre, id est Christum et eius vicarium papam vel alium qui est in unitate et fide ecclesie sancte, et recipere ab ipso frumenta, que electos nutriant, frumenta, inquam, mandatorum Dei, ut sic possint venire ad septenarium premiorum." Dominica XII p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 233 vb.
principle of the church. Everyone, whether layman or priest, is judged on the same basis, that is according to his morality.

It is significant that this implicit conflict of morality and hierarchy is lacking in Gratiae Dei. As we have seen, Gratiae Dei was written at a later date and is the result of a longer period of working and preaching. It therefore has a balanced character of maturity and consideration. Abortivus is the first work stemming from the beginning of Milicius’ career as a preacher. It is determined by a period in which Milicius was finding his way, when he was very alarmed by the situation he encountered in the church. His strong advocacy of morality is the main feature of his involvement. This postil is not as balanced as Gratiae Dei, but is sharper and more urgent. The implicit conflict between morality and the hierarchy is an example of the “unbalanced” character of this opus.

2. Clergy as the Source of Unity and Decay

The sermons in Abortivus and Gratiae Dei do not elaborate extensively on the theme of prelates, clergy or priests, as they do e.g. on preachers. The occasions on which they are mentioned can be divided into two categories. In the first group, the sermons refer to them in conjunction with preachers. These references are positive and describe the duties and responsibilities not so much of the clergy in general, but of leaders of the Christian community. In the other category the sermons are addressed directly to the clergy and the image of them is utterly negative. Prelates are sharply criticized for their lifestyle and attitudes that demonstrate their negligence toward their responsibilities. It seems that Milicius in general is profoundly distrustful of the clergy because of their practical life, yet he accepts them as a necessary aspect of the church.

Milicius utilizes all possible terms that denote those who have an office in the church. At one point he will speak about prelati, then later about clerici and sometimes, but not often, about sacerdotes. It is not easy to make a simple set of rules for explaining why he employs what term when but in general we can see that when he speaks positively about church leaders he more often uses the word prelatus, while on occasions with a more negative

---

22See p. 101 ff.
implication he applies the term *clericus*. In one instance, which we will discuss, he defines prelates as bishops.

The sermons that speak the most systematically about the work of the leaders of the church are those on St. Procopius, who is the great role model for all preachers and prelates. Both postils offer a sermon or homily about this saint. Although they do not differ in their general tenor, these two sermons do vary in what they emphasize and in their degree of completeness. The sermon from *Abortivus* is explicitly addressed to preachers and describes St. Procopius as a rooster, which is the symbol for preachers in the first place, but then also for clergymen. Another image originates in the place where the saint lived and worked, that is on the bank of the River Sâzava. He was the great navigator of the ship of the church. Milicius compares the work of the clergy to the way a cock carefully watches his surroundings and defends the hens belonging to him. He is always looking at the sky and the earth for enemies, ready to sound a warning and fight.

This is an excellent example for *confessores* — those who hear confession — and especially prelates, Milicius says, because they have to be rigid toward the obstinate and gentle toward the humble. The sermon concludes with some remarks about poverty and working in the church. This subject we will discuss later more extensively, but for now we can say that Milicius is a clear advocate of poverty for the clergy.

The homily in *Gratiae Dei* speaks from its outset clearly about both preachers and prelates. Both are mentioned in the *prothema*, where they are urged to awaken their sleeping people and turn them into individuals who are eagerly on guard. It states that it is the task of both preachers and prelates to comfort with the Word of God those who mourn. They have to be incessantly awake, keeping others as well as themselves from sleeping, and they must counter evil acts. When discussing the virtues of St. Procopius, who rejected luxury and wealth, Milicius enumerates some tools, which both preachers and prelates need in their work.

Firstly, preachers and also prelates should have the light of education and doctrine, the ardor of compassion and material support. Moreover, in

---

23 See p. 159 ff and p. 193 ff.
24 "Gallus enim hic plurimus vigilanti non dum pastum querit, unum oculum versus celum dirigit contra tyrannem, dum aquile accipitis vel avis cuiuscumque rapatis, ut sue rigore custodie eos a se et a gallinis propellat. Alium autem oculum in terram dirigit, ut una cum gallinis victum quires eas blandus tueatur affectus." St. Procopius, A, I D 37, fol. 157 ra.
25 "Lumen eruditionis (...), id est doctrina lucens (...), ardor compassionis (...), subsidium materiale." St. Procopius, GD, XII D 1, fol. 51 r.
the shining lamp there are four qualities that ought to be in the life of a preacher or prelate, related to the vessel, the oil, the flame and the light. Both should be aware of the fragility of the human condition and should be full of the energy of the conscience. They have to be flames of love and their light has to reveal the sins and injustice of both themselves and their audience.

It should be noticed that Milicius does not mention the prelate in the last three cases (oil, flame and light), but speaks only about the preacher. Obviously, even when he speaks clearly about the responsibilities of all people who work in the church, his first interest is in the preacher. To him, this is the most important and meaningful worker in the church. Prelates have their responsibilities as well but those are not different from the preacher's. Milicius looks at prelates as being — in the best case — preachers and identifies their work with some of the tasks of a preacher. The prelate is mainly a pastor, who guides his flock, comforts the mourning, watches for enemies and exhorts in order to keep sin at bay. A preacher's tasks are, however, more extensive and profound. He is an eschatological worker because he sifts the good from the evil. No such task is given to prelates in Milicius' sermons. In the sermons on St. Procopius' Day about spiritual leadership, the prelate is depicted more or less as a maintenance worker who takes care of the flock and keeps away enemies.

There is one other sermon, this time from Abortivus, which mentions prelates in conjunction with preachers. It is the sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis and it is full of an awareness of the suffering and misery of the world. This suffering can only end when good is separated from evil. Dividing between good and evil is necessary like in the days of Elijah when the choice was between the Lord and Baal. No place is untouched by evil. Everywhere good and evil are mixed, even among preachers, believers and prelates. "As good prelates are mixed with the bad, so are truly just people mixed with the apparently just and the hypocrites," Milicius writes. This division in the church and the world has to be executed through preaching. When the true Word of God is preached, the false proph-

---

26 See p. 174.
ets, the seven false preachers and prelates will be killed or captured with the
sword of God's word.

Not only do prelates belong to the negative grouping of false prophets
according to this sermon, but in a way that characterizes Milicius' ambiva­
lence toward prelates, he also states that they will be the heralds of the end
of the world. This positive role of the prelates is not limited here to pastoral
care, but they also have an eschatological mission. The seven angels from
Apocalypse 8,2 ("Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and
seven trumpets were given to them") are preachers and prelates. "The angels
are messengers, seven preachers or prelates and seven trumpets are given to
them, i.e. the whole of the truth, in order to announce the end of the world
and the coming judgment of God."\textsuperscript{28}

It is surprising that in this sermon Milicius entrusts prelates with the
same responsibility as a preacher. Yet preaching is to him very much for the
decisive moment, that is urging people to immediately choose good and
separate themselves from evil. Does the clergy have the same task and is
there no difference between a preacher and the clergy? We should not forget
that the sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis comes from Aborti­
vus, which is the postil Milicius compiled at the beginning of his career as a
preacher and which was written in somewhat of a haste. The well-balanced
character of the second postil Gratiae Dei is not equaled in
Abortivus. Therefore, we must first ask ourselves what is the aim of this sermon from
 Abortivus. It tells us about the power to divide between good and evil and
about the importance of preaching in this process. When Milicius makes
some remarks about prelates, he places them always in the context of
preaching, which has the power to reveal evil and separate it from goodness.
This sermon deals in the first place with the turbulent state of the world,
which can be changed only through the preaching of preachers and prelates.
In other words, in this sermon Milicius is viewing prelates through the act of
preaching. Prelates are just a kind of preacher. In this way, the sermon is no
more than another confirmation of the primary importance of preaching due
to its decisive power to change people.

Also Gratiae Dei has some — though more critical — remarks about
prelates in relation to the end of the world. This sermon is designated for the

\textsuperscript{28}"Angeli sunt nuncii i.e. predicatores seu prelati et 7 tube date sunt eis i.e. universitas
veritatis ad nuntiandum finem mundi et iudicium venturum Dei." Dominica XII p.T., A, I D 37,
fol. 234 rb.
Second Sunday in Advent and its theme is the Last Judgment. Not surprisingly this sermon also regards preaching as the instrument for gathering the elect from the four sides of the world. Judgment Day will be preceded by several signs from heaven, as is said in Luke 21 which the sermon is based on. Milicius distinguishes four signs: the sun, moon, stars and earth. They respectively symbolize prelates, the church, the clergy and lay people. The tenor of this message is that sins and oppression in the church and throughout the world indicate the coming end of time.29

At this point we can learn something about the relationship between prelates and rulers in Milicius’ view. Quoting from I Maccabees, Milicius makes some statements that define a prelate’s position in the world.

The sun is the prelate who has to be the spring of all warmth and light. As is said in I Macc. VI (39): “Now when the sun shone upon the shields of gold and brass”, i.e. the prelate upon the priests, “and the hills were ablaze with them”, i.e. secular rulers who are indeed ablaze when the sun shines and the shields are gold. The moon is the church, the stars are the clerics, the earth are the lay people.30

It is clear that to Milicius the significance of the prelate in the world is greater than that of a sovereign. The ruler receives his shine from the prelate and is dependent on him. The first position in the world is occupied by spiritual power, to which secular power is subjected. It is remarkable that Milicius does not speak in general about the church being superior over the world, but specifically about prelates, who are described as being as bright as the sun.

The other surprise is that the church is in this case compared to the moon, surely lower in the hierarchy of existence than the sun. Is Milicius implying that prelates have a greater importance than the church itself? In our survey of Milicius’ view of the church it was made obvious that to him the church hierarchy is indispensable as far as the existence of the church is concerned. In this sermon Milicius seems to stress this idea with a very unexpected example. Prelates are presiding over the church, just as the sun is in a sense “leading” the moon. Without their “light” there would be only chaos and injustice, is the suggestion. That is at least the implication of the lines following this quotation. Milicius speaks about the sign of the blood on

29See p. 153 ff.
30Sol enim est prelatus qui debet esse fons totius caloris et luminis. Sicut dicitur primo Mach. VI (39): ‘Refulsit sol in clypeos aureos,’ id est prelatus in presbiteros, ‘et resplenderent montes ab eis,’ id est principes seculares, qui revera resplenderent si sol luceret et clypei essent aurei. Luna est ecclesia, stelle sunt clenci, terra sunt layci.” Dominica II in Advent, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 10 v.
the moon (the church), which he identifies with the carnal love of consanguinity. Together with other signs of decay among both prelates and clergy — the sun and the stars — it signifies the total breakdown of all structures and the end of the world.\(^3\) Through this complicated metaphor Milicius confirms the indisputable importance of prelates and clerics to the church. At the same time though, he uses the image to criticize them by identifying the corruption among them as the main reason for the collapse of law and order. More in general, Milicius concentrates on the idea that the failures of the clergy result in them losing their credibility. They destroy the work of preaching if they do not take seriously their work in the church. They tear the net of preaching, which is full of fish, into pieces and do not cooperate with the Holy Spirit. God does not choose such people to be his fishermen of men, because whenever they do something praiseworthy, they ascribe it to their own virtues.\(^3\)

Much of the more concrete criticism Milicius makes of the clergy is connected to the issue of poverty. In the discussion of whether or not living in poverty is valuable and closer to the life of Christ, an issue which in one way characterized the fourteenth century, Milicius has an unambiguous position. The \textit{vita apostolica} is the ideal for all who live a religious life, as it was for the saints. In the sermon on St. Procopius in \textit{Abortivus} which focuses on the act of preaching, Milicius argues in favor of a life of poverty using the circumstances of the early church as his defense: “So was the Holy Church established in early times, that saints adhered to a life of restraint, loving poverty and leaving behind riches.”\(^3\)\(^3\) The sermon concludes that the need to possess material goods alienates a person from the “eternal prize” and from Christ’s patrimony.

It is not surprising that Milicius links preaching and poverty in the sermon on St. Procopius. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the church shared many of the same views about apostolic life held by the Franciscan order. The pope even quoted them in his bulls. However, in the first quarter of the fourteenth century the attitude of the church towards poverty changed.\(^3\)\(^4\) The year 1323 was in this regard a turning point. In the bull \textit{Cum}

\(^3\) See p. 157.
\(^3\) See p. 163.
\(^3\) “Sic sic ecclesia sancta primitiva tempore plantabatur, ut sancti paupertatem amantes et divicias reliquentes, vite continentiam conservarent.” St. Procopius, A, I D 37, fol. 157 vb.
inter nonnullos the pope to some degree distanced himself from the issue of poverty as he did not consider it to be the highest goal of apostolic life. From this point, voluntary poverty became suspect. The official church spoke about spiritual poverty and real, voluntary poverty was no longer a manifestation of sanctity. The general of the Dominicans, Herveaus Natalis, formulated this restraint in the following way: “The poor are called the blessed not because of their poverty being in itself sanctity, but because it predisposes to sanctity in the measure in which the good temporal things constitute obstacles to the love of God.” Property is not regarded as negative, but has simply a tendency to keep one away from God. The letter in which Herveaus wrote this was addressed to Pope John XXII and must have been in support of the bull Cum inter nonnullos issued by this pope. No wonder that John XXII was called by some Franciscans and lay people the great Whore of Babylon.

To Milicius, property is always negative as far as the church and its hierarchy is concerned. Clerics who do not handle church money well and become rich off the gifts of the poor are like those who changed money in the temple, he says in a sermon from Gratiae Dei about this story. The same is the case with bishops who “hand over churches.” They have the power to administer sacraments or execute a holy office for carnal or financial reasons. Their tables will be overturned as Christ did in the temple to the vendors and money-changers.

The most extensive discussion on the question of poverty is in Milicius’ homily on All Saints’ Day from Gratiae Dei. The sermon is a kind of commentary on every blessing given by Christ during his Sermon on the Mount. Speaking about the blessing of the poor, Milicius makes a distinction between three kinds of poverty. The first type of poverty is involuntary and is unfortunate because it simply makes life difficult. The second is spiritual and is fed by humility. The third one is voluntary and all religiosi, canons and monks should be devoted to it. Those who take a vow of poverty, so that they have no personal property, can have it in common. Every order is based on this, that whatever they own, belongs to the community, so that nobody can say that something is his and nobody among them be in need, as is written in Acts 4.

35 Quoted from Vauchez, p. 460.
36 Feria III post Dom. I in XL, GD, XII D 5. fol. 97 r.
37 “Quidam autem si vovent paupertatem, ut nichil habeant proprii in speciali possunt tamen habere in commune. Et in hoc fundatur omnis religio ut quidquid habent, sit eis com-
If members of the clergy do not obey these rules, they are robbers and thieves, Milicius says. He describes in detail the attitude the religious have to sustain in order to be poor. It is not enough just to declare oneself poor, but poverty must be practised in every way. E.g. when a religious needs a book, he has to ask his superior. Everything which is beyond that which the others have, requires permission from the superior. But also the superior has to be just because his decisions can turn a person into a violator of the ideal of poverty. When a community acquires more property than it needs, it violates poverty. Poverty is meaningless when it is feigned. It becomes hypocrisy and obscures sin. The poor should not be obsessed with wealth; although they are disregarded in the world, they should concentrate on the richness of good, spiritual poverty.

It seems that in this sermon Milicius is giving his community of preachers some concrete rules. The detailed nature of the regulations, for example when he speaks about having books or even a special diet, suggests that these are problems he encountered in his community. In another section of this study, we pointed out the tendency of Milicius to regard preachers as a third entity within the church, apart from the clergy and the laity. But poverty is not only limited to preachers. It is the most important practical characteristic of all people who have some leading position in the church. Violating poverty therefore means violating the sacred life of the church and is an attack on the credibility of the institution.

Clergy and prelates along with preachers bear the responsibility for teaching believers how to live. They have to behave holier than in an average life, as the canonist Hostiensis wrote in his *Summa aurea* of 1255. Hence, it is only one small step from declaring voluntary poverty the ideal for everyone in society. Sometimes Milicius seems to take this step. At one point he speaks about the relativity of all ownership and the importance of giving. The sermon is from *Gratiae Dei*, on the sixth day in Quinquagesima and contains a long elaboration on the theme of giving alms. They have the power to purify, to set free, to give shelter, to bless, to justify and to save. Milicius concludes his homily with an exhortation to be a good merchant. Giving away your possessions is more lucrative than holding them for yourself, is his conclusion.

mune, ut nemo dicat aliquid suum esse et quod nemo sit inter eos egens, sicut scribitur Actuum quarto." Omnes sancti, GD, XII D 5, fol. 141 r-v. See also p. 175.

See p. 175.

Swanson, o.c., p. 104.
When you want to be the best merchant, an excellent usurer, give away what you cannot hold to receive what you cannot lose. Give a little and you receive a hundred times more. Give your temporary possessions to gain the eternal inheritance.\(^{40}\)

To Milicius poverty is a virtue which is definitely a necessity to preachers and clergymen, but its significance transcends the borders of communities bound by a vow only.

### 3. Sovereign or Tyrant: the Morality of Power

Milicius has concerns not only about the church and its clergy, but also about secular power. This theme is not without ambivalence in Milicius' sermons. He at times speaks about it in an approving way, especially when he discusses the theme more extensively. At the same time, he frequently uses the word “tyrants” to address those who commit wrong-doings themselves or allow evil to be committed by others. There seems to be a parallel with the theme of the clergy: Milicius confirms the significance of the clergy in the church structure, but at the same time sharply criticizes the practical lifestyle of members of the clergy.

We find his approval of secular power expressed most directly in the two sermons on St. Wenceslaus, in which he formulates the principles of a good ruler. The sermons will be discussed in this study’s section on saints,\(^ {41}\) but we will briefly describe some of Milicius' ideas related specifically to power, which we meet in those sermons. The sermon presents Wenceslaus as a king driven by a prophetical spirit. He was a good ruler because he "was working in the Word of God," comments the protheme of the sermon. Good rulers listen to God’s word and propagate it during their rule. In this way, they are like preachers who meditate on the Law of God and spread the gospel of God’s mercy.\(^ {42}\)

Milicius goes on to say that God gives some people the dignity of power, however, as an instrument with which to do good works and to serve others. This was the case of St. Wenceslaus who was appointed by God and subjected himself to the Lord through his obedience. This was reflected in his

---

\(^{40}\) *Si ergo vis esse mercator optimus, fenerator egregius, da quod non potes (in marg. retinere), ut recipias, quod non poteris amittere, da modicum et recipias centuplum. Da temporalem possessionem ut consequaris hereditatem eternam.* Feria VI in L, GD, XII D 5, fol. 91 r.

\(^{41}\) See p. 177.

\(^{42}\) See p. 166 and 182.
The Problem: Church and Society on the Brink of Collapse

life: he was humble, poor, and refusing the world.\textsuperscript{43} The good ruler is at the same time also a “ruler of the church or the Christian people,”\textsuperscript{44} bringing good things to his subjects. He receives all his virtues from God and returns them to him by ruling his people well. Milicius compares the good ruler to Solomon, because he was an obedient king, unlike Saul. The former grew in perfection, whereas the latter lost himself in the arrogance of his power. The good ruler has God at his side when realizing his politics.

Again St. Wenceslaus is the example of the pious king who dedicates himself to God. He fasted, restrained himself from vengeance, and as a king he frequently took part in silent vigils, staying awake to meditate all through the night. St. Wenceslaus gave to the poor from his own property whenever some evil sovereigns confiscated their scant possessions.\textsuperscript{45} However, good rulers like Wenceslaus have many enemies. Wenceslaus led a holy life like Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain when God accepted the pious brother’s sacrifice. In the same way, Wenceslaus — the purest sovereign of the holy church — was perfidiously killed by his brother Boleslaus.\textsuperscript{46}

The Wenceslaus homily in \textit{Gratiae Dei} also paints an image of the good ruler, though the homily is more generally about his piety. The same virtues are mentioned as in \textit{Abortivus}, but they are not related so specifically to rulers, but to everyone in general. Wenceslaus cared for the poor, giving them his clothes, working with his own hands to prepare the wine for the altar etc. The sermon stresses the relative value of temporal goods and power compared to eternal life, which is the reward for a holy life. Milicius’ main remark about rulers is made rather reluctantly. After describing some of Wenceslaus’ virtues, he concludes: “He carried his cross in the spiritual sense because he was humble in glory, devoid of any vain glory, which is among sovereigns very rare.”\textsuperscript{47} Obviously, Milicius does not have high expectations for the average ruler of his day, since the good ones are rather

\textsuperscript{43} See p. 182.
\textsuperscript{44} See p. 183.
\textsuperscript{45} “Carnem terens inedia sive fame procul existens a vicinis et sub vestae regiae utendo silitis, sacra frequentans limina, nocte surgens media, cruantans nudis pedibus vestigia, in hyeme nunc lingua egenis deferens, nunc matutinis cruentat vestigia.” St. Wenceslaus, A, I D 37, fol. 214 ra-rb. Milicius is paraphrasing a strophe from the song \textit{Wenceslaus, dux gracie}, which was frequently used in the liturgy on St. Wenceslaus’ Day: “Sacra frequentat limina, nocte surgens media, callis ferens gravamina, cruentat vestigia.” See Orel, p. 441 or p. 391, 400, 434 ff.
\textsuperscript{46} “Etiam in mente crucem portabat quia humilis in gloria fuit, expers inanis glorie, quod est intra principes valde rarum.” St. Wenceslaus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 122 r.
rare. In praising Wenceslaus he is at the same time sharply criticizing those who are in power.

The good ruler in the eyes of Milicius is humble, ascetic and pious. He has certain prophetic and sacerdotal characteristics and is certainly not only the ruler of the country, but of Christendom. In his power he is a servant to the needy and the poor. Reigning over his subjects who are obedient to him, he is himself subject and obedient to God. It is not their power or glory that Milicius is referring to when he speaks about kings, but their obedience and care. The bad ruler, on the other hand, is the opposite according to Milicius. Like the brother of Wenceslaus, the bad sovereign is only hungry for power and temporal possessions and in being thus, he becomes a servant of Satan. Boleslaus was only interested in obtaining power, not as an instrument for doing good but as a way to gain temporal glory through use of weaponry and horses. His reign turned out to be nothing other than robbery and oppression. Milicius concludes that such evil rulers should be called tyrants.

Tyrants are a frequent theme in the sermons of Milicius. The evil ruler always finds himself in company with other terrible sinners like the hypocrites and the proud. He is dominated by seven evil spirits, Milicius says in his sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis from Abortivus. Those spirits are similar to those Christ identifies in Mt. 12,43-44 (“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then he says: ‘I will return to the house from which I came’. And he finds the house empty, swept clean.”). “What else can I say about the condemned and what else about the tyrants of the modern times than that they are marked by the seven spirits.”

The seven spirits are here the evil counterparts to the seven angels or preachers to whom are given the seven trumpets for announcing the end of time and the Last Judgment.

In the sermon on St. Vitus’ Day from the same postil, Milicius puts tyrants again in the contraposition, this time opposite holy martyrs, who suffer all kinds of torture and pain. This is the world dominated by “evil spirits.” Those “spirits, who possess hypocrites, tyrants and heretics opposed to the truth, are multiplied in them, seeing the end of the world or the defeat of the army of the world.”

48“Quid ergo dicam de reprobis, quid de tyrannis moderni temporis nisi quod significati sint per septem spiritus.” Dominica XII p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 233 vb.
49“Ita maligni spiritus qui possident tyrannos hypocritas et hereticos adversarios veritatis in eis multiplicati sunt, videns finem mundi sive stragem exercitus mundialis.” St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 ra.
In the homily on the Third Sunday in Lent, Milicius gives a small list of weapons that the devil uses to divide the church and to rule the world. (Mg. Sinners are the army of the devil.) Is it not that the luxurious are his breastplate (...), the proud are his helmet and they are pushed back as much as possible from the front by the lance of the Word of the Lord (...), those who makes things ridiculous are his bow (...), hypocrites are his shield (...), and tyrants are his sword?"  

The faithful have to separate themselves from these evil tyrants. Milicius enumerates a long list of the Lord’s enemies in the St. Vitus homily in Gratiae Dei. The church has to remain clean of those who are self-indulgent, avaricious, full of errors and greed, just as St. Vitus separated himself from such sinners. Milicius comments that this is a good separation, because it divides us from those who are the friends of the secular rather than of the eternal. He points out all the great of the world and tyrants, declaring them condemned. This separation is a special instruction for preachers, who must as powerless men in the worldly sense bind mighty tyrants, just as the angels bound demons. Preachers have the sword of the Word of God with which they can divide sinners from Satan, Milicius says in a sermon on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, which is especially dedicated to the work of preachers. 

Tyrants can be very powerful, but the faithful will never succumb to them. "Possunt ergo tyranni adversus bonos sedere sed prevalere non possunt" — “They can beleaguer the good, but they cannot prevail”, is how the sermon on St. Wenceslaus from Abortivus concludes. The same message is stated more extensively in the homily on St. Ludmilla— another Bohemian saint, who was oppressed by her mother in law Drahomira: “Behold how the New Gospel and the Old Testament are fulfilled in this, because evil tyrants and proud women are sent like Drahomira to the oven of fire, which the

---

90a (Mg. Peccatores sunt arma dyaboli.) Nonne litora eius sunt lusuriosi (...), galea eius sunt superbi, qui maxime retunduntur hasta verbi Domini in fronte (...), arcus eius sunt detractores (...), scutum eius sunt ypocrieti (...), gladius eius sunt tyranni?” Dominica III in XL, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 119 v.

91 "Bona ergo est ista separatio, dum ab amicis mundialibus separamur. Unde si vides superbos separa te ab eis. Noli dicere: Numquid omnis superbi damnabuntur? Sed vide quia omnes gigantes mundi et tyranni, Pharaon, Nero et alii perdit sunt.” St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 31 r.


93 St. Wenceslaus, A, D 37, fol. 214 vb.
officers or torturers of blessed Ludmilla indicate, because they have died several deaths.\footnote{"Ecce quomodo evangelium novum et vetus testamentum in hoc impletum est, quia mali tyranni et superbe mulieres ut Drahomizr missi sunt in caminum ignis, quod significant lictores sive tortores beate Ludmille, quia diversis mortibus sunt occisi." St. Ludmilla, GD, XII D 1, fol. 118 r.}

This, of course, is in contrast to St. Ludmilla who was lifted up to the glory of the Kingdom of God. Tyrants will certainly be defeated and deprived of their power. This is, however, the vision of the eschaton when Christ will come to triumph over evil and Satan. In other words, these illustrations make real the judgment of God, in which tyrants and their companions will have no chance of salvation.

In general, we can say that Milicius approves of power that is executed in the way God meant it to be. Those in power first and foremost must care for the poor. When this is the case, as during the reign of the good ruler St. Wenceslaus, Milicius does not hesitate to believe that this power is given by God. His approval of power is conditional however on the way it is used. Whenever a sovereign uses his power to gain profit and property for himself, he is nothing more than a tyrant and oppressor. Taken in and of itself this conditional endorsement of those in power is not original; however, Milicius’ purpose is distinct in that he uses this conditionality to emphasize that most rulers are worthy of our distrust. Milicius was often openly critical of power probably because he saw the practical result of its use. He concluded that many sovereigns do not care enough about the poor and are not humble nor obedient to God. The attitude of St. Wenceslaus is rare among rulers.

Another tendency in Milicius’ sermons confirms this distrust of rulers. Only in the sermons on St. Wenceslaus’ Day does Milicius speak in a positive way about power — which means, however, at the same time that he is limiting and defining “good power.” In all other instances, his remarks about those in power always have a negative tone. Milicius is familiar with the misuse of power, as exemplified in the oppression of the saints and torturers of the martyrs. Tyrants are the allies of Satan, who is trying to conquer the world and exterminate the good.

In this sense, we can consider the sermons on Wenceslaus as a critical review of the practice of power. Realizing this, it is clear that the message of these sermons is above all meant for the contemporary rulers of Milicius’ time, to whom he presents St. Wenceslaus as a role model. Milicius tries to persuade the powerful to execute their office according to the Law of God.
and sharply criticizes the powerful who reject these norms. More radically, Milicius even rejects all power that does not have the character of St. Wenceslaus' reign, claiming it comes from Satan and that the possessors of such power will certainly be sent to hell.

Finally, we notice that this image of power has a profoundly human character. Its primary aim is to make the life of the poor more human, to care for the needs of those who are dependent. Power is a way of spreading humanity. Milicius' view is again moral, as it is a manifestation of his will to change and improve the world. However, this change does not signify a revolution from the existing structures, but rather a return to the "good old world" characterized by obedience and piety.

4. Sin: The Spiritual Battle and Eschatological Implications

The complex issue of sin, its form and the struggle with it is a subject that is present everywhere in the sermons of Milicius of Chremsir. Our approach, which is to select certain themes from these sermons and to elaborate and analyze them, has a drawback when it comes to the issue of sin. While it is easy to make a compilation of quotations from the sermons about other topics relevant to our study, e.g. preachers, prelates or the church, this is not so much the case with the theme of sin and the end of time. This issue is much larger, it is like a thread throughout the sermons and is in fact the overall subject of the sermons. It is sin against which preachers and others have to fight. Sin originates from Satan and hell and its nature implies an end of time. Criticism of clerics is closely connected to a description of the nature of sin. The works of the great saints were all characterized by a fight with Satan and his allies. The mission of the church and its head, the pope, is to eradicate sin and evil. Sermons are the preacher's weapon against sin. Hence, the battle with sin inspires the sermon making it impossible to distinguish it from other themes appearing in the sermons.

With this in mind, however, we will elaborate on the issue of sin to give an idea of what Milicius thought about its nature and appearance. The main reason for this is that the theme is too important to his thinking to only link it to the preachers or clergy. In a certain sense, we can say that sin is the backdrop for all of Milicius’ ideas about the church and the world. His fight against sin gets its identity and concreteness from the works of those who
labor in these two realms. Sin is a most important subject to Milicius because his main aim is to search for ways how to combat it.

Sin is an aspect of our sad, daily reality because we are constantly tempted by it. We must therefore be open to correcting our ways, to curing ourselves from the "daily fever, because we sin incessantly," as Milicius says in the sermon on Dominica XII after Trinitatis from Abortivus. He seems to be referring to Holy Communion as an instrument against sin, which otherwise rules us completely.

Milicius refers to these daily sins as ties, and he divides them into two categories. There are

the loins of the mind (mg. of affectio), and of course of the intellect from which come opinions and desires. (...) Likewise there are the loins of the flesh, the seat of reproduction which give birth to the carnal longings.\(^5\)

According to Milicius, knowledge is suspect because it can easily distract one from the faith. Those who teach possess a power which can be misused to lead students to the devil instead of to a better understanding of God and the faith. In an Abortivus sermon on the Fifth Sunday after Trinitatis, Milicius describes the knowledge of wise and learned people as "the head of Leviathan," or the dragon from the underworld. God chooses the unlearned to be fishermen of people, he says.\(^5\)

In his sermon on All Saints' Day from Abortivus, a whole list of those people who live in sin and are Lucifer's associates is mentioned. Not only evil teachers belong in this category, but also judges and sovereigns.

But we should shudder at the thought that heavenly and earthly things are associated with the underworld. There are many who announce small evil things to their fellow creatures. Others teach big evil things to others. Others hinder the good by force. Others are ruling or reigning in an evil way. Others are judging unjustly. Others are full of the knowledge of perfidy and betrayal. Others are full of the fire of luxury and carnal love.\(^5\)


\(^5\) "Sunt enim lumbi mentis (mg. affectus), scilicet et intellectus, ex quibus cogitationes et desideria. (...) Item sunt lumbi carnis ubi est sedes generationis de quibus orientur carnales concupiscence." St. Procopius, GD, XII D 1, fol. 50 v.

\(^5\) See p. 166.

According to Milicius, the angels will throw such people into hell together with Lucifer. Sin associates a person with the devil, making him a part of the evil and malicious world. Sin is a sign that someone is overwhelmed by evil. Therefore, sin in itself is a mark of the end of time. Sin makes visible the eschatological world, the struggle between good and evil — evil being characterized by apocalyptic names such as Lucifer or Leviathan.

The devil has many methods of winning a person over to his side. Gra\textit{tiae Dei} contains a sermon about the temptation of Christ in the desert, which is in many ways a sermon about the struggle against evil in the world. In his comment on Mt. 4,6a ("If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down"), Milicius mentions the devil’s ability to deceive.

Behold the slyness of the devil because he knows that many who are strong at overcoming bigger sins such as greed and lust, but do, in fact, in a subtle manner strive for the fame of honour derived from works of holiness especially in a holy place.\textsuperscript{59}

He points out that the devil may be astute, however, Christ is able to defeat the false wisdom of the devil with the real light of the Scriptures.

In a sermon (Feria V in L) based on another part of Matthew (8,5-13) which tells the story of a Roman centurion requesting Christ to heal his servant, Milicius explains why the centurion is said to be "unworthy." Being a pagan officer, he has many things in his house which will offend Christ. He has to get rid of everything that prevents him from inviting Christ into his house, which symbolizes the house of his heart. Milicius claims it is necessary to throw all idols and female images and forms out of our (men’s) hearts, as well as knowledge and adulterous love. Then we can invite in the chaste groom Christ. This according to Milicius is real humility and does not offend the eye of the Lord.\textsuperscript{60}

Such idols and images are the work of men, according to the sermon on the Third Sunday of Advent, referring to unholy things that can draw a person away from Christ. Those who will not take offense at Christ’s demands are blessed. But there are also evil people who dress up women in

\textsuperscript{59}"Ecce astutia dyaboli, quia scit multos fortes ad vincendum grossiora peccata videlicet gulam et luxuriam, sed subtiliter honoris gloriam appetere de operibus sanctitatis precipue in loco sancto." Dominica I in XL, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 93 r.

\textsuperscript{60}"Forte habebat ydola in domo et ideo timebat oculos Christi offendere. Sic et tu stude prius omnia ydola et mulierum ymagines et formas et omnium peccatoris cogitationes et adulterinos amores de domo cordis eicere, dum castum spondum invitas. Ne offendatur in te oculus divine maiestatis. Intendite carissimi, quanta est virtus humilitas." Feria V in L, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 87 r.
order to distract others from the peace of Christ. Obviously, Milicius is referring to prostitution and especially to those people who "sell" women. He says they are nothing but demons because they lead others away from God's mercy to luxury and sin: "So are evil men or demons who decorate women and send them or place them where they deceive men, leading them into luxury and sinning against God's mercy." Milicius urges his audience to strive for the peace of Christ and stop sinning until the time when the Lord will come to fight against evil with the sword of the Word. "So on Judgment Day a double-edged sword will come out of the mouth of Christ, killing the soul and body of the damned. Woe to the man through whom scandal comes."  

It is not the outer ornamentation which designates the bride of Christ, but an inner decoration, such as in John the Baptist's heart. The sermon on this Sunday presents St. John as an example of virtue, whom the true follower of Christ should imitate. John the Baptist was a virgin, without a spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5,27). John was adorned on the inside, ready to receive his groom at his coming — a condition which all other prophets met as well.  

In Milicius' postils, sermons about saints often focus on the particular virtues that the saint represents. The saint then serves as a shining example of the rejection of sin and of fierce opposition to the devil. The sermon on St. Nicholas' Day from Gratiae Dei gives an excellent example of this approach. The homily is based on Lc. 12,35 ("Let your loins be girded and your lamps be burning"). In the protheme — which is exceptionally not about preachers — Milicius contrasts lightness to darkness, the later being the dwelling place of evil. Light enables the soul to see the Lord. "The man whose heart is with the Lord, his eyes are full of light and his spiritual mind is pure." The homily refers to the blessed of Mt. 5,8 who are pure of heart and will see God. The opposite is the fate of the one who 

---

61 "Sic sunt maligni homines vel demones, qui mulieres orant et mitunt vel statuunt ad decipierios homines, ad luxuriam trahentes et super misericordiam Dei peccantes. Et ut pacem Christi recipient sperantes, nuncum tantum peccare cessantes, donec veniat Dominus, qui in prefato capittulo talibus minatur, dicens: Veniam et pugnabo cum illis gladio oris mei. Dum in die iudicii exhibit de ore Christi gladius bis acutus. Ite videlicet maledicti animam et corpus occidens. Ve ergo homini per quem scandalum venit." Dominica III in Advent, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 15 r.  

62 "Cum ergo Johannes virginem non habentem maculam neque rugam Christo venerit adaptare recte intus, vestiri non debut, sed ab intra decorari ad suscipienda sponsum in eius adventu, quem ipse cercius omnibus alis prophetis demonstravit." Dominica III in Advent, GD XIV D 5, fol. 16 r.  

63 "Qui ergo cor habet ad Dominum, illius oculus lucidus est, id est illius mens spiritualis munda est." Dominica II in Advent, GD XIV D 5, fol. 12 r.
habet, "has heavy eyes", because he can see only in dark places. Such people are unable to see anything in sunlight, as they are only used to the light of a candle. Then, Milicius explains his metaphor in moralistic terms:

Thus a man of the world who has his eye i.e. his mind dirty and confused by earthly desires, when you place him in worldly matters, he is wise and smart. But when you turn him to spiritual matters, his eye becomes obscure to him because his mind is corrupt with earthly desires. He does not sense the good of justice. He does not sense it, I say. I say he knows it very well, he knows it but does not sense the good of justice, because he does not take delight in Him. He has his heart preoccupied with earthly sorrows.\(^{64}\)

Saint Nicholas is presented as an example of a man who had the Word of God to light his path. He was the example of humility, a man who took care of everyone and fled the comfort of women. Through speech, he fought his battle against sin and exhorted the sinful and liberated those endangered by sin.\(^{65}\) Saints offer the perfect contrast to men of the world, who are unable to orient themselves in spiritual matters.

It is necessary to dissociate oneself from this group of sinners because they are evil. Another saint, Vitus, is an example of the necessity to remain separated from evil. Milicius’ homily on him in Gratiae Dei is full of references to battles and wars against the devil and his forces. Preachers especially are said to have a mission to dissolve the false contentment the devil offers. Milicius mentions the seven mortal sins which the faithful have to avoid.\(^{66}\)

Milicius does not simply threaten and condemn "the evil ones." In the sermon on Ash Wednesday from Gratiae Dei which we have already mentioned, he speaks about forgiveness and purification as ways of becoming acceptable to the Lord. In this homily, he recommends saying the following prayer if one wants to invite Christ into his heart. The prayer gives a strong impression of Milicius’ humble piety:

---

\(^{64}\) "Sic et homo mundialis qui oculum i.e. mentem terrenis desideriis sordidam habet et turbulentam, si ponas eum in rebus mundialibus, sapit et astutus est. Si autem trabis eum ad res spirituality, obtenebrescit, quia mens illius corrupta terrenis desideriis. Iustitie bonum non sentit, non sentit dico, non (in marg.: dico) ignorat, scit enim sed non sentit bonum iustitie, quia nec delectatur in eo. Preoccupatum enim habet cor circa occupationem terrenam." Dominica II in Advent, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 12 r.

\(^{65}\) "Unde et in vigilia cum iret ad matutinum, electus est in episcopum humilitatem et morum gravitatem, in omnibus sectabatur, mulierum consortia fugiebat, humilis erat, in omnes suscipiendo, efficax in loquendo, alacer in exhortando, pia gestans, viscera peccatores et pauperes a fame anime et corporis liberando, et trium innocentum vitam tendentium colla, subiugulo de tirannorum manibus liberando et in tempestate maris nautis subveniendo." Dominica III in Advent, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 13 v.

\(^{66}\) St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 31 r - 31v. See also p. 192.
Milicius was obviously familiar with human fragility and weakness, which he may understand as belonging to our human condition; however, he is not prepared to accept it as unavoidable. He believed that with the help of the Lord a person can cleanse his heart of sin, that we must always strive for this aim, because he who continues sinning is an ally of the devil. Milicius believed that the division between good and evil existed in everyone, and therefore we must all fight against the evil in ourselves. Evil in Milicius’ eyes is not primarily something that exists independently in the world or cosmos. The devil, Satan or Leviathan are just some of the names which he uses to define evil, but the concrete image or presence of evil is always personal — people are doing evil; people are carrying evil in their hearts. Milicius did not write about an external evil force that is outside people’s hearts but gives evil a name and a concrete, human face.

It is important to note this in order to understand Milicius’ eschatology. Evil and sin represent the end of time in the sense that they ban us from the heavenly kingdom which is eternal. A battle has to be fought against sin and evil according to Milicius who uses words from an apocalyptic background. He speaks about the *bellum spirituale* or “spiritual war” and the *pugna* or “battle” against the devil. In a truly apocalyptic context, those words refer to the final battle between good and evil before the heavenly kingdom can come. Milicius never speaks about a final battle as a cosmic event involving angels and demons. His spiritual battle is a personal one, to be fought by every faithful individual within himself. We could, therefore, characterize...
Milicius’ eschatology as a personal one. The battle of tearing oneself away from sin is something every believer has to engage in during his lifetime, and this only has an apocalyptic character insofar as it represents the coming of the Kingdom of God into one’s own life. Milicius’ eschatology is an everyday event, immanent in the life of every individual.

The sermon that most openly uses the term bellum or bellum spirituale in the context of sin is the one on St. Vitus’ Day from Abortivus. The prothema addresses preachers who have the gladium acutum or “sharp sword” with which to announce and explain the truth. Preaching is presented in terms of war, as something that can triumph over both secular and spiritual matters (mundalia et spiritualia). The words in Mt. 10,38 are relevant to preachers who neglect this mission: “He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” “Let us take up in the spiritual war the banner of the cross and clean off the mud of pleasure. Let us take it up in his name, work and preach before kings and sovereigns and sons of men.”

The sermon makes a distinction between three kinds of battles: those of the flesh, of the world and finally, of the devil. In a battle against the flesh, one faces three enemies — the devil, tyrants and seductive women. This was St. Vitus’ battle. Demons attacked him and tyrants tortured him, then finally, when time came to resist the lasciviousness of women, he received help from seven angels as this temptation was too big for him to fight alone. In a battle against the world on the other hand, the enemy is hypocritical tyrants and heretics obsessed by a malign spirit. Martyrs are often the victims of such evil powers. In the third battle against the devil, victory can be achieved when a believer has four spiritual weapons — “magnanimity to attack (…), prudence to advance (…), constancy to maintain his position (…), courage to gain the victory.”

In the second part of the sermon, the inner reason for the spiritual battle is explained. Eternal life can only be gained through a test of temptation, Milicius writes. Every believer must experience such battles and knows

---

68 "Portemus in bello spirituali crucis vexillum et delicias lutum putemus. Portemus inquam nomine eius, opere et sermone coram regibus et principibus et filiis hominum." St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 141 va.
69 "Cum enim a demonibus infestatur et a tyrannorum punitur tortoribus, tacetur de angelis, quomodo autem de mulierum lascivias temptabatur tunc ei solempne VII angelorum adiutorium destinatur." St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 141 vb.
70 "Magnanimitas in aggrediendo (…), prudentia in progrediendo (…), constantia in susteniendo (…), fortitudo in expungnando." St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 ra.
71 See p. 191.
four reasons why to subject himself to it — firstly to fight for the faith; secondly for salvation or the spread of *pax hominibus* so that the unjust will not prevail over the just; thirdly to slay the pride of men; and finally, to exercise justice.\(^{72}\) Again, a saint is presented in the sermon as an example of this effort to fight evil. St. Vitus even had to oppose his own father, which fulfilled Christ’s warning in Mt. 10,35 that he came to bring division within families. This is also the experience of the church, which suffers with those who perish and rejoices with those who gain peace when it is in combat with people from outside or inside its institution. *Pax* is reached through battles, such as those which God is engaged in, Milicius concludes.\(^{73}\)

The spiritual battle also brings personal change. A person who struggles has to learn patience through suffering. He is purified in battle as his will is trained for the sake of peace.\(^{74}\) This peace, which will fill the mind and soul of the faithful, can be reached through God’s spirit. It is the peace of paradise “where the flesh does not strive against the spirit nor the spirit against the soul.” This battle can only be won if one perseveres; this perseverance leads apostles, martyrs and other believers to victory, in other words to the crown of the heavenly kingdom.

*Gratiae Dei* contains a homily that expresses Milicius’ opinion about the spiritual battle using the same vocabulary. The homily on the First Sunday in Lent is based on the story of Christ being “led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Mt. 4,1). These temptations are linked to the experiences of believers, who have to fight against evil and sin. Again the preacher is told to hold the sword of the Word when going into this battle. Also, the devil is said to have several means of deceiving people, which we mentioned earlier in this analysis. At the end of the sermon, Milicius makes some conclusions about the character and meaning of temptation in everyday life. Christ has gained victory over the devil all by himself. As is written in Mt. 4,11, the devil then left him and angels came to minister to him. All glory therefore belongs to the Lord.

Milicius concludes this homily with some remarks about the inner connection between the suffering and victory of Christ and believers. Christ

\(^{72}\) Quattuor enim cause sunt propter quas bellum suscipitur: (...) propter fidem (...), propter salutem (...), ut pax hominibus procuretur, ne injuriosi iustioribus dominentur (...), ut superbia hominum prosterminatur (...), ut iusti exerceantur." St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 va.

\(^{73}\) "Bellum ergo sanctorum est ut sint pacifici et proprias injurias sufferant pacienter et se prius et suoi motus supprimant, ut voluntas sempersit ad pacem, ad bellum non nisi necessitas magna compellat." St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 va.
suffered for the faithful and was victorious on their behalf, he remarks. That is the reason why we should rally around his banner and be prepared to fight the same battle he fought. The spiritual battle does not just involve the one who is struggling but also Christ who is the leader of the faithful. The believer is not alone in his battle against evil, according to Milicius, because he receives help from Christ who suffered in the same way as his follower:

"Ergo Christus pro nobis temptatus, nobis vicit et coronam obtinuit. Stemus sub eius vexillo in hoc sacro tempore ut ipse pro nobis pugnans, nos coronet in secula seculorum." Dominica I in XL, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 94 r.

4.1. Eschatology

The presence of evil and sin in the world is to Milicius a sign of the transitoriness of time. Evil is in many ways a kind of reference to the end of time when there will be no more evil. In Milicius' opinion, the presence of evil forces everyone to decide where he wants to belong — on the side of God or on the side of evil. It is the pressing nature of this decision which gives Milicius' sermons an eschatological flavor. In the analysis of his thinking about preaching and preachers, we will see the special position and mission the preacher has during this time of deciding where to belong. The preacher must make a distinction between good and evil and has to gather the followers of good for Judgment Day. Eschatology colors a preacher's activities because the end of time is immanent in his preaching. A sermon is nothing less than a presentation and representation of Judgment Day, which urges a person to make up his mind. Sermonizing has to reveal the difference between good and evil, whereas the distinction is often vague. Therefore, we term Milicius' eschatological ideas as immanent eschatology. In this section, we will concentrate on this eschatology and the expectation of the end of time as presented in the sermons of the two postils, without deducing their character from other issues in Milicius' writings.

The sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis from Abortivus is full of eschatological allusions. The church is compared to Israel in the time of the prophet Elijah who was competing with the priests of the god Baal on Mount Carmel. Elijah, the prophet of the eschatological time, pressed the people of Israel to make a choice between Baal and the Lord. The church
and its members have to make the same choice and preachers have the same role as Elijah.

The decisive character of time is made evident by several signs, all originating from the devil. We read about tyrants, false prophets, i.e. false preachers, prelates and enemies of the church. It is the time of the seventh misery, *tribulatio*, or, elsewhere, the seventh generation which is also the final one. Christ will soon come to liberate his church from this suffering. “Everywhere in this seventh misery of the end of the world, the Son the Lord will free his bride,’” Milicius wrote. And just a few sentences later, he makes this notion clearer and more concrete:

Thus, now the church is being pushed through the seventh and last generation in the peace of Christ, carrying justice, walking with God like Enoch and being zealous for the law of the Lord like Elijah, because the last hour is here and it is the end of the ages.”

Milicius did not hesitate to link two eschatological figures to the sufferings of the church. Both Enoch and Elijah are supposed to appear at the end of time and announce the coming of the Eternal Kingdom.

Milicius seems to expect the end of time to arrive soon. In these sermons, he was, however, reluctant to set an exact time for the end as he later did in the *Libellus de Antichristo*. Nevertheless, the sermon on the Tenth Sunday after Trinitatis gives a certain idea of time and its division. A contrast between expectation on one hand and our lack of preparation for the Judgment Day on the other characterizes the sermon. In its protheme, the sermon on Lc. 19,43 (“Your enemies will surround you”) again points to the power of preaching as a means of disassociating oneself from heresy and abolishing it. Eschatological images like the spiritual battle between Jerusalem and Babylon are mentioned in extensive quotations from St. Bernard. The text also presents St. Ambrose’s division of time. There are four eras in this division, the first being from the beginning of the world till the deluge called *tempus prudencie*, “the time of prudence.” The second era, the *tempus temperantie*, “the time of restraint,” spans from the deluge till Moses. The third era between the lifetimes of Moses and Christ is named *tempus fortitudinis*, “the time of courage” when King David, King Solomon

---


78 Dominica X p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 179 vb.
and the prophets did not despair. The fourth and last era is the *tempus iusticie* or “the time of justice” which began with the coming of Christ and will end with the Judgment Day.

This division is more or less identical to that made in the homily on St. Nicolas in *Gratiae Dei*. Here we find a threefold division of time based on Lc. 12,37-38. This text speaks about three vigils during which servants wait for their masters to return. Milicius understood these vigils as three eras in time. The first one he called the *vigilia legis naturalis*, “the watch of the natural law,” which ends with the coming of the law of Moses. Then the second period begins, the *vigilia legis Moysayca*. The third vigil is that of the gospel, the *vigilia legis ewangelica*, which obviously begins with the coming of Christ. Unlike the division described in *Abortivus*, the postil *Gratiae Dei* leaves out the Flood as an extra point of division. However, *Gratiae Dei* adds another qualification to the division because it speaks about the eras of boyhood, youth and old age.

Both of these divisions are by no means apocalyptic in nature. They are rather a division of time that is common in Christian theology because they are based on the structure of the Bible and the eras in it. This division originated in the *Letter to the Hebrews* and some writings of St. Paul, which make a distinction between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ. This division of time has an eschatological emphasis since it defines the present as a time of waiting for the Judgment Day. It does not, however, determine when this day is going to take place. The faithful are waiting for it, knowing that it can happen any day.

Milicius’ understanding of “the last era” is basically eschatological and by no means apocalyptic, as is sometimes suggested in studies of his *Libellus de Antichristo*. The notion of the end of time in the sermons is primarily a warning and exhortation to all people to take their Christian duties seriously. An apocalyptic division of time, on the other hand, is characterized by its determining nature, which pinpoints a particular moment when time will end. Such a division is comparable to a modern public transport timetable whose schedule is met under any circumstances. Milicius’ divisions lack this concreteness.

---

79 *St. Nicolaus, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 12 r - 13 v.*

In the sermon on the Tenth Sunday after Trinitatis, we find one of Milicius’ typical references to the end of time. People lasciviously eat and drink in order to simply achieve temporal peace, Milicius writes. Believers should fear that the Lord might arrive unexpectedly, stealthily as would a thief, and group them with the hypocrites. The same idea is conveyed in the sermon on All Saints’ Day from Abortivus. Firstly, Milicius explains that the church is a mixed congregation of evil and good individuals and that the two must be separated. Then he quotes St. Augustine on the difference between Holy Jerusalem and Babylon, both places having an eschatological connotation. The main question is whether we belong to Jerusalem or to Babylon.

And when someone finds himself to be a citizen of Babylon, let him ban cupidity, let him cultivate love. But when someone finds himself to be a citizen of Jerusalem, let him bear captivity, let him hope for freedom.

It is certainly too extreme to call Milicius an apocalyptic preacher who predicts the precise end of time. His opinions and visions are tied too much to the context of his era to reach such a conclusion. The use of eschatological images in his preachings always has a moral aim and works as an exhortation to break with sin and evil. Eschatology has a moral tendency in Milicius’ sermons because it confronts his audience with a question about the nature of the Last Judgment and its relevancy to the present moment. In his preaching where he presents Judgment Day as a future event, he crystallizes and sharpens the immediate situation of his audience, clarifying the border between good and evil, hypocrisy and faith, tyranny or ministry.

In the meantime, the opposite is also true. The presence of evil, hypocrisy and tyranny makes it obvious to Milicius that “this age” is ending. The increasing tendency toward evil is a sign of the eschatological character of this time. This age is impregnated with evil which indicates that it will soon end. On the second Sunday in Advent from Gratiae Dei Milicius writes a sermon about the structure of society (this passage we partly quoted when elaborating on the prelates and clergy). He compares the celestial bodies to the different layers of society. The sun symbolizes the prelates, the moon is..

82“Et si se invenerit civem Babilonie, exstirpet cupiditatem, plantet caritatem; si autem se invenerit civem Iherusalem, tolleret captivitatem, speret libertatem.” Omnes sancti, A, I D 37, fol. 239 rb.
the church, the stars are the clergy and the earth refers to the lay people. All of them are in a terrible state of darkness, blood and oppression, mutually attacking each other. The clergy are primarily to blame since due to their lack of leadership and example the laity live in sin and violence and even attack the leaders. The clergy itself is the reason for the violence used against the church. This crisis and confusion is an indication of the great battle that will occur before the glorious victory:

The sign in the sun is darkness, in which the inexperience of the prelates is pointed out. The sign in the moon is blood, in which the carnal love of consanguinity is pointed out. The sign in the stars is the fall on earth, in which the avarice of clerics is signified. The sign on earth is pressure, in which the mutual oppression of lay people is pointed out. The first is the cause of the second, and the third of the fourth, thus the fourth destroys the third and the second the first. And because after the great battle the glorious victory will follow, it is added: "Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

In the same sense, the homily on Saturday after the Third Sunday in Advent comments on the horror of the times. The part after the introduction briefly discusses the historical circumstances under which Christ was born. Those times were bad because there were many tyrants like Caiphas and Annas, who are also mentioned in the context of Christ’s suffering. Only John the Baptist zealously preached against this evil. By using the word Antichrist for the very first and very last time in his postil, Milicius reveals the true nature of those earlier times. This section is also an introduction to a quotation from St. Ambrose about the Antichrist:

For the current times are more dangerous than they were then, since many who seem to be Christians do more harm to the church than pagans, and do many anti-Christian abominations. Let us therefore take care as St. Ambrose warns us in his commentary on Lucas, the tenth book, the sixth chapter: "The abomination of desolation and of the awful Antichrist has come."
In the following quotation, Ambrose distinguishes between three Antichrists. Firstly, Antichrist is compared to priests who are not serving God. Secondly, those frauds who doubt God are referred to as Antichrists; and finally this term is applied to heretics like Arius or Sabellius who lead us away from the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. *In tali ergo tempore mali,* “in such bad times” Christ came on earth.\(^85\)

Milicius is very worried about the nature of his era, which according to him is full of lies, impiety and evil. He could only understand the meaning of his era by using words from an eschatological background. The times are so bad that he must speak about the Antichrist — however, only when quoting others. It is significant that the word Antichrist never appears in *Abortivus* and only once in the postil *Gratiae Dei* where it does not originate from Milicius himself, but from St. Ambrose. Moreover, this term is found in a homily during the time of Advent — a period when it was usual to sermonize about the Judgment Day and the end of time. During Advent, a remark about the Antichrist and his abomination is more or less obligatory. Obviously, Antichrist was not an important notion to Milicius when he wrote his postils. For the first time at the end of his life he devoted one sermon and the *Libellus* to this notion because he was experiencing hard and decisive times. In *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei* the issue of the end of time is primarily a mirror of the age: “For the times are more dangerous.”

---

\(^85\) *Sabato in quattuor temporibus, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 25 v.*