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.

Publication date
1999

Citation for published version (APA):
Moree, P. C. A. (1999). Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia. The life and ideas of Milicus de Chremsir (+1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia. EMAN.
The Answer: The Word of the Preacher and the Example of the Saints

Milicius not only gave his analysis of the problems and danger as he saw them, but also gave an answer to them. According to him preachers were to play a key role in the decisive battle with evil. This chapter takes a closer look at his ideas about the necessary change. Only the preacher has the power to change the situation for the better and to bring salvation. Milicius' sermons on saints emphasize the responsibility of every individual to the fate of church and society.

1. The Preacher breaking the power of evil

1.1. Abortivus

The main source we have for knowing how the postil Abortivus views the role of the preacher are the so-called prothema or introductions to the sermons in the collection. The prothema usually speaks about the preacher and his task in the church or community. Very often it relates the text of the sermon to the preacher by comparing him to the main character of the text.
In the sermons for holy days the preacher is compared to the saint to whom the particular day is devoted.

In general, it is the preacher’s task to save people from final punishment and hell. It is a sacred task assigned by Christ himself. The preacher does not operate in his own name but in the name of Jesus according to the first sentence in the sermon on the Fifth Sunday after Trinitatis. This sermon, based on Lc. 5,5 (“Master, we toiled all night and took nothing”) and which likens the preacher’s task of saving souls to catching fish, is entirely devoted to the work of preaching and preachers.

Every preacher is obliged, not in his own name but in the name of Christ Jesus, to urge, that is to pull people from the waves of the sea, that is from the world to the shore of the eternal fatherland.¹

In a sermon on St. Procopius’ Day, the preacher is compared to the captain of a ship. St. Procopius lived and preached on the bank of the Sázava River, where many people came to see him. He and his followers founded a monastery, which became of great importance to the church in Bohemia. In this sense his work — and with it the preacher’s work in general — is connected to the image of the church being like a ship on the waves of the unquiet world:

Thus in order to be worthy of hearing the preaching, let us enter the boat of Peter in which yet, according to Jude, no storm can be evoked. But when Christ and blessed Procopius were preaching the sea, i.e. the world, became placid and the boat of the church became quiet.²

It is God himself who speaks through the mouth of the preacher. The preacher is God’s instrument to correct sinful behavior, to offer salvation and to save his flock from eternal punishment. Preaching is a pedagogic activity through which God acts as a father to his children:

In one way God rebukes the ones who will be damned and in another the ones who will be saved, the first by punishing them eternally, the others by admonishing them physically and

¹“Omnis predicator non in suo sed in Christi Ihesu nomine debet instari, id est homines de fructibus maris, id est mundi, trahere ad littus patrie sempiterne.” Dominica V p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 153 rb.

²“Ut ergo nos predicationem digni sumus audire, Petri naviculam ascendamus, in qua iam propter Iudam tempestas nullatenus concitatatur [a reference to Jude vs. 13]. Sed Christo et beato Procopio predicante mare, id est seculum, placatur et naviculam ecclesie quietatur.” St. Procopius, A, I D 37, fol. 156 va.
The aim of preaching is thus to educate people, to tell them about the life of the faithful, the children of God. Through sermons, people should get to know the principles of the faith and of the devout life. The preacher has to inform his audience about God’s law and rule, to urge obedience and to warn against perpetrating these rules. To be able to do this, the preacher needs certain skills. The preacher cannot present Christ, “the cornerstone,” to his people without help from the Holy Spirit. The preacher himself has to be educated first, to be reworked as is a piece of wood, or more precisely, as is done with some raw material that contains a highly valuable core. The sermon on the fishing of men states:

Just as the Lord seeing them, does not elect their deeds but their hearts, so shall it be with you if you are inept in the work of preaching. The Maker of everything, the Holy Spirit, can model, smooth and round, and so by shearing, compose you, so that you can be of value like a precious stone or ornament, and a buttress of the church or to link walls against sinners as an image of Christ, who is the cornerstone. And if you are not fit to fish men, he will make you fit for him. Let us therefore come together, humbly and devoutly, that his word might catch us, that we, thus caught by it, catch others and that we will be led together to the gate of the eternal salvation.

The education that a preacher has to provide for his people is not just a matter of transmitting certain knowledge. The motive of preaching is to fight the war against evil, Satan and his forces. A preacher is a fisherman, whose task it is to catch as many people as possible in the net of God by his preaching. Satan however is also trying to catch fish with his own preachers, who also have their nets. They are also capable of attracting and fooling people by distorting the truth so that they become lost to Christ:

The beast has become foolish along with everyone who follows him, because many are those who widen the net as they are preaching, disputing and writing, making opinions not for the

---

3 "Aliter Deus corripit dampnandos et aliter salvandos, quia illos etemaliter puniendo, istos corporaliter et leviter admonendo. Sicud pater filium virga corrigit, ne ille hereditatem perdat, sic Deus facit per verbum predicationis." Dominica X p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 177 rb.
4 “Sic et Dominus videns illos non opera illorum eligit sed corda, sic et tu si ad opus predicationis inpetus es. Artifex omnium, Spiritus Sanctus, postest te dolare, planare, quadrare, et ista tensionibus componere, ut velud lapis precious aut ornamentum et sustentamentum ecclesie vel ad coniungendum parietes adversarium peccatorum ad instar Christi, qui est lapis angulai, posset valere. Et sic si inhabitis es ad piscandum homines, te habilitabit ad illum. Ergo con fugiamus humiliter et devote, ut nos capiat verbo suo, ut sic capti per ipsum alios capiamus et deducamur pariter ad portum salutis eternae.” Dominica V p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 153 va.
sake of the truth, but for the vanity of their pride, and so they catch souls not for Christ, but for the devil and themselves.5

As is required in a proper scholastic sermon, a third type of fishing net is distinguished in addition to those of Satan and God — that is the rethe mundi, “the net of the world,” which Milicius identifies with the seduction of the world. It distracts people from God toward all kinds of comfort. Here the delicatio luxurie, “the pleasure of lust,” is the factor which a preacher must criticize and warn against. This quality or characteristic is a danger to one’s salvation and must be dismissed.

God’s net with which he gathers his people into the Holy Church is, of course, related to preaching. In this part, Milicius has some rather negative opinions about clerics, he compares them to pillars. Many in the church are columpne, he says, but not all of them have the net of preaching. In other words, those who are pillars are necessary, but not all of them can preach the Word of God. However, the same is true for many preachers, he says. They have the rethe scripture, “the net of the Word,” but are not pillars so they collapse under any small burden. They are unable to support the building of the church.

But even those who have both the strength to carry and the net to catch are not necessarily righteous. They can still be collaborators of the devil rather than allies of the Lord. Many of them are not trying to catch and hold the people and care for their souls like good pastors do, but are cutting the net and enabling the fish to escape from God.

But many are also pillars because they are strong and have a net, which is Scripture, and nevertheless they do not decorate the Temple of Solomon, but rather the Tower of Babylon. How many are there in the church tearing the net of the Scriptures while the fish, i.e. the elect, escape. By no means are they worthy of the Holy Spirit holding onto them.6

Milicius has serious doubts about the ability of many members of the clergy to contribute to the well-being of the church. Many of them are unworthy of the work of preaching to the people, because they do not do good deeds for God and the salvation of men, but simply for their own

---

5"Bestia stulta factus est et omnes qui secuntur illum, quoniam multi sunt qui laxant hoc rethe, predicando, disputando, in scriptis dando, non pro veritate sed pro sue superbia vanitate opiniones faciendo et sie captiunt non Christo, sed dyabolos et sibi animas." Dominica V p.T., A, ID 37, fol. 153 vb.

In the section *In quibus verbis*, the sermon analyzes why a preacher is or is not able to convert people with his words. The main cause of ineffective preaching is when a preacher does his work without God. In this case, his work is useless but consumes a lot of energy. However, when a preacher performs his service together with God, his preaching brings the fruit of salvation. The sermon distinguishes seven reasons — being the seven deadly sins — for fruitless preaching without God:

1. *Superbia*, “pride,” which disables both the preacher and audience to enter the Lord’s net in humility. It is a sign of the absence of love between the preacher and his audience.
2. *Luxuria*, “lust,” either in the preacher or his audience.
3. *Avaricia*, “covetousness,” which is a characteristic of all who are “striving after honors, practicing usury, simony, and gathering property.”
4. *Invidia*, “envy.”
5. *Gula*, “gluttony,” which is when one is in the devil’s net and thereby cannot be caught in God’s net.
6. *Ira* or *iracundia*, “anger,” by which frogs rather than fish are attracted to the Lord’s supper.
7. *Accidia*, “sloth,” deprives one of God’s grace which is as deadly as dry land to fish.

All these obsessions distract both the preacher and his audience from Christ and his church and originate with Satan. He is the source of all human greed and hatred, which separates one from God. Every preacher who is filled with these temporary desires is therefore fishing for Satan, not for the Lord.

A preacher will be successful, however, when he does his work with God. His behavior is characterized by the polar opposite of the obsessions Milicius just described. The preacher and audience have to empty them-

---

selves of everything that distracts them from God. Only then will God’s net catch them and bring them to eternal life.

The Word of God does not catch the proud, but the humble, not the angry, but the meek. (...) Likewise the Word of God does not catch those who hate, but those who love, not those who are distorted by the image of carnal dissipation, as they are curly, slightly undressed, chatting, tightened up, dressed in the purple of beauty, not like God created them, but like the devil deformed them.

The third part of the In quibus verbis has an unusual structure that does not follow the strict scholastic rules for a sermon. The subject of this tertio part is the Last Judgment when the fish will be divided into two groups: the good and the bad. In this separation, the fishermen or preachers will play a key role. They will be like angels, the helpers of God, and will have the power to decide who will be saved.¹⁰

Milicius continues with an explanation on a passage about Leviathan, who is the symbol and presence of Satan, from Job 40,20 - 41,25. It is partly in the style of a homily as it is practically a commentary on the Job text and is not in the thematic style of the scholastic sermon. This is the only unusual change of styles in the sermons contained in Abortivus.

The work of the preacher is viewed within the context of the battle between good and evil, God and Satan, Leviathan and the angels. Preachers use their weapon of God’s Word to free sinners from Satan and his power. By preaching, they take people from the side of the devil and bring them to God.

You understand that therefore servants, i.e. preachers as well as angels, that weak preachers drive away potent tyrants, just as angels bind demons, and therefore preachers divide sinners from them and destroy them by the sword of the Word of God.¹¹

In another sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinitatis, Milicius states that it is the preacher’s task to announce the end of the world. This sermon about John 4,52 (“At the seventh hour, the fever left him”) is full of the expectancy that the world will soon end, that the judgment and condemnation of evil people — in this context primarily tyrants — will soon occur.

¹⁰See p. 120.
¹¹Verbum enim Dei non capitt superbos sed humiles, non iracundos sed mansuetos. (...) Item verbum Dei non capitt invidios sed caritativos (...), non distortos per ymaginem carnalis lascivie, ut sunt crispati, nodulati, rostrati, stricti, fuco pulchritudinis ornati, non sicud Deus eos formavit, sed sicud dyabolus deformavit.” Dominica V p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 154 va.

Preachers have to announce the end of the world, as angels do in the book Apocalypse when they blow the seven trumpets of the truth.\textsuperscript{12}

The importance of preaching has an eschatological dimension: wherever preachers work, they fulfill an eschatological task by announcing the coming of the Judgment Day. The content of their work itself is eschatological, no matter under what circumstances they live and work. To Milicius, the meaning of preaching is understandable only in an eschatological context. Preachers have to lead their listeners away from the gates of Babylon and bring them to Jerusalem. They have to bring them to eternal salvation. In a way, the preacher himself represents the Judgment Day by urging his audience to make a choice. His preaching has to convey the full weight of the Final Judgment, commemorating this day of the definitive decision. In his sermonizing the preacher has to become an immediate embodiment of the Final Judgment. The preacher himself is an eschatological figure and his preaching an eschatological act.

A preacher is therefore a liberator, freeing his people from the captivity of Babylon, the city of Satan. He sets people free from the power of evil and the devil, bringing them to Jerusalem. It should be noted that in these quotations clerics or prelates do enjoy a better reputation than in the sermon on the fishing of men.

Would that these prelates or preachers under the true Cyrus, Jesus Christ, together with the faithful Israelites leave the captivity of Babylon or the devil in order to build a new Jerusalem, a holy church, no matter how much they were hindered by tyrants, because if they perish because of them, they will rise again.\textsuperscript{13}

Special attention should be paid to the relationship between preachers and the powerful of the world. Those secular powers are understood to be not only those who rule but also those who possess knowledge and are learned. For the most part, this relationship has negative connotations, but not all the time. According to the sermon on the fishing of men, the powerful and wise of the world are connected to Leviathan. His collaborators are mighty tyrants and clever philosophers full of the wisdom of this world. Milicius uses here a kind of anti-intellectual argument against learned and eloquent people. The Lord does not need such people, but chooses the

\textsuperscript{12} See p. 135.
\textsuperscript{13} "Utinam ergo ipsi prelati sive predicatores sub vero Syrro Christo Jhesu una cum veris Israelitis exirent de captivitate Babylonica sive dyaboli ad edificandum novam Jerusalem, ecclesiam videlicet sanctam, quantuncumque a tyrannis fuerit impediti, quia et si coram eis ceciderint tamen resurgent." Dominica XII p.T., A. I D 37, fol. 234 rb - 234 va.
simple to be preachers and fishermen. Preachers are not necessarily educated in the institutions of the world, but are the pupils of God, who teaches them how to catch fish, i.e. how to lead people into the right way of living.

The head of it [i.e. of Leviathan] are the most powerful and wise, the wise of the world and the philosophers who are caught by the fishermen in their own hovel, i.e. tow-net. The Lord firstly collects the unlearned in order to gain the philosophers after that. God did not teach the fishermen through orators, but by the extraordinary power through the fishermen he has subdued the orators.14

These wise men are the false preachers, who are in the service of Satan and lead people into hell. Through these sapientes Leviathan is able to draw many souls to himself, or more precisely to the horrible place of Babylon. "Just as someone may enter through the good teachers as through the gates of Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, likewise he may gain entrance to hell through the gates of Babylon, i.e. the false teachers."15 Milicius' words reveal a tendency to distrust preachers who study some kind of knowledge, which we can identify as either philosophy or theology. Knowing the wisdom of the world or possessing eloquence are not necessary for being a good preacher is what Milicius is trying to say. Only the preacher who guides his audience to the gates of the Eternal Jerusalem is good.

The sermon on St. Wenceslaus is an exception to this tendency in Abortivus to be wary of the learned and powerful. Of course, this sermon is important since it speaks about the main patron of the Czechs, King Wenceslaus. In a sense, the sermon and its theme transcend the context of the postil by discussing Wenceslaus who was of a doubtless significance to Milicius' audience. This can be the reason for the fact that this sermon is the only one that speaks in an unambiguous way about the powerful and the mighty.

At any rate, the sermon presents King Wenceslaus as a role model for all good people no matter what their station in life might be. Therefore, he is also an example to preachers because his work was basically the same as theirs. Princes are people qui in verbo Dei laborant, "who work in the Word of God," the sermon says. They are not ashamed, nor do they hesitate to preach God's Word. The good ruler acts according to the Law of God and is

14 Caput autem eius [i.e. Leviathan] sunt fortissimi sapientes, huius mundi sapientes et philosophi, quos piscatores in suum gurgustium, id est sagenam comprehendant. Primo namque Dominus collegit indoctos ut post modum lucraretur philosophos. Et non per oratores docuit piscatores, sed mira potentia per piscatores subegit oratores." Dominica V p.T., A, I D 37, fol. 155 rb.

15 See p. 129.
therefore at the same time a preacher, a prophet and a priest. He represents God’s kingdom on earth, just as preachers do. St. Wenceslaus was a superb example of this type of model king.

Likewise every preacher should meditate on the divine law, so as not to be confused when face to face with kings, whoever accuses him of a crime. The Lord gives him the word to evangelize many of virtues.

1.2. Gratiae Dei

In Gratiae Dei the preacher is presented as practically the savior of the world. He is compared to the apostles, to saints, and even to Christ. His mission is to bring the Word of God into the world, that is to be a soldier on behalf of the Eternal Kingdom. More than prelates he is capable of spreading the gospel of hope and love. He is responsible for the faithful, for guiding the church, for separating his flock from evil, and for criticizing and consoling them. His tasks in fact are endless. It is clear that Milicius expects everything from a preacher, whom he considers to be the last and only instrument of God for delivering the church from sin and evil. In this sense, the preacher has an eschatological mission.

Milicius compares the preacher to whomever he is speaking about in his sermons. The work of the great forerunners of the faith can for the most part be categorized as a preacher’s work. The preacher is the actual embodiment of the history of salvation. There is no one from biblical or ecclesiastical history to whom the preacher cannot be compared. What began with the apostles was a small spark that grew into a big fire, which is now spreading throughout the world by preaching:

Let us therefore set each other afire, let one provoke the other into attending sermons, that even if the priests do not want to preach, you nevertheless excite their will. From a tiny spark a huge fire is born, and from a tiny preaching a huge fire of divine love is lit in many people. As through only twelve apostles the whole world is reached, let that be fulfilled in us and in the whole world. 19

Preachers have to be like Peter, the “imitator of the name of Christ,” who in his life and work, by preaching and carrying the cross followed Christ. Like Peter, the preacher has to give up his carnal life and devote himself to Christ’s love. Only in this way can we bring the church to Christ:

Let us abandon the carnal love and adhere to the divine love, preaching to the sheep of Christ and providing a meadow in unpretended love, that we together with them could happily reach the meadow of eternal life, together with the sheep of Christ.  

Elsewhere in one of his most lively sermons on the Saturday after the Third Sunday in Advent, the preacher is compared to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ. Preachers are encouraged to do the same, preparing the way for Christ to come into people’s hearts:

This veil John removed from our hearts that we would recognize Christ by his revealed face and see the profound mysteries of the Old Testament, fulfilled in Christ. He prepared rightly for us the way to Christ and other preachers are exhorted to do the same, that the divine word may have a free way to come into our hearts.

Martyrs have been oppressed and killed, because they revealed the evil of the enemies of the truth, who pose as true believers. Like those holy forerunners, preachers are also sent to reveal the hypocrites. It belongs to the fate of the true followers of Christ to be prosecuted, especially by those who say they are the church. Even when the costs are high and the resistance hard, preachers have the holy duty to tell the truth not only to those who are receptive to it, but also to those who refuse to listen. Preachers should be aware of the reaction of their audience and adapt their approach according to it.

Listen how any preacher must be meek towards the meek, and rigid towards the obstinate, towards the adversaries of the truth, like Christ was meek to the apostles and others to whom he was preaching, but rigid to the obstinate, especially to the Pharisees who resisted him so much that he called them hypocrites, sons of the devil.

168 Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia
However, the preacher is warned that his work cannot be postponed. His holy task is to sound the trumpet by preaching against the sins of Babylon. Since there is so much resistance to the truth, it is all the more clear that the root of this resistance is the empire of evil. Even when it seems that Satan has left, it is necessary to continue:

Most beloved sons, listen, that a short time ago the holy prophet of the Lord, Joel, proclaimed the house of Christ and his faithful, when he said to the preachers: “Blow the trumpet in Zion” [Joel 2,1]. Because the flutist and the trumpeter of Babylon ceased, therefore he ought to sound the trumpet of the word in their hearts even more.

Preaching in the eyes of Milicius is an eschatological activity. The preacher must stop evil by revealing its character. Sins such as simony, greed and all the others which Milicius accuses many clerics of, are not just a failure or wrongdoing but a denial of the very heart of the church. Through such sins, they themselves become instruments of Satan, who through them gains power over the church. The situation is very serious, according to Milicius, because many clerics use their positions for their own personal advantage rather than for that of their people. This is truly an apocalyptic sign of the times. The forces of sin and evil are intruding into the Holy Church, even winning over some of its hierarchy. It is for this reason that Milicius does not expect clerics, but rather preachers to offer hope to the church in these bad times by preaching the mighty Word of God. They are the church’s last line of defense. It is their task to stop the devil’s forces and to die if necessary. The prothema to a sermon on Mt. 4,1 relates this mission of the preacher to the work of St. Paul:

So a preacher, seeing the army of the devil in beastly human beings, has to hurl himself upon them with the sword of the Word of God and cut them down from the right of prosperity and from the left of adversity, even if it is necessary then to die, like Paul did in the courts. in Jerusalem, in Rome, in Greece. The court did not hide from him, that finally in the whole world prophets both fight and win.  

predicavit, sed rigidus erga obstinatos, et precipue pharizeos, qui sibi resistebant, ita ut vocaret eos ypocritas, filios dyaboli.” Omnes sancti, GD, XII D 1, fol. 142 v.

“Carissimi filii, audistis, quia heri sanctus propheta Domini Johel curiam Christi et eius nuptias proclamavit, cum dixit predicatoribus: Canite tuba in Syon [Joel 2,1]. Quia videlicet fistuatares et tubicine babilonicie cessaverunt, ideo debet eo fortius in vestris cordibus tuba ewangelica insonare.” Feria V in L, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 86 v.

”Ita predicator videns arma dyaboli in hominibus bestialibus, debet gladio verbi Dei in eos irrure et a dextris prosperitatis et a sinistris adversitatis prosternere, et si necesse est etiam ibi mori, quod et Paulus faciebat in curiis, nunc Jerusalem, nunc Rome, nunc in Greta. Nec fuit curia que (mg. absconderet se) ab eo, ut ergo in toto mundo predicatores sic pugnantes, sic vincant.” Dominica I in XL, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 92 r-v.
To emphasize this apocalyptic context, Milicius uses words with an apocalyptic background, however without indicating an imminent end of the world. This requires some explanation.

In Gratiae Dei the name Antichrist never appears in a direct way but only in quotations from St. Ambrose. The only time the followers of Antichrist are mentioned is in the sermon on Lc. 3, 1-6, which is referred to earlier on as well. The sermon’s place in the liturgical order is more important here. It is designated for the Saturday in the third week of Advent — Advent being a period that seems to elicit references to Antichrist. Here, he is connected to heretics, tyrants and hypocrites — a threefold indication of evil forces, which often occurs in the sermons. The preacher is bound to zealously preach against these representatives of Satan, just as John did:

Truly take note that John began to preach the evangelic justice or that of Christ to those evil rulers and to those who destroy the faith of God. So do we have to zealously preach the justice of Christ who is coming to judgment, to rulers, to many tyrants and heretics and hypocrites, in the zeal of John and Elijah, or rather of Christ. For the times are more dangerous than they were then, when now many who seem to be Christians, harm the church more than pagans, doing many anti-Christian abominations.

Many words in this quotation have an apocalyptic connotation. A key word quoted from Daniel 12 — the famous text which breaks history up into eras and discusses the coming end of the world — is abhominatio. This same term plays a central role in the Libellus de Antichristo. Moreover, the text refers to Elijah — the eschatological prophet who will return at the end of time.

In spite of all these apocalyptic and eschatological images, in his Gratiae Dei sermons Milicius by no means proclaims the end of the world nor does he divide history into apocalyptic periods. This is an important difference from the Libellus, which mentions even specifically that the coming of Antichrist will occur in two possible years (1365 or 1367). In Gratiae Dei Milicius says no more than that the “times are dangerous.”

He uses apocalyptic images to stress his message and the urgency of the preacher’s role. The badness of times and the degree of the clerics’ sinfulness can only be

---

23 “Notandum vero quod sicut istis malis regnantibus et quasi omnem cultum Dei destruenteribus, ceptit Johannes iustitiam evangelicam predicare sive Christi. Sic et nos regnantibus, multis tyrannis et hereticis et ypocritis iustitium Christi ad iudicium venturi zelo Johannis et Helie ymmo pocius (mg. Christi) zelandere predicare debermus. Periculosior enim sunt tempora quam tunc fuerunt, cum multi qui videntur esse christiani, magis noceant ecclesie quam pagani, multas abhominiones antichristianas facientes.” Sabato in quattuor temporibus (Saturday after III Advent), GD, XIV D 5, fol. 25 r.

24 See p. 153 ff.
exposed by an apocalyptic vocabulary. Evil in the church and society has a very harsh and defined character, a fact that can only be understood when seen in an apocalyptic light. But in Gratia Dei Milicius does not take the next step: He is not foreseeing or predicting the end of the world. His apocalypticism in Gratia Dei is therefore instrumental; in other words it reveals the real character of the present time and of a preacher’s work.

The apocalyptic vocabulary places more stress on the importance of preachers. Their struggle is not just with sin among lay people and clerics, but in fact with the devil, Leviathan, himself. This cosmic, apocalyptic force is behind all evil. The preacher’s vocation in this sense is the same as Christ’s — to separate good people from the devil:

Christ, seeing many who disagree among each other and contradict the common good, many who sinned in time of peace just like robbers who have peace to rob the state, came to separate and break the bad peace, because he himself was not the author of the bad peace, neither the cause of their disagreement. But so he made himself into their enemy in order to make them friends. Like Job 39 says about the devil and his members under the name Leviathan: “Will friends bargain over him? Will merchants divide him up?” [Job 41,6]. Look, those are preachers who negotiate for the sacred words and buy souls. They take the sword to divide the good from the body of the devil, from evil, out of friendship, to make friends from enemies.

The preacher is the last one who is considered capable of defending the church and its faithful members. In a sermon on the Second Sunday in Advent, Milicius compares preachers — his audience as it seems to be — to the angels in Mt. 24,31, who will come with the sound of the trumpet in order to gather the elect: “He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds.” This is a text often used by Milicius to characterize the importance of preaching and preachers. Again, a text that comes from a strongly eschatological context and is typically used during Advent is made relevant here to preachers. Their role can only be understood in an eschatological light — this is the reason for Milicius’ approach. The urgent character of a preacher’s work can only be

![Image](image.png)

---

25“Ita et Christus videns multos discordare et contradicere saluti communi, qui in pacem peccabant, tamquam latrones, qui pacem habent ad rempublicam spoliandam, venit separare et rumpere malam pacem, quia ipse auctor male pacis non fuit, nec fuit causa eorum discordie. Sed ideo adversarium se fecit illorum ut eos faceret amicos. Unde Job XXXIX dicitur de dyabolo et membris eius sub nomine Leviathan: ‘Concidet eum amici dividet eum negotiatores’ [Job 40,25 (Vulgate)]. Ecce predicatori qui pro verbis sacris negotiantur et emunt animas. Ad hoc accurpiunt gladium ut dividant a corpore dyabolli bonos a malis ex amicitia, ut ex inimicis faciant amicos.” St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 30 v. The translation of Job 41,6 follows the Vulgate and is therefore different from the Revised Standard Version.
conveyed by a language that is connected to the expectation of an impending end of the world, like that in Mt. 24.

But again, there is no explicit sign or word about the end of time. After the quotation Milicius simply states:

May this happen not only in resurrection by the angels, but already now by preachers. Let angels, that is preachers with the trumpet of the Scriptures, gather the elect in the church from the four parts of the world.\(^{26}\)

This message implies that the time of the resurrection or the *eschaton* has not come yet, however the work of preachers has to be understood in terms of eschatological significance as gathering the faithful.

It cannot be emphasized enough, that to Milicius preachers have a much greater importance in the dynamics of the church than priests or clerics. The latter are only the managers of the church.\(^{27}\) Milicius does not consider their role to be that of educating believers or telling people to repent. They are the rulers but have no power to really reform the church. The real dynamic input for change and for cleansing the church of unholy elements must come from preachers. They are God's moving force.

The preacher, therefore, has great power. His word can change the lives of people and the life of the church. Not only can the word of the preacher correct people's behavior, it can also renew them. It revitalizes the church and its members. Milicius compares this renewing ability of the preacher to the prophet Isaiah, whose preaching not only cured King Hezekiah, but even increased his life span.\(^{28}\) This is the mighty power of the word, which the preacher proclaims. It contains a secret life-saving and life-giving quality, which the preacher transmits. The word, uttered by his mouth, performs mighty things. The preacher has a certain charisma, which qualifies him to preach. He has a particular disposition that enables him to mediate salvation and eternal life, however not through his own personal merits, but as a servant of God. His word brings salvation and damnation, it distinguishes between good and evil. He not only explains the Word of God, but he is the channel of God's judgment. His sermon brings life and death.

\(^{26}\)"Quod non solum fiet in resurectione ab angelis, sed etiam nunc a predictoribus. Ut angeli id est predictores cum tuba evangelii congregent electos in ecclesiam a quattuor partibus mundi." Dominica II in Advent, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 9 r.

\(^{27}\)See p. 132.

\(^{28}\)"Quando ergo nunc concordat tuba cum fletu et infirmitas cum his, qui in nuptiis gratulantur, nisi quia tuba predications que ad curiam Christi invitat non solum infirmos letificat, ymo vitam prolongat, sicut tuba insonans per os Ysaie addidit annos XV Ezechie." Feria V in L, GD, XIV D 5, fol. 86 v.
The preacher, therefore, has a huge responsibility for the salvation of his audience. He has to correct sinners, urge for repentance and criticize clerics who misuse their position. If the word of the preacher is not successful, then damnation will follow. Milicius says this even more strongly: the preacher allows sinners to be damned when he does not rectify their ways:

Though the preacher has have peace with good people, he has to produce the sword of the Word of God against bad people. Because if he does not correct them, he allows them to be sent into damnation and gives the righteous the occasion to sin. ²⁹

Once again, he characterizes the mission of the preacher in an eschatological sense without declaring an imminent end of the world. Milicius’ conviction that the preacher’s sermon brings with it life and death and divides between the faithful and the hypocrites leads him to compare the power of preaching to God’s judgment on good and evil and even to identify who they are. Milicius’ eschatological vision, or in some places apocalypticism, is not futuristic but an immediate vision based on the historic circumstances of his day. The core of his work — preaching — is motivated by this immanent eschatology. The nature of preaching is itself eschatological. However, this does not mean that every preacher is a good servant of God. There are many who mislead and betray believers, drawing them away from God. But they themselves will be taken away from God and sent to hell. Good preachers, on the other hand, use every means to save their audience from the “outer darkness,” where “men will weep and gnash their teeth.” These preachers shout, cry and weep, only to spare their audience from hell:

So now some preachers preach flatteringly and therefore despise many who follow them. To those, though, they say in the coming judgment: ‘We piped to you, and you did not dance’ up to heaven, but actors have piped to you and you danced into hell. Others are preachers who grieve in the heart, weep, humble themselves in ashes and sackcloth, cry from the moaning of their heart, preach tears and prevent the people from going “into the outer darkness, where men will weep and gnash their teeth.” These preachers shout, cry and weep, only to spare their audience from hell:

²⁹"Quamvis cum bonis pacem habere debeat predicador, tamen contra malos debet producere gladium verbi Dei. Quia si eos non corrigit, ipsos in damnationem transire permittit et iustis dat occasionem peccandi." St. Vitis, GD, XII D 1, fol. 30 r.

³⁰"Ita et nunc predicatores quidem blandè predicabant et quia eos sequi multi contemnunt. Ideo eis dicent in futuro iudicio: ‘Cecimimus vobis et non saltastis’ [Mt. 11,17] suppra ad celum, sed cecinerunt vobis hystriones et saltastis ad infernum. Alii (mg. sunt) predicatores qui lugent in corde, plorant occulis, in cinere et cilicio se affligunt, rugiunt a gemitu cordis sui, predicant lacrimas et precavent populo, ne eiciantur in tenebras exteriore, ubi est fletus et stridor dentium’ [Mt. 8,12].” Omnes sancti, GD, XII D 1, fol. 143 v.
In a sermon about St. Procopius, Milicius outlines what the character and behavior of a preacher should be. A preacher's task is not only to encourage repentance — though this is his main and most frequently discussed task. A preacher also must console people who are filled with grief and sorrow. It is one of the things a preacher has in common with prelates, who are not mentioned in connection to the preaching of repentance and reform. Both of them have to provide consolation through the Word of God. Preachers and prelates both must provide pastoral care to their flock. Milicius states that in order to provide this care, a preacher must fulfill four requirements: to be aware of the fragility of human existence, to be a man of conscience, to be burning with charity and to be honest to himself and others. These he compares to the qualities of an oil lamp:

There are four things in a lamp that should be in the life of a preacher or a prelate. The first is the vessel, i.e. the fragility of the human condition, which he has to have permanently before his eyes in order not to be proud. (...) The second is the oil, i.e. the splendour of conscience, without which he can never be a preacher who can console others. (...) The third is the fire of love, with which the whole preacher should glow. (...) The fourth is the light that the preacher must constantly have so as not to seem righteous to himself, while calling others sinners.”

We can therefore conclude that Milicius viewed the act of consoling as more than just giving relief and comfort, but also searching one’s own mind and conscience for sin. This again is the central task of a preacher: to protect from and prevent sin.

On the issue of property Milicius identifies the position of a preacher with that of members of a religious order. His answer is very clear. No religiousus and no preacher is allowed to possess private property. Individuals from these groups can only hold property in common with their fellow members. Anyone who has private property is sinning against God and his church in a very serious way. He is depriving the dominion of Christ of its property, thereby turning himself into a thief and a looter.

31 "Ita prelatus sive predicator ut bonus comes iungat se hiis, qui ambulantes in via huius miserie ambulant tristes, et conseletur eos verbo Dei. Non dormitet in somno oblivionis, nec alios dormitare permittat, surgat invigilet, malis actibus contradicat.” St. Procopius, GD, XII D 1, fol. 50 r.
32 "Sunt autem quatuor in lucerna quern debet esse in vita predicatoris sive prelati. Primum est testa, id est fragilitas humane conditionis quam iugiter debet habere pre oculis ne superbiat. (...) (Mg. secundum est oleum), id est nitor conscientie sine quo numquam debet esse predator qui debet alios consolari. (...) Tercium est ignis caritatis, quo totus debet ardere predicator. (...) Quartum est lumen quod debet habere iugiter predator ne sibi iustus videatur et alios reputet peccatores.” St. Procopius, GD, XII D 1, fol. 51 r. See also p. 134 and 196.
Wherever members of a religious order call themselves the poor of Christ and nevertheless have riches belonging to the community, that they usurp as their own, they are robbers of the patrimony of Jesus Christ and thieves and bandits. Let their superior be on his guard not to allow them anything that might give them some property, some income or special benefit or menu. In this case, therefore, whatever they have in private, is not theirs, but of the community. When, therefore, something is allowed to one, without very good reason, it is an injustice to others, and the vow and the oath is broken. The only exception when someone deserves something from the community is when the lector needs books. Let him have an allowance, that he has the use of the books on behalf of the allowance. Similarly concerning the preacher. 

Being a monk or preacher means basically the same thing — being fully dependent on Jesus Christ, whom they serve. This makes them different from other people who are dependent on their property and therefore trust primarily in their possessions. Preachers and *religiosi* trust foremost in God and their property is always communal, thereby owned by Christ himself.

It is somehow surprising that on the issue of property Milicius compares the position of a preacher to that of a *religiosus*. The latter is a member of a community, generally an order, where he does not have to worry about his material well-being. The community is the owner of a small or even large amount of property and provides him with food and clothing. This offers an economic guarantee to its members, whereby they can still uphold the principles of living in poverty and of not owning property. The preacher on the other hand is not necessarily a member of an established community. He can be a *religiosus*, but also an ordinary priest who is allowed to own private property according to canon law. There is no order or institution that defines the rights and duties of a preacher. Milicius himself was not a member of a monastic order but just a preacher.

In other words, the fact that Milicius differs between *religiosi* and *predicatores* suggests that to him preachers were a third group or community in church and society in addition to the clergy and laity. Preachers only have some material guarantees when they belong to a separate community. This hypothesis is then confirmed by the comparison of *prelati* and preachers, which Milicius made in the sermon on St. Procopius' Day about the question of pastoral care. In addition to these two constitutive elements in the

---

33 Ubicumque ergo in religione pauperes Christi se vocant et tamen divitias habent videlicet quod commune est sibi proprium usurpantes sunt raptores patrimonii Jesu Christi et fures et latrones. Caveat etiam superior eorum ne eis aliquid indulget ut proprium habeant videlicet censum vel speciale comodum vel coquinam. Ex hac causa quisquecumque singuli habent non sunt eorum, sed communitatis. Cum ergo uni conceditur quod omni sine summa causa aliis iniuria infectur, votum frangitur et iuramentum. Nisi quis comunitati deserviret, ut lector indigens libris potest indultum (mg. habere), ut usum librorum habeat ex indulto. Similiter predicatorem," Omnes sancti, GD, XII D 1, fol. 141 v. See also p. 139ff.
church that are both bound by a vow — the religious orders and the secular clergy — there is a third group, the preachers, to whom rules about celibacy and poverty should also be applicable. When this is true, then it is no surprise that Milicius asked Pope Urban V in a letter to send preachers into the world to save the church from sin and decay. Neither the clergy nor the religiosi would be able to fulfill this task, but only preachers because they carry the immanent eschatological power of God’s Word.

In Abortivus we have seen similar ideas about the preacher in the sermon on the Kathedra st. Petri. There Milicius distinguishes between three authorities that St. Peter’s office has: one general over all people, one over the clergy and one over preachers. Preachers are again presented separately from the clergy. Preachers are responsible directly to the highest authority in the church, the pope.

It is striking that Milicius’ opponents used precisely this point, that preachers are an independent group, against him in the letter they wrote to the pope. They professed that Milicius was founding a religious order in his community since its members were not allowed to possess private property. Three out of the 12 articles in their accusation they wrote to the pope focused on this point. It looks as if they were not totally wrong. In his sermons in Gratiae Dei Milicius elevates the preacher to the same level as a cleric or monk. He defines a preacher as having several characteristics in common with the other two groups. In addition, the preacher has his own mission, which is different from that of the cleric or the monk — he has to convert sinners and divide between the good and the evil. The central message of Milicius’ immanent eschatology is the element which distinguishes the preacher’s role from clergy and religious orders.

---

34Epistola ad Papam Urbanum V, edited by Ferdinand Menčík, Milič a dva jeho spisy z r. 1367 [Milicius and Two of His Writings from the Year 1367], in: Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk, Praha 1890, p. 318-325.

35See p. 119.

36Articles six to eight from the accusation deal with this issue. According to the sixth the community of Jerusalem had grown into an unofficial order with special habits; the seventh said that Milicius had applied for permission to found a parish and order in Jerusalem, but when the Prague authorities refused his proposal, he abused the pope, cardinals and every other church authority; the eighth article stated that when he was told that he could be excommunicated for founding a new order without permission, he said that the emperor would defend him. The twelve articles are published by František Palacky, Über Formelbücher zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte, II, Praha 1847, p. 183-184. See also p. 74 of this study.
The views in both *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei* on the role and significance of the preacher are very similar. Both see the preacher as a representative of the eschatological age, even when there is no sign of an immediate end of time. *Gratiae Dei* is working out this idea to an extent. *Abortivus* indicates in the sermon on St. Peter’s seat that preachers are an independent element equal to the clergy and religious orders. It is most likely that the experiences he had in the community Jerusalem brought Milicius to formulate his ideas on this point. This is again a confirmation of our general impression of both postils and the differences between them. Compared to *Abortivus*, *Gratiae Dei* is the ripe fruit of a long period of work and preparation.

2. Saints as Models of the Evangelical Life

In both his postils, Milicius gives 31 sermons for the days of particular saints. As we have seen in the investigation of the dating of the postils, there are significant differences between them. The first postil, compiled by Milicius entitled *Abortivus*, does not contain sermons on the days of St. Martha, St. Giles (Egidius) or even St. Ludmilla. The second postil, *Gratiae Dei*, recognizes these feasts but does not provide homilies for St. Ambrose’s or St. Luke’s Day.

It is interesting to contemplate what importance the saints could have held to a strict preacher like Milicius de Chremsir. His close attention to moral issues of the life of the church and its members does not automatically include a vast admiration of saints. In fact, his view seems to be critical of the popular medieval veneration of saints that focused on their supernatural powers. Not so much the teaching or moral life of the saints, but those miraculous powers captured the main attention of common people, as scholars of medieval sainthood like Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell point out. Saints were used as talismans in everyday life, because they had the power to intercede in favor of the believer. Popular ideas about saints were often at odds with the approach of the official church, which stressed to a much greater degree the doctrinal purity of these holy persons. Never-

---

37 See p. 101 ff.
theless, even to the church the *virtus signorum* — the proven miracle-working powers of saints — was decisive in the process of canonization.

It is important to realize that here we are not referring to facts about saints, but the way they were perceived by medieval people like the preacher Milicius. In this respect saints are a mirror of the times. As Aviad Kleinberg says, sainthood is not about an individual's charisma, but about communities shaping their ideas of sainthood around specific individuals. Saints reflect the needs of the people who venerated them. It is therefore necessary to search for the aim of the person speaking or writing about saints.

At the same time, saints are an expression and confirmation of the hierarchy of life with God, saints being at the top and sinners at the bottom. For several reasons saints gained a place in the divine presence. In this sense, sainthood did not bring ordinary people closer to experiencing God directly, but fixed the faithful at their position at the base of the hierarchy. Or, like Weinstein and Bell say, saints transfer responsibility from the individual to the venerating community.

It is true that saints can be guides to a spiritual life, and these great personalities reflect a life of faith and divine love. Popular medieval perception was, however, much more fascinated by their supernatural powers than by their moral behavior. In this way, the greater their sainthood is in the eyes of the common people, the greater is the distance between the people and the beloved saint. In such cases, saints are in the first place intercessors between us and God in heaven. They are not like us, rather they are the heroes of spiritual life, far above the sorrows of the everyday. Following them in their way of living is then simply not a question: they are substantially greater and thus different from us. The conclusion of this seems to be that morality, the main subject of Milicius' work, disappears in the presence of this type of veneration. What then is Milicius' perception of sainthood?

In general, Milicius provides sermons only for the days of those saints who lived in the early centuries of the church. He recognizes St. Thomas, St. John, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great and many others. The sainthood of these "witnesses" is always characterized by their martyrdom. They suffered for their faith. Only a few of the saints in both postils are from a later date. Among them we find St. Margaret and St. Giles. All other saints

---

39 Kleinberg, o.c., p. 4 ff.
40 Weinstein and Bell, o.c., p. 240.
who do not stem from the early church are local saints, in one way or another linked to Bohemia.\textsuperscript{41} A clear example of the last category are St. Elisabeth and St. Catherine. The appearance of the latter in Bohemia is for example closely connected to the emperors of Charles IV, who very much supported her cult in his country, as he attributed the victory in his very first battle in 1332 to her. He devoted one of the chapels of Karlstein to this saint. Moreover, because St. Catherine was quite popular in Germany, Charles might have introduced her to build a bridge between Bohemia and the empire dominated by Germany.\textsuperscript{42} For this aim he used a spiritual symbol from outside Bohemia, introducing her to the public also by means of a biography.\textsuperscript{43}

All other local saints are of Bohemian origin or have a direct connection to it. They are St. Adalbertus, St. Procopius, St. Ludmilla, St. Wenceslaus and St. Vitus.\textsuperscript{44} The last one, not of Bohemian origin, has been one of the patrons of the cathedral at the Prague Castle from its earliest existence. In general, we can say that Milicius pays attention only to the main saints from the “international” church — which is an obligatory approach — and to the local Bohemian saints, who have a greater identity and impact in the Bohemian environment. Two important saints venerated in the Bohemian country do, surprisingly, not occur in Milicius’ calendar: St. Cyril and Methodius, the Byzantine missionaries who brought Christianity to Bohemia in the ninth century. The reason for this probably is the novelty of their cult in the fourteenth century. Thanks to Charles IV they got a place in the liturgy after being forgotten for several centuries.

In this part of the study we concentrate mainly on the five saints mentioned earlier and the sermons on them in order to grasp the significance of


\textsuperscript{42}So Ferdinand Seibt, Karl IV. Ein Kaiser in Europa, 1346 bis 1378, München 1978, p. 392.

\textsuperscript{43}Život svaté Katařiny [The Life of St. Catherine], edited in: Josef Hrabák e.a., Dvě legendy z doby Karlovy [Two Legends from Charles’ Age], Praha 1959, p. 93 ff.

\textsuperscript{44}For Czech saints see Jaroslav Kadlec (ed.), Bohemia sancta, životopisy českých světců a přátel Božích [Biographies of Czech Saints and Friends of God], Praha 1989.
saints to Milicius. The two sermons on All Saint’s Day also provide us with useful information and are therefore included in this discussion.

2.1. St. Wenceslaus

St. Wenceslaus is considered the main saint in the Czech Lands. Even today, his statue looks out over Prague from the top of the Wenceslaus Square, where it was put at the beginning of the first Czech independence. He is the good king who will save Bohemia in times of great trouble. In 1918, the year of the founding of Czechoslovakia, the cathedral in Prague Castle was not finished yet. Basically only the choir and the transepts were erected. In an effort to finish this national symbol, of which St. Wenceslaus was one of the patrons, enormous energy and money were spent to finish the work of Emperor Charles IV, who saw Wenceslaus as his great example. The building was finished and reopened in 1929, not by accident in the year of St. Wenceslaus’ millennial anniversary.\(^{45}\)

Saints from the nobility are a special chapter in medieval holiness. Also in medieval days, power had something of an ambiguous character, giving occasion for both corruption and for holiness. In the words of Weinstein and Bell:

> For both princes and prelates the possession of power was an opportunity to cultivate the virtue of humility; to command obedience and yet to remain as humble as the lowliest of one’s subjects was a saintly manifestation of that Christ-like virtue.\(^{6}\)

The public need for their sainthood may lay in the effect it had on the country: their sanctity sanctifies the country.\(^{47}\) The king can be an intercessor in heaven on behalf of the country. For the church, royal sainthood offered an opportunity to further christianize the secular structures and fight the remains of paganism. This sainthood could emphasize the ideal of the rex bonus, “the good king” or rex justus, “the just king” in that they collaborate with the church and can even be ac si bonus sacerdos, “like a good priest.”

The medieval cult of St. Wenceslaus had an important aim for those in power since it legitimized their authority. He was one of the first and, moreover, the main representative of the House of the Przemyslids, which

---


\(^{46}\) Weinstein and Bell, p. 158

\(^{47}\) Vauchez, p. 190 ff.
ruled Bohemia for several centuries. The authority of this house was given by God, which was symbolized by St. Wenceslaus. Sermons about Wenceslaus therefore must necessarily deal with the question of legitimate power. To speak about Wenceslaus is to speak about the symbol of power and discuss the question of power in general. Zdeněk Uhlíř has made an inventory of all sermons, legends and other texts about St. Wenceslaus from the high and late Middle Ages, grouping them according to two paradigms. The first one was in support of the king, the second in support of the nobility. The paradigms are a theological reflection on the endless struggle of power between the two sides. Fundamental to all texts and paradigms is the legend *Oriente iam sole* from the second half of the thirteenth century. In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, Peregrinus de Opoli published his biography on St. Wenceslaus, which may have influenced Milicius’ understanding of the good king.

It is true that Saint Wenceslaus here as a model or *exemplum* does not cease to be monarch; nevertheless, the understanding of his figure does not legitimize the dynasty or the abstract royal power, but legitimizes the *nobles et divites*, the nobility, and not only this, but most likely also the so-called old patriciate.

In the third quarter of the fourteenth century, a second version of *Oriente iam sole* was published, most likely originating from Roudnice. It presents a new synthesis by gathering all known facts about Wenceslaus. It also reworked political-theological legitimation of the power of ruling. It takes not only the kingdom into account, but also the second structure of power in the country, the nobility. This new version of the old legend is characterized by a strong emphasis on the Eucharist, which is a characteristic of the Bohemian *Devotio moderna*, especially in the monasteries. This cult of the Eucharist could be a threat, because it implied also a profound democratization of the faith.

Little is known about the historical figure Wenceslaus. He was king of Bohemia at the beginning of the tenth century. Tradition says he was a

---

48 Zdeněk Uhlíř, *Literární prameny svatováclavského kultu a úcty ve vrcholném a pozdním středověku* [Literary Sources of the Cult and Veneration of St. Wenceslaus in the High and Late Middle Ages], Praha 1996.
49 *Uhlíř, p. 22.
50 Uhlíř, p. 26 ff.
peaceful king, who preferred praying to ruling the country. Most likely on 28 September 935\textsuperscript{52} he was murdered by his brother Boleslaus, possibly for political reasons, but certainly because of envy. Boleslaus became king after his brother was assassinated. The famous scene of the murder at a church in Stará Boleslav shows Wenceslaus trying to escape into the church, which was unfortunately closed. After Boleslaus’ take-over no major political changes took place.

Milicius uses the sermon on St. Wenceslaus’ Day (28 September) in Aboritus to introduce a classical text from Psalms 104 (105),21 (“He made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions”). In the prothema, princes are compared to preachers, because they, too, work with the Word of God. St. Wenceslaus reigned over his people according to the Law of God.

“\textit{A king then is the one who does not put to shame, is not caught in a reprehensible act or speech, since he should be firm in life. And he is perfect in words as if he were a prophet.” (\ldots) So blessed Wenceslaus reigned over the people entrusted to him according to divine law, while he flourished through a prophetical spirit.}\textsuperscript{53}

The first part of the sermo distinguishes between obedience, prudence and justice when speaking about the question of power given by God. A human being is created by God in order to obey him. Also a person who has power owes obedience to God, because he has received his power from God. Ruling means at the same time serving. Also St. Wenceslaus was subject and obedient to God. Milicius paints an almost monastic image of Wenceslaus: “humble in glory, poor in riches, refusing the world and chaste in wealth.”\textsuperscript{54} Neither force of weapons nor the splendor of property is the

\textsuperscript{52}Some date the murder of Wenceslaus on 28 September 929. For this discussion see Třeštík, p. 428 ff.
\textsuperscript{53}Rex igitur est qui non erubescat, nec in actu reprehendatur vel redarguat in sermonibus eo quod vita debat fundatus. Et verbis itaque quod quamvis perfectus, ita esset propheta.\textsuperscript{(...) Sic beatus Wenseslaus regebat populum sibi commissum secundum legem divinam, dum spiritu prophetico floreret.” St. Wenceslaus, A, I D 37, fol. 213 rb. The quotation is from St. Ambrose, Super beati immaculati, lib. 6, vs. 5. The link between Wenceslaus and his prophetical spirit is also made in the Antifonarium of Arnestus de Pardubicz, where the third antiphon in the second nocturn says: “\textit{Spiritu prophetico vir sanctus florebat, dum verbo veridico multa predicabat.” See Dobroslav Orel, Svatóváclavský sborník na pamiatku 1000. výročí knížete Václava svatého, II, 3, Hudební prvky svatováclavské [Studies on St. Wenceslaus on the occasion of the 1000th anniversary of his death, II, 3, Musical elements in the cult of St. Wenceslaus], Praha 1937, p. 471. See also p. 140 and p. 159 ff.
\textsuperscript{54}Nam humilis in gloria fuit pauper in divitis, mundi refutans, gaudia castus in delitiis.” St. Wenceslaus, A, I D 37, fol. 213 va. Milicius is quoting from the Antiphon to the Magnificat “Gaude felix bohemia.” See Orel, p. 343.
sign of real power, but humility and poverty. Then Milicius gives in more abstract terms a kind of definition of a good ruler.

Secondly, in him who bears the office of ruler of the church or of the Christian people there should be serviceable providence, that he is generous and virtuous to his subjects and that he returns to God all virtue, which he has received from God."

The practice of such a ruler is similar to Wenceslaus, who founded the church of Prague, dedicated himself to God, and cared for the poor who were robbed by the rulers.

The power given by God is to be used to fight the lack of order in the world. Milicius does not have a very positive image of the world where demons, enemies and the flesh try to deceive us and establish the reign of darkness. God invests rulers like Wenceslaus with power in order to establish the reign of justice. In a quotation from St. Ambrose, Milicius compares this conflict with the conflict between rulers and prophets. The tyrants of darkness can be very strong, but they will never be able to prevail over the good, he concludes. He implicitly calls St. Wenceslaus a prophet rather than a ruler.

This conflict is again demonstrated by the stories of Saul and David or by Cain and Abel. Wenceslaus, clarissimus princeps ecclesie sancte, "the most distinguished prince of the holy church," reflects the life of Abel, since he too was murdered by his brother. He lost the reign over his kingdom, but gained the eternal kingdom by his martyrdom. The end of the sermon describes in detail how St. Wenceslaus was murdered.

The sermon on St. Wenceslaus in Abortivus offers an image of the saint as a good and holy ruler. Leadership is not about power and glory, but about serving the poor and fighting darkness. The way Wenceslaus reigned is the way God wants kings and rulers to govern. Necessarily, St. Wenceslaus had his enemies, including his own brother Boleslaus who finally murdered him. Milicius points out that this image is repeated in several stories from the Bible.

55"Secundo in eo qui constitutus est in principem ecclesie vel populi christiani debet esse utilis providentia, ut erga suos subditos sit beneficus et virtuosus et omnem virtutem a Deo recipiens ad Deum referat." St. Wenceslaus, A, I D 37, fol. 213 va.
56"Beatus ergo Wenseslaus tamquam clarissimus princeps ecclesie sancte, vita sancta sicud Abel refusit. Sederunt autem principes adversus eum, martyr videlicet eius et frater eius Boleslaus ut Caym invidens eius sanctitati cupiditatee dominandi, dum in Boleslavia convivium fecerunt et eum invitaverunt ut occiderent, ubi cum regno suum principatu privare putabant, ibi ad regnum eternum per martirium provexerunt." St. Wenceslaus, A, I D 37, fol. 215 ra.
Milicius does not doubt that authority comes from God. Structures of power in society are given by God and have to be accepted. Milicius, however, asks a moral question of those in power. Authority has its aim in fighting disorder and evil. When a leader does not fulfill this mission given to him by God, he associates himself with darkness. Tyrants, therefore, do not deserve any respect, because they deny God and his commandments. The consequence of this line of thought is a conditional obedience to authority. If a ruler is spreading the reign of darkness instead of light, it is no longer our duty to follow and obey him.

The homily in Gratiae Dei on St. Wenceslaus’ Day discusses a second biblical text, which is also commonly applied to the image of a good king, Mt 16,26 (“For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”). It is worthless to strive for temporal profit if God’s truth is absent, the prothema states. Preachers have to dedicate themselves to the truth of the gospel, because only in this way can they gain eternity for their soul.

The pericope that the homily comments on begins in verse 24, which is about following Christ. Milicius adds that it is not important what one’s background is. Everybody is equal when it comes to their ability to follow Christ: be it woman or man, king or servant, ruled or ruler. Wenceslaus followed Christ even when he was king, carrying his cross in his heart. He refused to wear a cilicium, a kind of shirt, under his clothes. Even in winter he frequently visited chapels to the saints and gave firewood to the poor. He did hard labor with his own hands, preparing wine and bread for the sacrifice of the altar, which he served himself, Milicius says. St. Wenceslaus is the king-priest, which is similar to the image presented in the Abortivus sermon where Wenceslaus was inspired by a prophetical spirit. These characteristics are quite unusual among rulers, Milicius comments in a critical note. Wenceslaus was a true follower of Christ, even when his mother tried to prevent him from taking that path.

What a loss it is, not to have the courage to suffer for Christ and gain the eternal crown, Milicius laments. For the evil ones have the courage to suffer for the devil, even when the consequence is eternal penance. Christ, how-

57"Id est si mulier, si vir, si rex, si servus, si regens, si rectus." St. Wenceslaus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 122 r.
58See p. 141.
ever, assists and comforts us when we follow him, while the evil-doers cannot expect any support.

In the main verse of the pericope (v. 26) Milicius comments that if someone continues sinning, his soul has to expect the coming damnation. What was Boleslaus gaining when he murdered his brother? True, his profit was reign over the country, but because of this fraticidium he had to suffer the penance of damnation. Therefore, “let us break the desire of earthly longings, which is to carry the cross in times of peace, as in times of persecution to carry the cross means to die for Christ.”

Again Milicius uses the story of St. Wenceslaus to criticize the rulers of his day. They are just the opposite of the saint, for they are concerned with gathering more property and selling souls. The righteous, however, give from their own possessions.

Blessed Wenceslaus by following [Christ] poured out his blood and gave his support to those who returned from slavery under foreign nations. He exchanged his money rightly for the souls of gentiles and liberated them. Our people, however, exchange and sell their own souls to the devil pro robotis (?), i.e. for the service of the poor and servitude, forcing them to subject themselves to their ownership with their lives and money, just as a horse is a mule — they use men as animals.

Like the sermon in Abortivus, the Wenceslaus homily in Gratiae Dei is practically about being a good ruler. However, the point of view on a leader’s duties is more general. It is the duty of everybody to carry a cross, serve the poor and thus to gain eternal peace, no matter whether he is a king or servant. There is no principal difference between human beings in this sense. Anyone who is a follower of Christ, will gain the same reward, just as anyone who is like Boleslaus and is only striving for temporal profit will have to suffer the eternal penance. Wenceslaus is a saint not so much because he was a leader protecting his people from evil and injustice, but because he fulfilled the commands of love given by Christ to everyone. His story is again an excellent illustration of the way Christ asks us to follow him.

59 “Frangamus ergo desiderium terrenarum concupiscentiarum, quia hoc est crucem portare tempore pacis, sicut tempore persecutionis crucem portare est mori pro Christo.” St. Wenceslaus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 122 v.

60 “Beatus hunc Wenceslaus imitando sanguinem suum fudit et substantiam suam per gentibus in servitutem reditis tribuit. Bene comutavit pecunias pro animabus gentilium et eos liberavit. Nostri autem comuntant et vendunt dyabolic animas proprias pro robotis (?), id est pro angariis pauperum et servitute cogens eos proprietati sue et vita et pecuniis servire, sicut equus et mul[i]us utuntur enim hominibus sicut bruitis.” St. Wenceslaus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 123 r.

61 See p. 140 ff.
Unlike *Abortivus*, the homily from *Gratiae Dei* is addressed to everybody. *Abortivus* gives us some principles of the good sovereign, while *Gratiae Dei* offers us the principles of following Christ. The fact that Milicius openly criticizes the rulers of his time more directly than in *Abortivus*, does not dismiss the more general tenor of the homily. *Gratiae Dei* again offers a perspective that is more accessible to everyone in the audience by presenting a personal and concrete kind of sainthood. It is not explained very much why St. Wenceslaus is canonized, but rather what sainthood means to us in the case of good King Wenceslaus. The homily concentrates rather on the moral principles that come out of the biblical text, instead of elaborating on the theme of how one rules well as in the Wenceslaus sermon in *Abortivus*.

Zdeněk Uhlř sees in the *Abortivus* sermon a synthesis of the ideas of Peregrinus de Opoli and the later reform views of early Hussite preachers. According to him, Peregrinus was the defender of the interests of the nobility at the expense of the king’s authority. However, all we can say with certainty is that Milicius is by no means explicitly defending the rights of either king or nobility. He gives a view on the duties of rulers in general. Implicitly, however, he also stresses the necessity of accepting any authority given by God, because its substance is divine. In the concrete circumstances of the fourteenth century, this also must have lent support to the rights of the king, since he was a descendant of St. Wenceslaus.

### 2.2. St. Adalbertus

The life of St. Adalbertus had many highs and lows and was full of unexpected changes. He was a descendant of the House of the Slavnikids, which ruled the greater part of North Eastern Bohemia. In 982 he became the second bishop of the diocese of Prague, which became independent in 973. For several reasons, he did not gain much support from the mightiest house in Bohemia, the Przemyslids. The most powerful reason for this was Certainly the rivalry between the two houses, which ended in a massacre of the Slavnikids whence St. Adalbertus escaped to safer places. Nevertheless, even the concept and vision of his work was a source of conflict with the king. He spent some time in Germany, and finally he went to Poland and

---

62 Uhlř, p. 31.
63 For Adalbertus see Jaroslav V. Polc (ed), *Svatý Vojtěch, sborník k mileniu* [Collected Studies on the occasion of the Millennium], Praha 1997; Kadlec, p. 85 ff.
Prussia to bring the gospel to pagan communities. During his efforts he was killed by the Prussians in 997. Soon after his death, his bones were transported to Prague, where today they are among the relics of the St. Vitus Cathedral. For this reason he became one of the patrons of the cathedral, together with St. Vitus and St. Wenceslaus.

Milicius includes sermons about St. Adalbertus both in *Abortivus* and in *Gratiae Dei*. The sermon in *Abortivus* based on John 15,1 ("I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser") opens with the general remark that the innocent blood of martyrs is an appeal to us. Their faith and innocence are a call to our spirits and senses, a recommendation to follow the suffering of those spiritual role models. In the *sermo*, Milicius states that martyrdom is the ultimate way to follow Christ. Through his suffering as human flesh, Christ sacrificed himself and offered us the sweetness of his sacraments: "Likewise we should follow Christ to the battle and thence to the victory."  

This was also what St. Adalbertus did. His adherence to Christ consisted of uniting the church in Bohemia: "So did blessed Adalbertus, because he untied the donkey, the church of Bohemia, from many errors and bound it, unifying it with Christ." However, he met with a lot of resistance and had to leave the country. He asked the pope in Rome for advice and consent for his plans. Milicius compares the pressure and resistance of Adalbertus’ enemies with the pressing that a grape requires in order to become wine. After the murder of his entire family, St. Adalbertus left Bohemia again. Milicius calls this decision the fruit of the *iustitia interne contemplationis*, "the justice of an inner contemplation," and he adds: "In this we must follow him, that we do not abandon justice when much is offered to us, that we in this way can be martyrs and even if we do not pour out our blood, we live piously and saintly."  

Milicius is searching for ways in which his audience can imitate the life of the saints. How can someone have a holy life without being threatened and persecuted by some enemies? The key to answering this question Milicius finds in a kind of internalization of sainthood. Everybody can be a

---

64 "Ideo nos sequi debemus Christum ad pugnam et per consequens ad coronam." St. Adalbertus, A, I D 37, fol. 103 rb.
65 "Sic fecit beatus Adalbertus, quoniam solvit asinum ecclesiam Bohemie ab erroribus multis et alligavit uniens Christo." St. Adalbertus, A, I D 37, fol. 103 va.
66 "In hoc ergo ipsum sequi debemus, ne cum nobis multa offeruntur, iustitiam deseramus, ut et per hoc martires esse possimus et si non sanguinem fundendo tamen pie et sancte vivendo." St. Adalbertus, A, I D 37, fol. 103 va.
martyr, even without pouring out his blood. The only necessity is to live quietly, in holiness and piety. Sainthood is accessible to everyone. This holy life also has its fruits in that it gives us spiritual children and is in a sense the life of paradise. These sons and daughters are received not through seduction, but through the way of the spirit, *per adiutorium rationis*. This is the way Adalbertus received his spiritual children: "He begot spiritually Bohemians, and other nations, Poles and Prussians." 67

In the section following *ex quibus verbis*, St. Adalbertus is depicted once more as an *exemplum Christi*, an "example of Christ." The sermon still uses images of the vineyard, calling Adalbertus the planter of the spiritual vineyard of the church of Bohemia. He was like Noah, who planted a vineyard after the flood as a sign of God’s love. In a spiritual sense, the flood represents a situation characterized by lack of truth, mercy and knowledge of God on earth. Moreover, hatred, murder, revenge and adultery rule during such a time. This was also the situation in Bohemia, when St. Adalbertus became bishop of Prague. In those times, Milicius says, one man — including the clergy — usually had many women. There was no justice and, as a sign of the total wickedness of the times, he adds in the usual anti-Semitic spirit of his time: "Tyrants sold the Christians to the Jews." 68

*Tertio* tells us about St. Adalbertus' death when he was killed by the Prussians. He is again symbolized by the grape that is then poured out as wine. His murderers cut off his arms and legs, then his head, as a grape is severed from the vine.

The homily from *Gratiae Dei* on St. Adalbertus' Day is about the same text as the sermon from *Abortivus*, John 15.1. The big difference, however, is that the homily does not even once refer to St. Adalbertus. The saint is also not mentioned at the beginning of the homily, where we usually find an address referring to the particular day. Only in the upper margin of the manuscript XIV D 5 do we read "Adalberti." Other copies attribute this homily generally to St. Adalbertus, St. Georgius and to whichever other saint.

The symbolic theme of the homily — the vineyard and the grapes — is explained however in the same way as in *Abortivus*. Milicius believes the

---

67 "Bohemos et alios romanos Polonos et Prucenos spiritualiter generavit." St. Adalbertus, A, I D 37, fol. 103 vb.
significance of the parable of St. John lies in the image of the grape being pressed into wine. Martyrs are in this way also food for the church or, better yet, fertilizer needed by the church for growth.

Because saints entrust their bodies to the earth, they bring much profit, not only with a physical plowshare, but also with the plowshare of (spiritual) divine culture. Hence, our veneration of them is right. If we do not imitate them only in words alone but also in habits, then we too will bear fruit.

In this parable, the homily is stating that the church is the vine, which has as many grapes as there are martyrs. And, at the same time, the church drinks their precious wine, the blood of the martyrs. It is a more vivid way of illustrating the idea that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. We, the audience, have to follow and imitate the martyrs. Our martyrdom is to lead the life of Christ and to carry our cross. It is not necessary to be a spiritual hero or do great deeds. Martyrdom is a part of normal, daily life, according to Milicius. One has to concentrate on one’s own personal life and on God’s commandments on how to live. Martyrdom has become a personal and individual dimension of everyday life. It is not supposed to be easy, because only through many difficulties can we enter into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, let us flee from pleasure and glorify in misery, Milicius says. Only in this way can we gain eternal life, where no enemy can come.

2.3. St. Vitus

The main reason why both *Abortivus* and in *Gratiae Dei* dedicate a sermon to St. Vitus is that he is a patron of the cathedral in Prague Castle. Charles IV ordered a new church to be built on the place of the existing one. The new cathedral, just like the old one, was dedicated to three saints: St. Adalbertus, St. Wenceslaus and St. Vitus. It is in a twist of history that only the name of St. Vitus is used to identify the church today. The fact is that the second one of the three saints was far more important to the cathedral, to the house of the king and to the Czechs generally. Even today at the heart of the church is the chapel of St. Wenceslaus, the symbol of the Czechs.
According to the legend St. Vitus, who was born in Sicily, was tortured in Rome. An angel brought him then to Southern Italy where he died and was burnt. Historically it is more likely that he died in Sicily, probably in 304-305. The main impulse for his cult in Bohemia came from Wenceslaus, who on Prague Castle built a chapel devoted to St. Vitus. The saint may have been known in the country due to the missionary activities of Cyril and Methodius and their followers who spread the cult also in Eastern Europe. Wenceslaus brought some of his relics to Prague, an example which was followed later by Charles IV. Vitus was seen as one of the patrons of the country.

Milicius preaches on St. Vitus’s Day, 15 June, on the text “In his arduous contest she gave him victory” from The Wisdom of Solomon 10,12. The life of this saint was that of a holy war, which everyone, a preacher in particular, has to fight in the name of Christ. It is necessary to have sharp weapons in this war, which are provided by the Word of God. When preachers are not sent by God, they just drift about without any orientation and obscure the way to truth. But when we fight in truth, anything can be conquered through preaching. Even in front of the rulers and princes and the son of men preachers have to bring the Word to the people through their acts and speech without fear.

The rest of the sermon is not addressed in particular to preachers, but rather it elaborates on the theme of the holy war and the fight against evil. In holy war there are three enemies, the sermon says: the flesh, the world and the devil. St. Vitus had experience with all of these during his lifetime. He served God from his childhood, which caused him to come into conflict with his father. He was thrown out of a window by his father, but survived miraculously because seven angels guarded him. The assistance of the angels gave him the strength to resist the attacks of the flesh by demons, tyrants and women. Martyrs, Milicius says, do not fear their enemies. Even when undergoing the most horrible tortures — he mentions some of them in a catalogue — they do not renounce their faith, but gain the victory of eternity.

71 For St. Vitus and Bohemia see Kadlec, p. 72 ff.
72 "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.
“Blessed is the man who suffers temptation because as he has been tested, he will gain the crown of life.”73 This sentence at the beginning of the section in quibus verbis summarizes the whole sermon. The spiritual battle has to be accepted for five reasons: for the faith, for salvation, for guarding the pax hominibus, to annihilate the pride of men and to train the righteous.74 This time the whole church is encouraged to learn from St. Vitus’ example of how he fought the holy war:

Blessed Vitus undertook war in order to look after the faith and peace and well-being of the church, not only against those from outside, but also against his father, because Christ came to separate man, i.e. a son against his father, as is said in Mt. 10,35. Likewise the church, if it fights against those who are outside or those who belong to it, mourns for those who are killed and is comforted by those who have peace, which peace procured through wars such as David fought.”

In the duty of this pastoral care, St. Vitus had mercy on Valerian, the son of the Emperor Diocletian. He liberated the child from demons and put the light back in his eyes.

Saints and martyrs fight the holy war also by “peaceful” means, for example by suffering injustices. They survive by their will to attain peace, which cannot be forced to fight a war. This is the peace of paradise, which can and will be reached only in and with the Holy Spirit. It knows no contradiction between the flesh and the soul.

St. Vitus won the holy war he fought with the emperor. God ruined the temples full of idols that the emperor had erected. Diocletian tried to escape his fate, but died while fleeing. Milicius concludes: “Behold how the patience of St. Vitus, strengthened by suffering, subdued the mightiest enemies.”76 It is the perseverance of the faithful, which conquers all enemies and brings the eternal victory to the holy martyrs. St. Vitus demonstrated this faith during his life and received the crown of the kingdom of heaven.

---

73 “Beatus enim vir qui suffert temptationem, quoniam cum probatus fuerit accipiet coronam vite.” St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 ra.
74 “Beatus ergo Vitus propter fidem et pacem et salutem ecclesie procurandam bellum suscepit, non solum adversus extraneos sed etiam contra patrem quia venit Christus separare hominem, id est filium adversus patrem suum, sicud dicitur Mt. 10 (35). Ita ecclesia si pugnat contra extraneos sive suos doleat de pereuntibus et consoletur de pacem habentibus, que pax per bella procuratur sicud fecit David (...).” St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 rb.
76 “Ecce quomodo patientia sancti Vit passionibus rorbata hostes fortissimos sic devicit.” St. Vitus, A, I D 37, fol. 142 vb.
Thematically Gratiae Dei just continues with the topic of St. Vitus in the same direction as Abortivus. The homily is based on a text, which is also quoted in the Abortivus version: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but the sword” (Mt. 10,34). The prothema is again addressed to preachers, who have the sword of the word, which gives them the power to separate the good from the evil.\(^7\)

Also in the main part of the homily the language of war is used. Like an army, the church needs unity to fight the enemy. The church may be longing for peace, but on earth it will always be a false peace. It is the task of preachers to disclose this false peace by cutting off the good from the devil. It is necessary to accomplish this task of separating all the time, while being prepared for hatred and martyrdom.

Even becoming separated from one’s family and beloved as stated in Mt. 10,37 is good and necessary, Milicius says. “Let us separate from the friends of the world.” Those friends of the world are those, who commit the seven deadly sins: they are the proud, the lustful, the covetous, the angry, the envious, the gluttonous and the slothful.\(^8\) We have to carry our cross, which means killing those parts of ourselves that are captive to matters of the earth and damning the voluptuous spirit in our life. Only then can we enter eternal life.

The homily concludes with a short reference to some of St. Vitus’ virtues. He lived according to the strict principles of the text of the homily. He left his father and his friends “in order to receive Christ and his gospel, and he gave not only a cup of cold water, but also his own blood for Christ.”\(^9\) His way of life brought him martyrdom and a cruel death.

In both sermons about St. Vitus, Milicius deduces from the life of the saint some principles for preachers primarily but also for the church as a whole. In Abortivus Milicius addresses preachers only in the prothema, while in Gratiae Dei he does so in the main part of the homily. Both sermons offer some details from the life of St. Vitus, but Abortivus is more extensive in this. The structure of Abortivus is that of a classical scholastic sermon, which seems to offer more opportunities to concentrate on the saint’s life. The sermon is about St. Vitus, whose life is compared to the

---

\(^7\) St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 30 r. See p. 173.

\(^8\) St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 31 r - 31 v. See also p. 163.

\(^9\) “Ut reciperet Christum et evangelium eius et non solum calicem aque frigide, sed et san­guinem proprium pro Christo dedit.” St. Vitus, GD, XII D 1, fol. 31 v.
biblical text on which the sermon is based. Because of the fact that this kind of sermon is thematic, more attention can be paid to the subject. In *Abortivus*, St. Vitus is the subject of the sermon, but is discussed within the idea of the holy war. Biblical references are no more than an illustration of the saint’s holiness. In this respect, *Gratiae Dei* is just the opposite — it is above all a commentarial homily on a larger biblical text and adds to it stories from the life of St. Vitus. Here St. Vitus is the illustration, which results in a more profound — but more abstract as well — emphasis on the text and its message, that is separation from evil. This message, compared to the one in *Abortivus*, requires the audience to be more active. They have to separate themselves from everything that might put them under the power of Satan. Our conclusion is again that *Gratiae Dei* stresses more the moral impact of the message on the audience’s daily lives.

The sermons give us a clear foundation for establishing the reasons for St. Vitus’ sainthood. St. Vitus is holy because of the holy or spiritual war he fought with evil, sin and tyrants. This is also the task of the church (*Abortivus*). Or, more concretely, the faithful have to separate themselves from evil (*Gratiae Dei*).

2.4. St. Procopius

Another saint whose vocation was in the church is St. Procopius, the founder of the monastery at the Sázava river, which is located about forty kilometers southeast of Prague. Today, some buildings in the monastery still stand on the top of a hill next to the ruins of the once impressive church. Like many other famous monasteries and institutes, it was closed by Josef II during his reforms in 1785. Once this house was a center of Christianity and Bohemian culture. As one of few monasteries in the region, it had permission to practice the old Slavonic rite in the language of the apostles of Central and Eastern Europe, Cyril and Methodius.

Little is known about the life of St. Procopius. According to his earliest biography, written by the end of the 11th century, he was married and had a son. Probably in the beginning of the 11th century he founded a convent on the Sázava, which became an abbey under a Benedictine rule in 1032. Nevertheless Procopius cultivated the liturgy in the Slavonic language.

---

80 For Procopius see Kadlec, p. 126 ff. For the Sázava monastery see Pavel Vlček, Petr Sommer and Dušan Foltýn (ed.), *Encyklopedie českých klášterů* [Encyclopedia of Czech Monasteries], Praha 1997, p. 632 ff.
instead of in the usual Latin. His relationship to the ruling house of the
Przemyslids and the bishop of Prague was close. The Slavonic rite did not
survive long after Procopius’ death. After a first exile in the 1060s, the
monks of Sázava had to leave their monastery definitively in 1096, and the
new inhabitants introduced the Western Latin rite. In 1204 Procopius was
canonized. He became a very popular saint in Bohemia, as the many edi­
tions of his biography may prove. Also Charles IV was his venerator. In
1347 he founded the Emaus Monastery in Prague, which as a center of the
Slavonic liturgy was a continuation of St. Procopius’ legacy. St. Procopius’
feast is on 4 July.

The sermon from Abortivus again describes for us in a lively manner
quite a few details about the life of St. Procopius. The text for this sermon is
from Proverbs 30,31 (“The strutting cock”), which is in the translation of the
Vulgate: “Gallus succinctus limbos.” St. Procopius is, of course, compared
to the cock, which is here the symbol of a preacher. As a result of this, the
sermon presents the saint mainly as a great preacher.  

During the night of infidelity and sin, Procopius spread the light of the gospel along the borders
of the Sázava river, navigating those who are in trouble through the storm,
as Christ did on the Sea of Galilee. The ship in trouble symbolizes the
church, which is in need of rest and safety. “But when Christ and blessed
Procopius were preaching, the sea, i.e. the world, became placid and the
boat of the church became quiet,” the prothema concludes.

In the subsequent part of the sermon, several stories and miracles about
St. Procopius are told. His preaching and his healing were instruments for
enlightening people. After his death he also saved a woman by the name of
Labessa from certain death by enabling her to escape from her persecutor,
Prince Spitigneus, the ruler who forced the monks of Sázava for the first
time to leave their monastery. Procopius prayed all night, longing for
meditation and solitude. The aim of this work was to bring relief and love to
people.

Pastors, who must care for their people, should learn from St. Procopius
how to tend their flock. Like a cock always on his guard with one eye
watching the sky and with the second on the earth, so too those who hear
confession and especially prelates must watch their people. They must be

\footnote{See p. 160.}
\footnote{“Sed Christo et beato Procopio predicante mare i.e. seculum placatur et navicula ecclesie
quietatur.” St. Procopius, A. ID 37, fol. 156 va.}
harsh with the obstinate and gentle with the humble. Through this approach they can transform people as Procopius did. He changed the avarice of some people he met into a spiritual wine, or the piety of true believers.

Also St. Procopius resisted the devil, creating a holy place out of a pagan place. Until his death, he was as firm as a guard, taking care that the devil did not regain his former property, i.e. the souls of the converted. Milicius does not have a high estimation of his audience’s ability to resist evil. “What about us?,” he asks, “we who are so strong and wise and yet cannot resist the devil.” He advises those who are weak to remain in Christ, where the devil cannot win him over.

Finally, St. Procopius liberated others from the bonds of carnal temptation. In this way, the church in the early times was planted, Milicius says. Saints adored poverty, renounced riches and practised self-constraint. Milicius stresses once more the significance of poverty for clerics. The last remarks of the sermon are written in a very direct way:

But if you say: “I need to own riches to live with my friends the poor,” be careful lest, while wanting to display a pious work, you rob yourself all too easily from your eternal reward. Which is the case if the poor are denied what they need and yet are called friends of Christ’s patrimony.”

The sermon from *Abortivus* mainly presents St. Procopius as an example to preachers and clerics. He was the perfect pastor who took care of his people in every possible way. He was able to navigate the church through hard and difficult times. This is also the task Milicius assigns his audience — obviously clerics and preachers. In contrast to the general tendency in the sermons on St. Adalbertus, this sermon on St. Procopius leaves a wide gap between the audience and the saint. The sainthood of St. Procopius as presented by Milicius does not have the internalization or personal character we saw in the case of St. Adalbertus. On the contrary, Milicius stresses some of the inabilities of his audience when comparing them to St. Procopius, whose qualities are almost superhuman. These qualities are not only dependent on moral issues, but also on physical abilities. St. Procopius was able to work miracles, which makes him different from us.

---

83."Quid ergo nos qui quando fortes et sani sumus, dyabolo non resistimus." St. Procopius, A, I D 37, fol. 157 va.
84."Sed si dicis 'necesse habeo possidere divicias ut vivam cum amicis pauperibus,' vide ne volens opus pietatis ostendere te possis de facili eterno premio defraudari. Quod fit cum pauperes necessariis defraudantur et de Christi patrimonio amici dicantur." St. Procopius, A, I D 37, fol. 157 vb.
The homily from *Gratiae Dei* is again not very different from the interpretation of St. Procop’s life in *Abortivus*. Here as well, Procopius is presented as the perfect preacher and pastor, who chose the life of a hermit in a monastery. *Gratiae Dei* is, however, far more sober about his qualities as a holy man. As far as his life is concerned, the homily refers basically only to his dwelling in the convent at Sázava. There is no mention of any miracles. In general, we can say that the homily from *Gratiae Dei* concentrates on the qualities a preacher or prelate should possess, employing St. Procopius simply as an example and to offer inspiration.\(^{15}\)

The homily is based on Lk. 12,37 (“Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes”). Preachers and prelates have to encourage the sad and console them with the Word of God, the *prothema* states. They cannot sleep, but have to constantly be on watch and criticize evil acts. The *sermo* distinguishes between two kind of attractions or bonds: those of the flesh and those of the mind or intellect. St. Procopius resisted both by leaving his marriage in order to be ordained and choosing monastic life by becoming a canon at Vyšehrad (before 1143 Bohemia did not know an obligatory celibacy — a fact not respected by Milicius). Again, as in *Abortivus*, the homily uses the image of light to explain the work of Procopius.

A preacher or prelate needs three things to do his work well: the teachings of the church, compassion to console people and material support.\(^{86}\) In a second division, a preacher or prelate is said to need four qualities in his life: the fragility of the human condition, the beauty of conscience, the fire of love, and light to see his own pride.\(^{87}\)

Finally, St. Procopius is compared to a pelican (a magnificent bird, the explanation says) of solitude, because he lived as a hermit. He was by virtue of his preaching, life and example a shining light to the ruler of Bohemia. The case was similar in his “residence, as he, leading a monastic life, instructed in discipline, unity of love and common life.”\(^{88}\) St. Procopius was canonized because of his incessant vigilance against sin and evil.

Compared to the sermon from *Abortivus*, St. Procopius’ homily in *Gratiae Dei* concentrates more on the moral contents of his life. His main

---

\(^{15}\) See p. 174.
\(^{86}\) See p. 133.
\(^{87}\) See p. 134 and 174.
\(^{88}\) “Domicilio, dum vitam monasticam ducens, disciplinam et unitatem caritatis et communem vitam edocuit.” St. Procopius, GD, XII D 1, fol. 52 r.
quality was his constant alertness against the temptations of the flesh and the mind. Milicius finds in Procopius a great example of a pastor and brings him close to his audience. The distance created in *Abortivus* between the saint and the audience is due to its stress on miracles, which is replaced in *Gratiae Dei* by an emphasis on the serious and complex character of being a pastor. *Gratiae Dei*’s approach to St. Procopius is basically educational, while *Abortivus* simply admires the saint.

### 2.5. St. Ludmilla

St. Ludmilla lived in the time of the Christianization of Bohemia. As the daughter of Prince Slavibor from a small tribe in Northern Bohemia she married Borzivoj, the prince of the Czechs and ancestor of the Przemyslids. Both were baptized around the year 870 and enabled monks representing the Slavonic rite to do their missionary work in Bohemia. Due to the conversion of Czechs, the first churches were built among them. Ludmilla was the grandmother of St. Wenceslaus, whose father died before he reached adulthood. The reason for her violent death was the upbringing of the young boy. Ludmilla came into conflict with her daughter-in-law Drahomira and was murdered in 921. In 924 her remains were brought to the monastery of St. George at the Prague Castle by Wenceslaus, which was regarded as a part of the canonization process. Her cult gained increasing popularity and was widely spread by the 12th century.

Surprisingly, St. Ludmilla does not appear in the postil *Abortivus*. The reason for this absence can only be guessed. Possibly her significance to Milicius was not great enough to place her in league with the non-classical, local saints discussed in *Abortivus*. The later postil *Gratiae Dei*, however, presents her as one of the main patrons of the country and contains a short homily about her based on Mt. 13,48 (They “sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad”). The homily introduces the saint to us with:

> Hence blessed Ludmilla, which is pronounced in Czech ‘lydu mila’, i.e. beloved by the people, noble by birth, but even more noble by virtue, the first Christian woman of the Czechs, the grandmother of St. Wenceslaus, the leader of Bohemia, our patron.

---

89 For St. Ludmilla see Kadlec, p. 41 ff.
90 *Hinc ergo beata Ludmilla, quod in bohemico sonat lydu mila, id est populo dilecta, nobili genere sed nobilior virtute, prima bohemorum christiana, awa sancti Wenceslai, ducis*
The prothema of the homily compares the audience to the catch of fishermen in the story of the gospel. Just as the good and bad fish are mixed together in the fisherman’s catch, so too are the good and evil in the church intermingled. This is also the case with preachers since some of them are indifferent about catching souls.\(^9\)

The sermo talks about the virtues of St. Ludmilla, who maintained the chastity of her body and soul after the death of her mother and lived like a turtle. She was as vigilant as Judith, prayed as Anne, gave alms to the poor and constantly offered an excellent example of the Christian faith. Milicius then compares the church of Prague with a vineyard, obviously because St. Ludmilla is also regarded as the patron of vintners. This vineyard, namely the church of Prague, is planted by those three planters, St. Wenceslaus, St. Adalbertus and St. Ludmilla, our patrons, who in our homeland in the press of martyrdom poured out their own blood.\(^2\)

Just as Naboth was murdered because Jezebel wanted to gain his vineyard (I Kings 21), St. Ludmilla was killed by her daughter-in-law Drahomira. She wanted to deprive Ludmilla of her vineyard, which was Christianity. However, she was not “amputated” from Christ, the homily says, but died in memory of Christ. Drahomira murdered her because she wanted to be the sole ruler, which is the same reason why Ahab murdered all his potential rivals. The life and death of Ludmilla fulfills the gospel. While St. Ludmilla was taken to the glory of the heavenly kingdom, Drahomira was sent to the eternal fire, together with evil tyrants and proud women.

The homily on St. Ludmilla presents her in a quiet, low-profile way, compared to the other saints we have analyzed. Milicius tells her story briefly and compares her to Naboth, the victim of the evil Queen Jezebel. Her story is nothing more than an illustration of the reading from Mt. 13. The reader or audience of this homily receives an image of a holy woman, who was in danger because of pagan enemies. The main exhortation the audience gets from Milicius is already formulated in the prothema: be...
careful to be a good fish, i.e. to be on the same side as St. Ludmilla. Although this presentation is formulated on a personal level — confirming the idea we have of Gratiae Dei — Milicius does not give concrete and direct advice on how to achieve St. Ludmilla’s sainthood. The rather general character of her holiness could be the reason why a sermon about her is missing from Abortivus. She was then later added to Gratiae Dei because its intention is to be complete and well-balanced.

2.6. All Saints’ Day

Not only the sermons about saints give us an impression of what sainthood meant to Milicius. A second source consists of the two sermons on All Saint’s Day. As we will see, Abortivus elaborates more on the eschatological dimension of sainthood, while Gratiae Dei stresses the existing consequences of it.

On the occasion of this feast, Abortivus offers a sermon based on Apoc. 21,2 (“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”). According to the prothema, a city is primarily a location where people keep their possessions. Jerusalem is therefore a place where the ecclesia militans, the “church militant“, has its treasure, which has to be mentioned and described by preachers.

This refers to the treasure of the martyrs, which the church possesses. Who is then acting as a witness to our virtues and the wealth of our souls, Milicius asks. The life and deeds of the saints are for him like a book that describes their virtues, enabling us to compare our deeds with theirs. Therefore, we have to listen to what the saints before us have done, so that we deserve to be enterd with them in the book of life or of heaven.93

Jerusalem, our fatherland, is worthy of praise because it signifies the heavenly country. In describing the beauty of this country Milicius contrasts it with its opposite, the terrena infernalis, the “land of hell.” Inhabitants of

93 “Queramus nunc qui fuerit nostri scriptores in mundo qui nostras virtutes hoc nostrorum animarum divitas conscrierunt. Nonne prophete, nonne apostoli, nonne evangeliste, nonne confessores, nonne virgines in quarum pellecebras hae de picta nascentur? Nonne et martires quorum sanguine libri sunt evangelisti rubricati et eorum mortibus cum sigillis signati? Audiamus ergo que illi scripserunt, ut cum ipsis libro vite sive celesti mereamur ascribi. Quod ut facilius efficiere et consequi valeamus ad illam bibliothecam que omnia verba divina in sui pectoris archano servabat matrem gratie recurramus.” Omnes sancti, A, ID 37, fol. 238 ra.
that country will all fall down with Lucifer. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem will all live in God’s light, as indicated by Christ’s coming into the world:

And this has all happened to us through the descent of Christ to us as he betrothed our humanity to his divinity and renewed our old age. Therefore, it is correctly said about us that we are the church militant and are moving towards the church triumphant.4

In the second part of the sermon Milicius explains how the holy church has been united; out of a wide range of diversity it has become one.5 Out of thieves, heretics and all kinds of sinners, Christ has created saints. Sainthood here means to Milicius belonging to Jerusalem, the holy city where the church finally shall be unified. In this sermon, sainthood does not imply a specific quality or condition. Those who are gathered from the sinners and the unjust of the world are all saints, because Christ has chosen them to be so. It is a profound “democratic” definition of sainthood, because it understands every true follower of Christ to be a saint. There is no mention of supernatural powers nor divine evidence of a saint’s ability to be an intercessor between God and man. Above all, sainthood has the eschatological dimension of the vita imitationis, and in this way it is in the future of every faithful individual.

*Gratiae Dei* provides an extensive homily on All Saints’ Day on the Sermon on the Mount, Mt.5,1ff. Milicius relates the blessings from this text to those people who want to follow Christ. As in *Abortivus*, this homily does not glorify the supposedly heavenly nature of sainthood, but concentrates on the morality of it. The difference from *Abortivus* is that the *Gratiae Dei* homily describes the moral issues of sainthood in a very concrete way. Often, Milicius explicitly refers to preachers and prelates, whom he mentions in the *prothema* as people who have the duty to spread and preach the “great fire of the Lord” on earth.6

Sainthood is, however, signified by suffering and martyrdom. Those who want to live in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount have to expect resistance and persecution, Milicius explains using the text from Mt. 5,4 (“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”).

---

4“Et quia hec omnia facta sunt nobis per descensionem Christi ad nos quando nostram humanitatem sue divinitati desponsavit et vetustatem nostram innovavit. Ideo de nobis qui sumus ecclesia militans et ad ecclesiam tendimus triumphantem bene premissum est.” Omnes sancti, A, ID 37, fol. 239 rb.
5See p. 120.
6See p. 167.
So the holy martyrs conquered all kingdoms by meekness. Some were killed by the sword, some burnt by flames, others beaten with a whip, others pierced through by a bar, some tortured by a cross, some submersed in the sea, others skinned alive, others put in prison, some deprived of their tongue, some covered by stones, others afflicted by cold, others tortured by hunger, others, truly as a spectacle of injury, placed naked before the public, their hands being cut off or other members of their body missing, because they carried the name of the Lord. Therefore, they shall inherit the earth because of their meekness.

2.7. Conclusion

Our survey of eleven sermons from *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei* indicates that to Milicius sainthood primarily has a moral content. Each of the Bohemian saints from the early church whom Milicius added to the obligatory calendar represents a specific moral virtue, which is used by the preacher to warn and direct his audience. St. Adalbertus was the persevering planter of the church in Bohemia; St. Procopius was the great preacher who rejected worldly luxuries; St. Vitus kept himself separated from evil; and St. Wenceslaus was the perfect ruler. Only St. Ludmilla does not have a specific quality but suffered for Christianity and the church in general.

Saints are examples for us, from whom we have to learn and imitate in our personal lives. They are like books that we can study to discover the Word of God. Milicius presents us with an image of sainthood that is in principle accessible to everyone. By following the same moral principles as the saints did, everybody can achieve holiness. However, we must be prepared for persecution, because it is integral to the holy life. It may not mean to die for Christ as martyrs did, but sainthood in times of peace has its equivalent in breaking with all earthly desires.

In comparing sermons for the same feast days from the postils *Abortivus* and *Gratiae Dei*, we can observe how this tendency evolves. In the thematic sermons of *Abortivus*, the saint himself is often the subject. This approach makes the distinction between the audience and the saint more marked. Often, the miracles performed by the saint are told, which stresses the supernatural power of this holy person. To some extent *Abortivus* still

---

97 "Sic sancti martires per mansuetudinem omnia regna vicerunt. Alii ferro perempti, ali flamma exusti, ali flagris verberati, ali vectibus perforati, ali cruciati patibulo, ali pelago submersi, ali vivi decorati, ali vinculis mancipati, ali linguis privati, ali lapidibus obruti, ali frigore afflicti, ali fame cruciati, ali vero truncatis manibus sive ceteris membris cesis spectaculum contumelie in populos nudi, propter nomen Domini portaverunt. Ideo propter mansuetudinem possident terram." Omnes sancti, GD, XII D 1, fol. 142 v. The catalogue refers to Hebr. 11,35-37.
Gratiae Dei is clearly the product of a development that made morality the fundamental dimension of Christian life. Milicius does not present any supernatural saints, but offers homilies about biblical texts in which the saint is no more than an illustration of an ideal. They stress a moral virtue that applies to everyone, making a holy life accessible to the entire audience. In part, this shift is the result of a different approach to the homily as a literary and rhetoric form, which does not concentrate on a theme but rather on a biblical text. This approach was obviously a logical choice for Milicius, given his theological development.