
The Role of the Preacher According to Milicius de Chremsir

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Milicius de Chremsir¹ (d. 1374) is generally known as a predecessor to the reformer Jan Hus along with Matthias de Janow and Conradus de Waldhausen.² This image has its roots in the historiographic discussions of the nineteenth century, when the Czech scene was dominated by František Palacký. He found in Constantin Höfler his counterpart on the German side. In the struggle for the recognition of the Czech nation and its political rights Bohemian history was re-interpreted and rewritten. History had to serve as an argument in a political debate and therefore as many historical events and figures as possible were appropriated and put in a long string of witnesses for the national cause of political independence. The usual line of national succession, which was established in the course of this debate, contained Hus, Žižka, Chelčický, Comenius, Dobrovský and others. In the twentieth century names as Palacký and Masaryk were added to it.³

In the eyes of some historians and theologians the very first place in the row of national witnesses - not seldomly martyrs - was reserved to Milicius de Chremsir. The first one to do so programmatically was Palacký himself in his main oeuvre *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia*. According to him Milicius awakened

a great and lasting force in the Czech nation. In his personality came forward the freshness of emotion and imagination, the deep but somewhat suffering piety, the fresh mildness and the tough decisiveness, by which this nation is for ever characterized; therefore it was him who, supported by the favor of the highest secular and spiritual offices, was moved by this national spirit to its deepest profundity and for the first time brought it to a motion similar to the waves of the sea, from where a storm came forward as never heard before, when other elements were mixed with it. His power was especially manifest in his convincing words and immediate acts; his writings, however, that bear the obvious signs of haste, do not have this vigor and vitality that could assure them lasting significance, except in some places.⁴

Many followed Palacký in this description of the fourteenth-century preacher and vulgarized the content of it. One of them was František Loskot who came up

1) In Czech his name is written Milíč z Kroměříže, in German Militsch von Kremsier. In general, I use here the Latin spelling for names of persons from medieval Bohemian history. The reason is the necessity which I see to free Bohemian history from nationalistic prejudices mainly coming from Czech and German sides.

2) In Czech Matěj z Janova and Konrád Waldhauser, in German Matthias von Janov and Conrad Waldhauser.

3) See e.g. the ordering of T.G. Masaryk, *Česká otázka, snahy a tužby národního obrození* [The Czech Question, the efforts and desires of the National Revival] (Prague, 1895). See for a discussion on this J. Pekař, *Masarykova česká filosofie*, ČČH 18,2 (1912) 170-208.

4) *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě*, 3 (Praha, 1939) 25 (author's translation).

with the widely accepted portrait of Milicius as the "Father of the Czech Reformation," thus not only firmly connecting the preacher to Jan Hus and Hussitism but also to the birth of the Czech nation.⁵ Other Czech historians like F.M. Bartoš and M. Kaňák used this label in their writings on the fourteenth century. Even Palacký main adversary Constantin Höfler, in his time spokesman of the German concept of Bohemian history, agreed on the image of Milicius as the domestic source of the Bohemian Reformation. Nevertheless to him this was exactly the reason why he condemned Milicius and his "Czech" radicalism.⁶

Another steady feature in the depiction of Milicius is his alleged apocalyptic understanding of the world of his day. Most of the attention paid to Milicius is concentrated on two smaller writings about the Last Judgement and the coming of Antichrist⁷. In larger studies about fourteenth-century Bohemia Milicius is regularly mentioned as calling Emperor Charles IV "Antichristus Magnus", even when the historical probability of this event is highly problematical.⁸ This image of an apocalyptic Milicius comes largely from Matthias de Janow, one of Milicius' biographers. He presented him as an apocalyptic figure, a second Elijah announcing Antichrist's coming and the end of the world. Matthias had a big influence on scholars of Bohemia's history up till today, as the example of R.R. Betts may prove.⁹

5) "Milicius is a Czech human being by birth, his nature, his labor, his idea of Christianity and life, even when he considered himself strictly orthodox and by others was regarded as such. (..) It is the purely Czech soul of Milicius that primarily explains why the efforts of Milicius found such resonance in the Czech nation. Milicius is a direct incarnation of the Czech spirit and this circumstance made him under the given conditions the Father of the Czech Reformation." F. Loskot, *Milíč z Kroměříže, otec české reformace*, (Praha, 1911). 7 (I deliberately translated "Czech Reformation" because it bespeaks better the nationalistic content of Loskot's ideas than the common "Bohemian Reformation.")

6) "In Milič zeigte sich mehr das Schwärmerische, welches im českischen Charakter liegt, verbunden mit dem Bestreben ideale Zustände herbeizuführen, bei dem Möglichen, dem Erreichbaren nicht stehen zu bleiben. Ihm sagte die mystische Auffassung des Chistenthums und eine derartige Neugestaltung des Lebens ungleich mehr zu, als die einfache, klare, verständige seines Vorgängers, welche sich an die wirkliche Welt wandte und diese, die Sitten und Gebräuche zu bessern suchte. Milič schien dieser Erfolg nicht zu genügen; ihm war es um vollständige Umwandlung des Menschen zu thun und während Konrad nur in der Kirche und durch diese zu wirken suchte, verengte Milič sehr bald das grosse weite Ganze der letzteren, um ein von ihm selbst geleitetes, von ihm abhängiges Kirchlein in der Kirche zu haben. (..) Bald griff er [Milicius] seinen Oberen [Arnestus] ebenso gut an als den Kaiser, den er öffentlich als den Gegenchrist bezeichnete, endlich auch den Papst und die Cardinäle. Nur seine Kirche scheint von dem Verdammungsurtheil ausgenommen worden zu sein, jedoch nicht Prag, welches das grosse Babylon und die apokalyptische Bestie war." *Concilia Pragensia 1353-1413. Prager Synodal-Beschlüsse*. Zum ersten Male zusammengestellt und mit einer Einleitung versehen von C. Höfler, (reprint Vienna, 1972) XXXII.

7) *Sermo de die novissimo* (edited by F.M. Bartoš, in: *Reformační sborník* 8 (1946) 49-58) and *Libellus de Antichristo* (edited by V. Kybal, Narracio de Myliczyo, in: *Matthiae de Janov Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, (Praha/Innsbruck, 1911) 3:122-129 or F. Menčík, *Milič a dva jeho spisy z roku 1367*, in: *Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk*, (Prague, 1890) 328-336.

8) See P.C.A. Morée, *Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia, The life and ideas of Milicius de Chremsir (d. 1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia*, (Heršpice, 1999) 34.

9) Betts interpreted Matthias' emphasis on apocalypticism in Milicius' work as a feeling of crisis and fear of chaos: "It was the Czech artisans and shopkeepers who flocked to hear Milič preach in their own language at St. Giles' in the Malá Strana, and their sons whom he instructed in Latin about the art and duties of a preacher at St. Nicholas' in the Old Town. When Milič preached that the wars and pestilence of his own day, the division of nations, the avarice and self-indulgence of clergy and

In these interpretations one important aspect of Milicius' life is not taken into account systematically: He understood himself primarily as a preacher whose tasks it is to educate people and to prevent them from evil. He devoted his life to preaching, as he quit his work at the chancery of the Emperor in 1363, started to deliver sermons in several Prague churches and later established a school for preachers. This school and the centre for former prostitutes connected to it, named "Jerusalem", grew into a community which in many respects resembled a monastic order. Precisely this character of the community became the target of Milicius' critics from mendicant orders and finally the impulse for its abolition after Milicius' death in 1374.

As a support to his work and his community, Milicius wrote two postils. The first one by the name of *Abortivus* dates most likely from the years 1363-65, the very first years of Milicius' activities as a preacher. The second one, *Gratiae Dei*, can be dated to 1371-72.¹⁰ This was shortly after two visits Milicius made to Rome (in 1367 and 1369) in an effort to convince the pope about the urgency of reform. He stressed the function and importance of preaching and preachers as a means to reform religious life of laity and clergy.

The preacher as a pedagogical leader

Not only by offering 271 sermons to his pupils and fellow preachers did Milicius elevate the significance of preaching, but also the content of many sermons focuses on the central role of the preacher and his work in church and society. In his first postil, *Abortivus*, it is Milicius' general view that the preacher has the task of saving people from final punishment and hell. It is a sacred task for him, 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 his sermon on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity. 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 homeland.¹¹

It is God himself who speaks through the mouth of the preacher, says Milicius. The preacher is God's instrument to correct sinful behaviour and to offer

laity alike were all signs that the abomination of desolation was already set in the holy place, that the Antichrist was at hand and that the year of the prophet Daniel had already come, he was merely stating in apocalyptic terms the historical fact that he was living in an age of revolution and that the ecclesiastical and moral order designed for an agricultural, feudal, non-nationalistic society was breaking down into the new commercial and nationalistic society in which he and his listeners were living." R.R. Betts, *The Place of the Czech Reform Movement in the History of Europe*, in: *Essays in Czech History*, (London, 1969) 88.

10) P.C.A. Morée, *The dating of the postils of Milicius de Chremsir*, in: *Listy filologické CXXI*, 1998, p. 64-83.

11) "Omnis predicator non in suo sed in Christi Jhesu nomine debet instari, id est homines de fluctibus maris, id est mundi, trahere ad littus patrie sempiternae." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 153 rb.

salvation. Preaching is a pedagogical activity through which God acts as a father to his children as he states in another sermon.¹²

According to Milicius, the aim of preaching is 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 breaking these rules. To be able to do this, the preacher needs certain skills. The preacher cannot present Christ to his people without the help of 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. In the sermon on the fishing of men Milicius says:

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 build 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.¹³

In Milicius' view the education that a preacher has to provide for his people is not just a matter of transmitting certain knowledge. To him the deeper 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. However, the preacher has to expect resistance from his opponents, both the devil and the world. Satan as well is 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 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.¹⁴

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

12) "Aliter Deus corripit dampnandos et aliter salvandos, quia illos eternaliter puniendo, istos corporaliter et leviter admonendo. Sicut pater filium virga corripit, ne ille hereditatem perdat, sic Deus facit per verbum predicationis." Dominica X p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 177 rb.

13) "Sic et Dominus videns illos non opera illorum eligit sed corda, sic et tu si ad opus predicationis ineptus es. Artifex omnium, Spiritus Sanctus, postest te dolare, planare, quadrare, et ita tonsionibus componere, ut velud lapis preciosus aut ornamentum et sustentamentum ecclesie vel ad coniungendum parietes adversantium peccatorum ad instar Christi, qui est lapis angularis, posset valere. Et sic si inhabilis es ad piscandum homines, te habilitabit ad illum. Ergo confugiamus humiliter et devote, ut nos capiat verbo suo, ut sic capti per ipsum alios capiamus et deducamur pariter ad portum salutis eterne." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 153 va.

14) "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 superbie vanitate opiniones faciendo et sic capiunt non Christo, sed dyabolo et sibi animas." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 153 vb.

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, Milicius warns. 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.¹⁵

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 only want to highlight their own virtues. "Such a one, God does not elect to be fisherman of men. They do nothing good and ascribe themselves virtues," is Milicius' conclusion in the sermon about the net of preaching.¹⁶

The section *In quibus verbis* of the sermon analyses 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, i.e. the seven deadly sins, for fruitless preaching without God. 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 temporal desires is therefore fishing for Satan, not for the Lord.

Milicius promises a preacher success, however, when he does his work with God. His behaviour is characterized by the polar opposite of the obsessions Milicius just described. The preacher and audience have to empty themselves of everything that distracts them from God. Only then will God's net catch them and bring them to eternal life.¹⁷

The relationship between preachers and the mighty of the world is rather complicated in Milicius' eyes. 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 as far as Milicius is concerned, but not always. According to the sermon on the fishing of men, the powerful and

15) "Multi autem sunt et columpne quia fortes et rethe habent, videlicet scripturam, et tamen non decorant templum Salomonis, sed pocius turim babylonis. Quanticumque sint tales in ecclesie scindentes rethe scripture cum pisces, id est electi, excidere. Nequaquam valent Spiritui Sancto eos tenente." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 154 ra.

16) "Non tales elegit Deus piscatores homini. Ne quidquid boni facerent, sue virtuti ascriberent." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 154 ra.

17) "Verbum enim Dei non capit superbos sed humiles, non iracundos sed mansuetos.(..) Item verbum Dei non capit invidios sed caritativos (..), non distortos per ymaginem carnalis lascivie, ut sunt crispatis, nodulatis, rostratis, strictis, fuco pulchritudinis ornatis, non sicut Deus eos formavit, sed sicut dyabolus deformavit." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 154 va.

wise of the world are connected to Leviathan. His collaborators are mighty tyrants and clever philosophers full of the wisdom of this world. Here, Milicius uses a kind of anti-intellectual argument against learned and eloquent people. The Lord does not need such people, but chooses the 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 [his] extraordinary power, through the fishermen he has subdued the orators.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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 heavenly Jerusalem is good.

The sermon on the feast of St. Wenceslaus is an exception to this tendency in *Abortivus* to be wary of the learned and powerful. Here, the doubtless significance of the principal patron of Bohemia 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. The sermon presents 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 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.

18) "Capud 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., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 155 rb.

19) "Sicut enim per bonos doctores quasi per portas Syon ad celestem Jherusalem subintratur, sicut per portas Babylon[is], id est falsos doctores, ad infernum patet ingressus." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 155 va. This warning we know also from *Gratiae Dei*, where it has almost the same wording: "Sicut enim per bonos doctores quasi per portas Syon ad celestem Jherusalem intratur, sic per malos doctores tamquam per portas Babilonie ad confusionem eternam inferni patet ingressus." St. Petri, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 40 v.

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.²⁰

Preaching as an eschatological act

The meaning of preaching and the role of the preacher in Milicius' concept can only be understood in the context of the eschatological character of the times. The preacher is not only the one who is fighting against Satan, but he is bringing the Last Judgement itself into effect. In the last part of the sermon about the fishing of men Milicius gives the fishermen or preachers a key role on Judgement Day. They will be like angels, the helpers of God, and will have the power to decide who will be saved.²¹ Milicius continues with an explanation on a passage about Leviathan, who is the symbol and presence of Satan, from Job 40:20 - 41:25. 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.²²

In a sermon on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity from *Abortivus*, Milicius states that it is the preacher's task to announce the end of the world. This sermon on John 4:52 ("At the seventh hour, the fever left him") is full of the expectancy that the world will soon end and the judgement and condemnation of the wicked - in this context primarily tyrants - will soon occur. Preachers have to announce the end of the world just as angels do in the Apocalypse when they blow the seven trumpets of the truth.²³

To Milicius the importance of preaching has an eschatological dimension: wherever preachers work, they fulfill an eschatological task by announcing the coming of the Judgement Day. The content of their work itself is eschatological no matter under what circumstances they live and work. 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 Judgement

20) "Similiter omne[i]s predicator meditetur in lege divina, ne confundatur in conspectu regum arguere quoscumque hoc scelere. Dat enim Dominus verbum ewangelizantibus virtute multa." St. Wenceslaus, *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 213 rb.

21) "Tunc exhibunt angeli et velud piscatores in littore celestis patrie. Pisces bonos cum malis educetes eligent bonos in vasa sua, malos autem foras miserunt. 'Separabunt enim malo de medio iustorum et mittent eos in caminum ignis, ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium' [Mt. 13,49-50]. Qui autem sunt illi mali pisces nisi membra dyaboli, qui Leviathan sive cetus Job 40 cap. nuncupatur." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 154 vb.

22) "Subaudis ut ergo in servis, id est in predicatoribus sicut et in angelis, ut infirmi predicatorum potentes tyrannos abigent, sicut angeli demones ligaverunt, et quia predicatorum gladio verbi Dei peccatores ab ipso dividunt et scindunt." Dominica V p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 155 ra.

23) "Angeli sunt nuntii i.e. predicatorum seu prelati et 7 tube date sunt eis i.e. universitas veritatis ad nuntiandum finem mundi et iudicium venturum Dei." Dominica XII p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 234 rb.

Day by urging his audience to make a choice. His preaching has to convey the full weight of the Final Judgement, commemorating this day of definitive decision. In his sermonizing the preacher has to become an immediate embodiment of the Final Judgement. To Milicius the preacher himself is an eschatological figure and his preaching an eschatological act.

Milicius regards the preacher as 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.

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.²⁴

In his second postil *Gratiae Dei*, dating from the end of his life, Milicius worked his notions about the eschatological role of the preacher out into a broader coherence. To him sins such as simony, greed and all the others which he 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 a 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 preachers both fight and win.²⁵

To characterize the situation, Milicius uses words with an apocalyptic character but without indicating an actual imminent end of the world. Neither in *Abortivus* nor in *Gratiae Dei* does the name Antichrist appear in a direct way. He is mentioned only in quotations from St. Ambrose. The one and only time the followers

24) "Utinam ergo ipsi prelati sive predicatorum sub vero Syro Christo Jhesu una cum veris Israelitis exirent de captivitate Babylonica | sive dyaboli ad edificandam novam Jherusalem, ecclesiam videlicet sanctam, quantumcumque a tyrannis fuerit impediti, quia et si coram eis ceciderint tamen resurgent." Dominica XII p.T., *Abortivus*, I D 37, f. 234 rb - 234 va. 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.

25) "Ita predicator videns arma dyaboli in hominibus bestialibus, debet gladio verbi Dei in eos irruere et a dextris prosperitatis et a sinistris | adversitatis prosternere, et si necesse est etiam ibi mori, quod et Paulus faciebat in curiis, nunc Ierusalem, nunc Rome, nunc in Gretia. Nec fuit curia que (mg. absconderet se) ab eo, ut ergo in toto mundo predicatorum sic pugnantem, sic vincant." Dominica I in XL, *Gratiae Dei*, XIV D 5, f. 92 r-v.

of Antichrist are brought up is in a sermon on Lc. 3: 1-6. The sermon's place in the liturgical order is more important here. It is designated for the Ember Saturday in 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 did John:

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 must we zealously preach the justice of Christ who is coming to judgement, 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.²⁶

Many words in this quotation have an apocalyptic connotation. A keyword quoted from Daniel 12 - the famous text which breaks history up into eras and discusses the coming end of the world - is *abominatio*. Moreover, the text refers to Elijah - the eschatological prophet who will return at the end of time.

In spite of all these apocalyptic images, in his sermons from the postils Milicius by no means proclaims the end of the world nor does he divide history into certain periods. He 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 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 Milicius does not take the next step: He does not foresee or predict the end of the world. His apocalypticism 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

26) "Notandum vero quod sicut istis malis regnantibus et quasi omnem cultum Dei destruentibus, cepit Johannes iustitiam ewangelicam predicare sive Christi. Sic et nos regnantibus, multis tyrannis et hereticis et ypocritis iustitiam Christi ad iudicium venturi zelo Johannis et Helie ymmo pocius (mg. Christi) zelanter predicare debemus. Periculosiora enim sunt tempora quam tunc fuerunt, cum multi qui videntur esse christiani, magis noceant ecclesie quam pagani, multas abhominaciones antichristianas facientes." Sabato in quattuor temporibus (Ember Saturday in Advent), *Gratiae Dei*, XIV D 5, f. 25 r.

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.²⁷

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 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.²⁸

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.

For 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. 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 truly 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 behaviour, 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.²⁹ This is the mighty power of the word, which the preacher proclaims. It

27) "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: 'Concident eum amici dividant eum negociatores' [Job 40:25 (Vulgate)]. Ecce predicatorum qui pro verbis sacris negociantur et emunt animas. Ad hoc accipiunt gladium ut dividant a corpore dyaboli bonos a malis ex amicitia, ut ex inimicis faciant amicos." St. Vitus, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 30 v.

28) "Quod non solum fiet in resurrectione ab angelis, sed etiam nunc a predicatoribus. Ut angeli id est predicatorum cum tuba ewangelii congregent electos in ecclesiam a quattuor partibus mundi." Dominica II in Advent, *Gratiae Dei*, XIV D 5, f. 9 r.

29) "Quando ergo nunc concordat tuba cum fletu et infirmitas cum hiis, qui in nuptiis gratulantur, nisi quia tuba predicationis que ad curiam Christi invitat non solum infirmos letificat, ymo vitam

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 good from evil. He not only explains the word of God, but he is the channel of God's judgement. His sermon brings life and death. 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 to have peace with good people, he has to produce the sword of the word of God against the wicked. Because if he does not correct them, he allows them to be sent into damnation and gives the righteous the occasion to sin.³⁰

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 judgement 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.

Preaching as an office

Milicius' emphasis on preaching and its powerful role in reform lead him to a final consequence: the establishment, at least theologically, of a separate place for the preacher as such next to the one of the priest or prelate. In *Abortivus* we find this idea in the sermon on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, which distinguishes between three kinds of seats or offices that Peter prepared for himself in the church: the *cathedra predicationis* (the authority on preaching), the *cathedra prelationis* (the authority over the clergy) and the *cathedra subiunctionis* (the authority over everyone). The office of preaching is conditioned by six grades of *differentia*, which make it clear whether or not a person has the qualities necessary to preach.³¹ Those grades are fully in the jurisdiction of Peter, in whose place the pope must act today. He must decide whether a person is able to take up the seat of preaching and to be a preacher. Preachers are presented separately from the clergy, which has its own

prolongat, sicut tuba insonans per os Ysaie addidit annos XV Ezechie." Feria quinta in L, *Gratiae Dei*, XIV D 5, f. 86 v.

30) "Quamvis cum bonis pacem habere debeat predicator, tamen contra malos debet producere gladium verbi Dei. Quia si eos non corrigit, ipsos in dampnationem transire permittit et iustis dat occasionem peccandi." St. Vitus, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 30 r.

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

cathedra. According to Milicius preachers are responsible directly to the highest authority in the church, the pope.

A similar idea we find also in the sermon on the feast of St. Procopius from *Gratiae Dei*, where Milicius outlines what the character and behaviour of a preacher should be. A preacher's task is not only to encourage repentance, but he must also console people who are filled with grief and sorrow. It is one of the things a preacher has in common with prelates. Both of them have to provide consolation through the word of God.³² Preachers and prelates both must provide pastoral care to their flock. Milicius states that in order to provide this care, a preacher or prelate 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 qualities 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.³³

By mentioning preacher and prelate next to each other Milicius suggests that their significance and place are equal but separate. Both positions are necessary, but are to be distinguished.

In *Gratiae Dei* we find another witness which, from a different angle, confirms the idea of the sermon on Peter's see. It is the sermon which Milicius delivered on All Saints Day 1372, which is a discussion basis on Mt. 5:3 ("Blessed are the poor of spirit") about the question of poverty and its obligatory character for members of a religious order. The sermon indicates that Milicius was giving his community of preachers some kind of rule. On 19 September 1372, shortly before the sermon was preached, the corner-stone of the chapel of the community dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene was laid. We can conclude from both events that Milicius' community was largely established and even bore some features of a religious order.

According to Milicius, those who have taken vows as a religious are not allowed to possess private property. Individuals from communities can only hold property in common with their fellow members. Anyone who has private property is sinning against God and the church in a very serious way. He is depriving the

32) "Ita prelati sive predicator ut bonus comes iungat se hiis, qui ambulantes in via huius miserie ambulant tristes, et consoletur eos verbo Dei. Non dormitet in sompno oblivionis, nec alios dormitare permittat, surgat invigilet, malis actibus contradicat." St. Procopius, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 50 r.

33) "Sunt autem quatuor in lucerna quem 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 predicator qui debet alios consolari. (..) Tertium est ignis caritatis, quo totus debet ardere predicator. (..) Quartum est lumen quod debet habere iugiter predicator ne sibi iustus videatur et alios reputet peccatores." St. Procopius, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 51 r.

dominion of Christ of its property, thereby turning himself into a thief and a looter.³⁴ In this view being a religious means basically being fully dependent on Christ. This makes them different from other people who are dependent on their property and therefore trust primarily in their possessions. Members of a community trust foremost in God and their property is always communal, thereby owned by Christ himself.

According to the biographies, a large part of Milicius' community were his fellow preachers and pupils.³⁵ Preaching belonged to the core activities of it, as the postils show us. The idea that such a community needs its own rule underlines at the same time its specific identity and independence next to other groups in church and society. By establishing itself a community where preaching is at the heart of the activities understands itself as different from others. Preachers have their own separate, special task in the environment of the church, irreplaceable by others like priests. To Milicius this also meant that a community of preachers has its own specific character.

In his sermons in *Abortivus* and *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.

The usual interpretation of Milicius de Chremsir as a forerunner to Jan Hus easily closes its eyes to the specific ideas he had about preaching and the preacher. He was primarily a figure and theologian who was fascinated by the power of the spoken and, to some extent, written word. To him those who use the word are able to change the world either in a good or bad way. The word is the main weapon against the power of evil present due to the lack of discipline in the church and disorder in society. In this respect we can liken Milicius to many individuals from different groups in our own times who use mass media to evangelize the world. His understanding of preaching brought him to regard it as a separate office in the church, with preachers holding their own mandate. Their role is to distinguish between good and evil and identify this as characteristic of an eschatological age.

As such, Milicius was very much a part of the preaching movement which started in the twelfth century and gained an important place in the developments of the late Middle Ages. As a result, ordinary people were more and more confronted with the church and its moral demands. The preaching movement between the

34) "Quidam autem si vovent paupertatem, ut nichil habeant proprii in speciali possunt tamen habere in commune. Et in hoc fundatur omnis religio ut quidquid habent, sit eis commune, ut nemo dicat aliquid suum esse et quod nemo sit inter eos egens, sicut scribitur Actuum quarto. Ubi cumque ergo in religione pauperes Christi se vocant et tamen divitias habent videlicet quod commune est sibi proprium usurpantes sunt raptores patrimonii Jhesu Christi et fures et latrones. Caveat etiam superior eorum ne eis aliquid indulgeat ut proprium habeant videlicet censum vel speciale comodum vel coquinam. Ex hac causa quia quecumque singuli habent non sunt eorum, sed communitatis. Cum ergo uni conceditur quod omni sine summa causa aliis iniuria infertur, votum frangitur et iuramentum. Nisi quis communitati deserviret, ut lector indigens libris potest indultum (mg. habere), ut usum librorum habeat ex indulto. Similiter predicator." Omnes sancti, *Gratiae Dei*, XII D 1, f. 141 v.

35) See "Vita venerabilis presbyteri Milicii, praelati ecclesiae Pragensis" FRB 1: 420.

twelfth and fourteenth centuries was the main vehicle of this second Christianization of Europe.³⁶ Milicius' idea that the preacher and his influence were a key to the reform of the church and society is a product of this movement and a contributing factor to its reception in Bohemia.

36) See Swanson, R.N., *Religion and Devotion in Europe c.1215-c.1515* (Cambridge, 1996) 70.