

Bohemian-Polish Preaching Relations In the Middle Ages: Introductory Reflection

Summary

In the course of the many years of research on preaching in the Middle Ages, a whole range of scholars (e.g. Aleksander Brückner, Stanisław Bylina, Wiesław Wydra and mainly Bohumil Vydra) have emphasized the exceptional closeness between the Bohemian and Polish intellectual milieus. They unquestionably intensified after the foundation of the University of Prague in 1348. Already from the first years of its existence tens of students of Polish origin had begun to attend it, who created here on the territorial principle the Polish university nation (*natio polonorum*). Its members were a number of Polish clergy from the chapter milieu, who came to Prague to expand their education. Primarily in the last decades of the 14th century several distinctive personalities of Polish origin studied in Prague, who later played a decisive role in renewing the activity of the university in Krakow. However, the intensive relations between the Prague and Polish intellectual milieus did not have an effect only on the development of academic knowledge, but conditioned in a significant manner the also the penetration of preaching models into the Kingdom of Poland. Earlier research based on a number of examples proved the influence of preachers of Bohemian origin, or preachers serving in the Bohemian Kingdom (Konrád Waldhauser, Jan Milič, Jan Štěkna and Jan Silvanus – Jan Jeroným of Prague), on Polish preaching at the end of the 14th and mainly in the first half of the 15th century. Although the Hussite revolution separated the Prague and Krakow academic worlds from one another in a fundamental way, not even the negative position of the Polish clergy towards the Hussite “heresy” did not stop the spread of the original earlier Bohemian preaching handbooks to Poland. The Bohemian-Polish preaching relation continued to influence also emigration of Bohemian Catholic clergy and theologians to Poland, who found work there mainly in the Krakow university.

In the last decades, the joint work of Czech and Polish medievalists examining late medieval preaching has advanced significantly. Some common themes were presented at the working meeting called *The Bohemian-Polish Preaching Relation in the Middle Ages / Polsko-czeskie relacje kaznodziejskie w średniowieczu*, which was organized with shared energies on 25th-26th October 2013 by the Centre of Medieval Studies at the Institute of Philosophy of the CAS in Prague and the Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza

Manteuffla of the PAS in Warsaw. This working meeting built freely on the previous discussions called *Warsztaty sermonistyczne*, which had taken place on 18th-19th November 2011 in Warsaw.

The result of our efforts is a monograph comprised of eleven studies. Their authors paid attention to the reception of preaching handbooks and individual sermons, preachers as public intellectuals and thought concepts, which were components of preaching and through them the preacher influenced social ideas and contributed to the formation of a specific late medieval piety. Zdeněk Uhlíř in this context investigates the beginnings of reform preaching in Bohemia, which he places in the 1360s and 1370s. He defines the term "reform" in a formal way, which he does not connect, as is common, with a religious reform, but on the contrary with the formal changes of the construction of the preaching text. As an example, he selected the preaching by Kuneš of Jilemnice, where he placed the emphasis on his criticism of the social relations and injustice in the collection of feudal levies. On the contrary, he approaches the much more widespread preaching of Milič of Kroměříž as a departure from the classical Dominican preaching style and places emphasis on its use of not modern but almost exclusively Patristic authorities. In this perspective, Milič is, according to Uhlíř, close to the later seeking of an ecclesiastical ideal by Hus and Jacobellis von Mies. Krzysztof Bracha's study heads into that same ideological world as Uhlíř, which analyses the contents of the preaching of Jan Milič of Kroměříž *De die novissimo*, preserved in two Polish manuscripts of the 15th century (Warsaw, National Library III 3021, Krakow, Jagiellonian Library 2244). Here, it came to the finding that the Polish redaction of this sermon, adapted to the Advent cycle, was to mediate for the audience a universal definition of the vision of the Last Judgement.

An independent part of the monograph comprises studies focused on synodal preaching. Zuzana Lukšová looks at Prague Pre-Hussite synodal statutes through the lens of their interest in preaching activity. She connects a normative regulation with the preserved synodal sermons of Jan Hus and Stanislav of Znojmo from 1405-1407, which reflect the reform efforts of the Prague university circle at the time when it was vehemently supported by the archbishop of Prague Zbyněk Zajíc of Házmburk. Based on a comparison of the synodal preaching and the synodal regulations, she comes to the finding that their themes mingle and together aimed at disciplining the moral life of the parish clergy. Pavel Soukup investigates the synodal and university preaching of Štěpán of Pálec, who in his opinion did not deviate in any substantial way from the contemporary criticism of the life of the clergy, but basic stress is placed in his study on the preaching presented during the Council of Constance by Mařík Rvačka. He considers this Prague university master to be one of the most active preachers of the *nacio germanica*, who in his speeches intervened in all of the main themes and problems, which the council tried to resolve in the conflict with the pope. Based on the sermons presented, he considers him as an adherent of the conciliar reform group. From this position, Rvačka appeared polemically against the early Hussite teaching. In many places, however, the author indicates the radical changes of Mařík's positions, which appear in comparison with his Prague preaching from the first decades of the 15th century with the sermons at the Council of Constance. The anti-Hussite polemics also concerns the study by Paweł Kras. He subjected the sermon *De haereticis* by Krakow master and university rector Stanisław of Skarbimierz to an analysis. He sees the author of this sermon, which was one of the most widespread anti-heretical texts in

Poland in the 15th century, as part of the theological climate of the Kraków University, which formed the ideological bases for the negative position and discussions of the Polish political elite towards Hussite thought. On the contrary, two sermons by Wrocław Dominican Paweł Meysner from the abbey of St Adalbert, preserved in a manuscript of the Wrocław university library I Q 386 from the 15th century, lack any kind of anti-Hussite echoes, which are dealt with by Anna Zajchowska. These sermons were presented before two bishops of Wrocław, who took part in the campaign against the Hussites, and later served as didactic material and as model sermons for Dominican students, but did not in any aspect touch on contemporary religious events (the dispute between the council and the pope, or between the bishop and the chapter, or the reform efforts for the renewal of the religious life of the clergy). On the contrary, their main theme is the theology of the incarnation and the restoration of human nature.

Two papers in the book are devoted to the preaching activities of the originally Prague Camaldolese monk Jan Jeroným of Prague, called Silvanus. Jan Stejskal analyses Silvanus's preaching from the time of his Italian stay in the Eremo di Camaldoli, intended for his monastic brethren. In terms of the formal side, he considers them absolutely traditional. In this respect, he lagged behind the preaching of the members of the mendicant orders in Tuscany, who addressed the wide urban masses with new formal means. A component of his study is also a list of the preserved sermons by Silvanus created in Italy. Conversely, Jerzy Kaliszuk in his inventory work focused on the sermon collections of Jan Jeroným of Prague, which are in the pre-war collections of the National Library in Warsaw. Through the catalogues, he was able to follow an extensive corpus of at least twenty-seven manuscripts (a significant part of which no longer exist today), which puts Silvanus among the most represented preachers of Bohemian origin in Poland.

A somewhat isolated but all the more deserved contribution in the book is the paper by Ota Halama, which considers the issue of Old Czech holiday postils in the long period from the 15th to the middle of the 16th centuries. The author reaches the surprising finding that the preaching literature was very limited in terms of themes and authors at the time. In his opinion, the printing press contributed to that to a significant extent, which placed stress on the traditional preaching texts by Jan Hus and Jacobellis von Mies, which became very popular precisely because of the new medium. He considers, however, the decline of holiday preaching to be only seemingly and emphasizes its every closer connection with the liturgy. Halama's consideration of Old Czech holiday postils also shows that in the period in question the previous intensive relations between Bohemian and Polish preaching was entirely interrupted for the reasons of different religious positions and that their revival occurred only under the influence of the Unity of the Brethren, or brethren emigration to Poland in the second half of the 16th century.

A special theme, which penetrates the Bohemian-Silesian-Polish preaching relations, is the Lenten preaching of the 14th and 15th centuries. They are studied as a part of Lenten culture in the study by Mieczysław Mejor, with an emphasis on their folklore character. A component of his study is the edition of the sermon *In carnisprivio* from the manuscript of the Wrocław university library IV Q 126. Outside of the theme of preaching, but with an emphasis on the Bohemian, Polish ties in the Late Middle Ages, Tadeusz M. Trajdos deals with the issue of the foundation of the Dominican cloister of Corpus Christi in Lvov and patronage of the local wealthy Czech merchant

Mikuláš Čech. Through these two issues, he vividly portrays the spiritual climate of the multi-ethnic medieval town, in which several religious faiths coexisted side by side.

The studies that form a component of the monograph on Bohemian-Polish preaching relations in the Middle Ages show in many aspects that at the turn of the 15th century there was a truly intensive circulation of preaching texts and religious-reform themes between the kingdoms of Bohemia and Poland. As shown by the existing research, that preaching transfer was more or less unilateral. This situation certainly reflected the new development of the University of Prague in comparison with the University of Kraków, which assumed its intellectual independence only in the first decades of the 15th century. At the time, however, the communication channels closed because of the outbreak of the Hussite revolution and led in the Polish milieu only to the reception and subsequent development of anti-Hussite texts, in which also preaching texts played a significant role.