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**OH, BESTIA SYNAGOGA!  
THE REPRESENTATION OF JEWS  
IN CZECH SERMONS AT THE TURN OF THE 17<sup>TH</sup>  
AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

Among the most progressive genres of the Early Modern Czech literature was homiletics. The allure of the Baroque preaching especially lied in a performative character of its rendition (elocution); moreover, a gradual spread of literacy among the population of the Czech lands secured popularity also to the printed collections of the Sunday and festive sermons or occasional prints used for special events. In Baroque homiletics, connection between its persuasive and aesthetic function was a guarantee of its far-reaching impact on the society and at the same time of its influence on forming its ethic, religious and cultural values.

The following paragraphs focus on an area which has played in the Czech homiletics of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century rather a marginal role so far. The study discusses the ways the characters of Jews are construed on the pages of several, mainly Sunday Czech-language postils and trace the tension between the real Jewish community of the time and the so called textual, fictional or literary Jews. The main aim of this study is thus to explore the discursive reality, that is, the then concept of “Jewish presence in the midst of the Christian world”.

In the paper, the argumentation mainly follows the propositions made by Jeremy Cohen, who, using medieval texts, showed that in the Christian literature, the Jews were for centuries depicted according to how a Christian learning wanted them to be and not according to the reality.<sup>1</sup> To a considerable degree, this premise can be applied even to the corpus of Czech sermons at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Christian theology perceived Jews as witnesses proving the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible (in Christian terminol-

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, *Living letters of the Law*.

ogy, the Old Testament); such was their theological-historical part as already defined by St. Augustine.<sup>2</sup>

In view of these facts, besides demonstrating the continuity of this medieval perception of the Jews, we will also try to turn the attention to the current approaches to the Jewish community, reflecting the social situation of the time. The vast majority of the Czech sermons where the Jews appear in the form of brief mentions, invectives or exempla, continue in the tradition of conventional preaching methods. Texts paying more detailed attention to the Jews, or even using some elements of Judaism as a subtle rhetorical concept are incomparably less frequent and therefore we will leave them out of our discussion as they represent a certain anomaly in the context of Czech literary production.

Early Modern preachers perceived the Jews as a marginal group. On the pages of approximately a dozen mainly Sunday Czech-language postils which I analysed, the Jews were given minimal attention even though after the Thirty Years' War, they constituted almost the only legally tolerated non-Catholic group in the country. Hand in hand with the growing Catholic triumphalism also grew the pressure on the Jewish community as well as efforts aiming at its reform, separation and limiting the number of its members.<sup>3</sup> Homiletic texts at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century thus reflect the era of the so called bureaucratic anti-Semitism which culminated in tightened anti-Jewish legislation (the Familiant Laws and the Translocation Rescript of 1726–1727) which had a devastating impact on the Jewish community in the Czech lands.<sup>4</sup> Especially since the 1690s, characteristic of its dramatic case of a “made-up” Jewish martyr and convert Šimon Abeles (allegedly killed by his father *ex odio fidei*, that is in hatred of the Christian faith), efforts increased to continuously exert influence upon the Jews and convert them to Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

Traditional portrayal of the Jews which had its origin in the medieval hagiography was petrified in the domestic homiletics by repeatedly quoted miraculous stories – miracula – usually used as exempla.<sup>6</sup> Miracula became the main narrative texts in which an Early Modern Catholic believer could have encountered a rather diverse range of Jewish characters, from the die-hard enemies of Christianity to potential converts.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Blumenkrantz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins*; Fredriksen, “Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei,” 299–324; Fredriksen, “Divine Justice and Human Freedom,” 29–54; van Oort, “Jews and Judaism in Augustine’s Sermones,” 243–265.

<sup>3</sup> Putík, “The Prague Jewish Community,” 4–140.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 29–40.

<sup>5</sup> Carlebach, *The Death of Simon Abeles*; Soukup, “Šimon Abeles,” 346–371; Louthan, *Converting Bohemia*, 300–316; Greenblat, *To Tell Their Children*, 161–165; Greenblat, “Saint and Countersaint,” 61–80.

<sup>6</sup> Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 169–235. For a case study see Marcus, “Images of the Jews,” 247–256.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive overview of conversions from Judaism see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*.

Among the wealth of these texts, especially popular was, for example, the miraculum on the purported desecration of the hosts which took place in the upper Hungarian town of Pressburg in 1591. In this miraculum, the Czech preachers describe a dramatic profanation of a Eucharist allegedly perpetrated by the Bohemian Jews. According to the story, a certain Jew Lev of Prague, a convert to Christianity, supposedly stole three hosts and after a short stay in Nikolsburg, the seat of the Moravian Chief Rabbi, sold them to his former fellow believers in Pressburg. When the Jews tried to torture the host, a lightning killed some of those present. As a punishment for their blasphemy, the rest was arrested and executed by impalement.

Different versions of this legend were inspired by the German graphic sheet by the Nuremberg printer Lucas Mayer.<sup>8</sup> The renowned Jesuit poet Friedrich Bridel (1619–1680) even put this miraculum into verse and included it in a section on Eucharist in his versed Catechism.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Jesuit Matěj Václav Šteyer (1630–1692) or, in a later period, Bohumír Josef Bilovský (1659–1725) who quoted this miraculum in their sermons on Maundy Thursday<sup>10</sup> respectively on the Feast of Corpus Christi<sup>11</sup> used it to illustrate the Catholic Eucharist doctrine and in this way stressed one of the crucial constituents of pietas Austriaca.<sup>12</sup> The use of exempla thus also had a significant dimension of confessionalization or recatholization. It cannot be ruled out that this exemplum was chosen by the preachers also for its regional context. As a matter of interest, let us add that this miraculum can be found even in the handbook for missionaries and formators of Jewish converts by the Hebraist and Jesuit Franz Haselbauer (1677–1756) from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> In a missionary catechism, printed in German and also in mirror Hebrew characters showing elements of Judendeutsch (Yiddish), this anti-Jewish narrative plays an important role. It represents a cautionary tale about insincere conversion whose function was to deter a Jewish neophyte from such a false conversion and at the same time it was to become a part of his memory and mediated experience.

In a traditional Catholic homiletics, the Jews were repeatedly characterised as “unfaithful (i.e. unbelieving) and obstinate” because they committed “the most grievous of all sins when the Messiah came into the world and the

<sup>8</sup> Strauss, *The German Single-leaf*, 703.

<sup>9</sup> Bridel, *Básnické dílo*, 377–379.

<sup>10</sup> Šteyer, *Postila katolická*, 210–211.

<sup>11</sup> Bilovský, *Cantator cygnus*, 360.

<sup>12</sup> The miraculum is also mentioned by Beckovský, *Katolického živobytí nepohmut-edlný základ*, 374–375; most of the authors draw from Antonius Davrousius, *Florum exemplorum sive Catechismi historialis*, 122–124.

<sup>13</sup> Franciscus Haselbauer, *Kurtzer Inhalt deß Christlichen Gesetzes*, 176–177. About Haselbauer see Segert and Beránek, *Orientalistik an der Prager Universität*; Kva-pil, „Die deutsch-böhmische Barockliteratur,” 65–72; Maciejko, „The Rabbi and the Jesuit,” 147–184.

Jews refused to accept him as their Redeemer.”<sup>14</sup> Characterization of the Jews as a religious group reflects traditional religious-polemical topoi – the Jewish law is described as yoke; the Jews are predestined to condemnation. Motive of damnation, resulting from the rejection of Christ, repeatedly appears in the sermons like a refrain.

In this context, the sermons of the Jesuit Antonín Koniáš (1691–1760) seem therefore rather surprising.<sup>15</sup> Koniáš, notorious in the Czech cultural space for his missionary work among the non-Catholics as well as for burning of heretical books, explicitly verbalizes in these sermons Augustine’s theological concept of Jewish presence in the midst of the Christian world and even invites the listeners to pray for Jews.

Holy father Augustine says about the Jewish nation: That prophesy is now fulfilled that a greater number of repudiated Jews will serve to a smaller number of chosen Christians: since now the Jews serve us, Christians; they praise the Old Testament and as our servants they place the Old Testament into our hands and bring it to us, and we then learn from their own books that Christ is the true God and the promised Messiah<sup>16</sup> ... Since Christ, our Saviour from the Abraham’s line, is of a Jewish ancestry, as is the Virgin Mary and all holy apostles, let us draw a lesson from this – that we are not to scorn the Jewish race nor cause it any harm but ardently pray for these people that the God would enlighten them with the Holy Spirit and let them thus know the true Messiah. If their souls cannot be won with words, let us win them with good example.<sup>17</sup>

Yet let us linger a bit longer on the traditional anti-Jewish portrayals. If one was to name one of the most frequently used topoi than it surely would be the symbolic pair of the Synagogue and the Church (*Synagoga et Ecclesia*) which in Baroque homiletics conveys a comprehensive message on the clear-cut dichotomy and a clear distribution of the positive and negative attributes. A shift in the theological interpretation of the relation between Judaism and Christianity gradually manifested itself in the iconography of the Synagogue as represented in the fine arts, in her gestures, clothing or movements. Some depictions contain explicitly negative features: a broken banner staff, a crown falling from her head, blindfolded eyes signifying spiritual blindness. There are cases where the Synagogue is depicted with her eyes open yet her gaze is full of indignation, even contempt for the crucified Christ. The Synagogue did not only embody the Old Testament and the Jewish inability to accept Christian-

<sup>14</sup> Šteyer, *Postila katolická*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> There exist only Czech studies about this preacher. See Sládek, “O skryších převzácných darů ducha,” 81–91; about his anti-Jewish attitudes see Arava-Novotná, *The Bydžov’s “Israelites,”* 2.

<sup>16</sup> Koniáš, *Vejtažní naučení*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Koniáš, *Vejtažní naučení*, 52.

ity, it also personified hatred towards it.<sup>18</sup> This was an important interpretation shift which can be traced also in the texts used by the local Czech preachers.

The motive of a fierce Synagogue (*bestia Synagoga*) can be found in the works of many Bohemian preachers, most often in discourses found in the Passion cycles which provided space for emotive description of the Christ's Passion as well as the motives of the other protagonists featuring in the whole set of Easter plays.<sup>19</sup> The juxtaposition of the Synagogue and the Church was most often and in the most ingenious manner used in the sermons written by the diocese priest Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka (1688–1746/47). In several of his sermons he elaborates on the image of Christ as a repudiated groom, abandoned by his wife: “The Jewish Synagogue gave a letter [Hebr. *get*, it is divorce document] to her heavenly groom in which she repudiated him” and instead begged Pilate to release from prison the blackguard Barabbas she fell in love with. The Christ's new bride therefore became the Church.<sup>20</sup>

On the mount Zion, the last supper took place, the wedding glee of the loveliest new groom Lord Jesus with his beloved bride, the Catholic Church, after he had been repudiated with a letter given to him by his mean beloved, the Jewish Synagogue. On the mount of Cavalry, the wine mixed with gall indeed proved a very bitter and disgusting sleep remedy which the ungodly Jewess gave to her beloved ...<sup>21</sup>

According to the preacher, it was this malevolent behaviour that caused the repudiation of the Jewish people and lead to the choice of the new bride – the Church. The allegory of marriage and divorce, rivalry between the Synagogue and the Church, the tension between the Jews and the Christians represent in the texts of the Baroque preachers a historical turning-point which, according to the Christian authorities, was to happen at Golgotha and which unequivocally determined the inferior status of the Jews in history.<sup>22</sup>

However, when compared with the Easter and Passion plays, the anti-Jewish tone in the Czech homiletics is significantly hushed. While the popular dramas were usually free from any tolerant aspect,<sup>23</sup> homiletics, whose designated space was the church, tried to avoid of vulgar anti-Judaism. On the one

<sup>18</sup> Faü, *L'image des Juifs*, 29–54; Lipton, *Dark Mirror*, 42–43, 119–122.

<sup>19</sup> For instance Jan Kleklar (1639–1703), and Jan Táborský (1696–1748). Kleklar, *Semen verbi Dei*, 438–443; Táborský, *Tria tabernacula*, 101–102.

<sup>20</sup> Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článěk*, 258–259.

<sup>21</sup> Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článěk*, 479.

<sup>22</sup> For a general overview of this theological imagination see Cohen, *Christ Killers*.

<sup>23</sup> Havelka, *Komika českého*, 152–171. For a detailed example describing Bavarian *Passionspiel* (performed for the first time in 1634 in Oberammergau) see Cohen, *Christ Killers*, 211–229. For other cases of anti-Jewish drama (Passion Plays) see Martin, *Representations of Jews*, 33–105.

hand, preaching actively spread anti-Jewish stereotypes, on the other hand, it restrained and moderated them and thus adjusted the traditional – religiously motivated negative portrayal of the Jews.

As we will demonstrate in the following part, demographic rise of the Jewish community in the Czech lands and a social tension even had the opposite effect on the domestic preaching and forced the preachers to adopt a critical stance towards these phenomena. The portrayal of the Jewish community was not always shaped just on the grounds of medieval pretexts but also in confrontation with actual problems encountered within the society. If we want to explore how the Jews were represented in Czech preaching, we must not forget to take into account the demographic stratification and distribution of the Jewish population in the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia. A brief glance at the Baroque postils reveals that the regional origin of a preacher, the place where he was active and possible presence of a Jewish community all influenced the frequency of themes related to the Jews in his works. Preachers mostly active in Prague where at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century lived more than 11 thousand Jews, that is, almost a half of all Jewish population in Bohemia,<sup>24</sup> could have more serious reasons to thematize the Jews in their discourse.

This is certainly true of the Cyriac<sup>25</sup> František Štěpán Náchodský (1676–1721) who joined his career with Prague and paid unusual attention to the local Jews. He is one of the few preachers who used Jewish themes (e.g. ethnographically accurate description of circumcision or Jewish feasts) to elaborate on a wider homiletic concept.<sup>26</sup> The fact that his two-volume postil *Sancta curiositas* includes a relatively large number of texts regarding the Jews and Judaism is closely related to the location of the Cyriac convent of The Holy Cross in the Old Town adjacent to the Prague Jewish ghetto. Since the beginning of their mission in Prague, the canons regular came into everyday contact with the Jewish inhabitants and their coexistence was not without conflicts. These disputes were ignited, for example, by arguments about stole fees, of which were the friars, due to expanding Jewish households, deprived, or by kosher abattoir and loud meat markets which lessened convent's comfort and disrupted peace on Sundays and during feasts.<sup>27</sup> In this context it is not surprising that Náchodský repeatedly commented on the situation of the Prague Jews.

<sup>24</sup> Putík, “The Prague Jewish Community,” 8; Wolf, “Statistik der Juden in Böhmen,” 819–82, here 820; Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> The Canons Regular of the Order of the Holy Cross with Red Heart (Canonicus Ordo crucigerorum cum rubeo corde), commonly called Cyriacs, are a Roman Catholic religious order. In 1256, the order was invited to enter the Czech Lands by the king Přemysl Otakar II.

<sup>26</sup> For ethnographic literature about the Jews see Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes*.

<sup>27</sup> Novotný, *U staropražských cyriáků*, 66, 69, 74–75; 110, 123, 182.

However, strict evaluation of social conditions could often be heard also in the sermons of the village preachers. Criticism of close relationships between the aristocracy and the Jews can be found in sermons severely attacking the nobility for failing to abide by Christian teaching, for their easy way of life and superficial piety. These texts not only became a regular part of domestic preaching anthologies but, as Magda Teter proved in her research, they were even more prominent in the homiletic works of the Polish clerics.<sup>28</sup>

In the Early Modern era, the situation in Poland significantly differed from that in the Czech lands. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth where in the 18<sup>th</sup> century lived as many as 750 thousand Jews,<sup>29</sup> the ruler's status was significantly weaker than in the Habsburg monarchy and the connections of the Polish nobility with the Jewish community was therefore traditionally much stronger. The nobility used the services of wealthy leaders of the Jewish community and in return granted them privileges that would be undreamt of within the borders of the Habsburg state. The saying „Polonia Purgatorium Clericorum, Infernus Rusticorum, Paradisum Iudeorum”<sup>30</sup> would not apply to the Czech-Moravian space, however, this does not mean that similar problems were not encountered also by the local clerics. It is also thanks to these clerics that we have a record that the nobility used the capabilities and especially the capital of the wealthier Jews.

One example of such a cleric can be the priest active in the South Bohemia Ondřej František Jakub de Waldt (1683–1752) who in the town of Strakonice delivered a sermon fiercely condemning the liaisons between the nobility and the court Jews (*Hoffaktoren, Hofjuden*):

Each Haus-Jud in the house is like a devil pestering a man; both are unhappy fellows, both smell of a billy-goat and slyness, both only care about gain – one about the worldly one, the other one about the eternal one, one cares about possessions, the other about a soul, the one sooner or later deprives his lord of his earthly possessions, the other eventually of his redemption ... Jews are welcome by many, by men and women alike ... many nobles treat the Jews like lords yet many treat them like slaves.<sup>31</sup>

A similarly harsh criticism can be found in the works of the aforementioned vicar and deacon in Uherské Hradiště (Moravia) Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka, an ardent critic of élite circles of society. He even calls the Jews “privileged scoundrels.” In his opinion, the nobility tolerates the Jews on their estates because of the profit they bring them, and the court Jews exert greater influence over them than their confessors. Laštovka points out that the nobility demands money from the Jews and because of that the Jews even more exploit their sub-

<sup>28</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 80–98.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 97

<sup>31</sup> Waldt, *Chválořeč neb kázání*, 251.

jects through usury and other “crooked deals.” This is why he likens the Jews to the moths in a fur coat.<sup>32</sup>

The Czech preachers were not so much concerned with the business liaisons with the Jews but rather with the fact that the Church was not able to control and regulate it in any way. The object of the social criticism was therefore especially the nobility, not so much the Jews themselves. Comparison with Poland shows that at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the tension between the nobility and the clergy can be viewed as a certain invariable valid in a wider geographical space.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast, the financial profit and business intercourses with the Jews were defended by the already mentioned Prague preacher Náchodský. He describes himself as a patron of the Jews and admits that the princes can permit Jewish usury so that the Christians themselves would not have to soil their hands with it. Moreover, if usury was banned for good, it might have led to other social problems, e.g. to robberies and exploitation of the poor. According to his reasoning, the nobility and the municipality are only to control that the usury is, if possible, fair and the interests not too high.<sup>34</sup>

By his overall stance, Náchodský openly rejects extirpative politics which was one of the main topics of the Prague municipality since the 1680 and which culminated with the real (though temporary) expulsion of the Jews by the empress Maria Theresa in 1744/1745.<sup>35</sup> Among one of the motives for his defence of the Jews, Náchodský mentions also economic reasons which surely must have played a crucial part in the decision making of the town officials who were afraid of losing gains flowing from the Prague Jewish community.

However, this does not mean that this preacher was not in any way critical towards the Jews. On the contrary, his texts contain many anti-Jewish invectives and negative stereotypes including accusation of ritual murders of the Christian children.<sup>36</sup> He therefore recommends punishing every transgression against the Christian religion as severely as possible.<sup>37</sup> Thus he condemns everything that would transform the inferior status of the Jewish community and would harm the majority society as well as disrupt the social hierarchy.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 40, 187–188.

<sup>33</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Bergl, “Die Ausweisung der Juden,” 263–331; most recently see Guesnet, “Textures of Intercession,” 355–375.

<sup>36</sup> However, it must be stressed that the Czech sermons only rarely contain accusations of ritual murder. It almost seems as if the Czech and Moravian preachers were trying to avoid mentioning this theme in their sermons. Compared to Poland, there are almost no records about ritual murder cases in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bohemia and Moravia. For the situation in Poland, see Wijaczka, “Ritual Murder Accusation,” 195–210.

<sup>37</sup> Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> For medieval roots of the concept of social order, see recently Tolan, “Of Milk and Blood,” 139–149.

When on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1689 a fire broke out in Prague and the whole Jewish town was reduced to ashes, some wealthy Jews were allowed a temporary shelter in the Christian houses. However, the Church uncompromisingly rejected it, fearing it would disrupt the given social order and the whole thing would lead to forbidden and unacceptably close contacts between the two communities. The archbishop Jan Fridrich of Valdštejn (1642–1694) even forbade the priests to visit the houses which were also inhabited by the Jews, to celebrate masses there in the private chapels and to administer any sacraments, including baptisms and the last rites.<sup>39</sup> The archbishop's stance was also shared by Náchodský who complained in one of his sermons that after the fire, shelter was granted to the wealthy Jews rather than to poor Christians.<sup>40</sup>

The preachers thus generally strived to maintain the existing social conditions and were strongly opposed even to the slightest of hints pointing at the possible emancipation of the Jewish community. For every deviation from the established social order they put the blame especially on the nobility which, in their eyes, acted as the protector of the Jews. By its lax attitude towards religious life and disrespecting the Church authorities, the nobility allegedly gave bad example to the ordinary believers. In the Bohemian homiletics, bad Christians also become the subject of criticism, surprisingly put in contrast with the Jewish population, as will be demonstrated in the following part.

Another one of the popular stylistic devices was the figure of contrast “Christians worse than the Jews.” As proved by Magda Teter, Polish preachers at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century complained that Christ's suffering caused now by the bad Catholics is much greater than that inflicted earlier by the treacherous Jews and heretics.<sup>41</sup> This topos can be interpreted as the manifestation of the frustration the Catholic clergy experienced due to the gradual loss of their influence and power. Also in the Czech and the Moravian postils, the Christian piety of the time is compared with the eagerness of the Jews, Muslims or other non-Catholics.<sup>42</sup> The local preachers fulminated that the believers do not pay attention to the sermons and are very lax in attending religious ceremonies. Repeated moans that people do not honour Sunday and prefer entertainment instead naturally needs to be perceived as a literary cliché common to the preachers all over Europe. Yet having said this, some details can nevertheless reveal remarkable regional differences.

As becomes clear from the local Church accounts and synodal regulations, in Poland, the Jewish arendators, that is, the leaseholders of distilleries, breweries and pubs were accused of allowing the villagers to rather sit in a pub than

<sup>39</sup> Putík, “The Prague Jewish Community,” 15–17.

<sup>40</sup> Náchodský, *Sancta curiositas*, 52.

<sup>41</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 59–79.

<sup>42</sup> For instance Bilovský, *Pia quadragesima aeterna veneratione*, quoted according to Kopecký *Starí slezští kazatelé*, 110; Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 141, 143, 144, 229, 253, 299.

in the church.<sup>43</sup> Surprisingly, such invectives are not to be found in the works of the Czech preachers even though the system of Jewish leases was so common after the Thirty Years' War that it had to be repeatedly addressed by the local rabbinic authorities.<sup>44</sup> The explicit accusation of the Jews of having their share in the alcoholism of the population appears much later, in the sources and literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup>

However, Baroque homiletics did not portray the Jews only in a negative light: the sins and lukewarm faith of the Christian believers provided the preachers with inspiration to depict an impressive contrast, using a comparison with the religious rigorousness of the Jews and the heretics.<sup>46</sup> Tomáš Xaverius Laštovka, for example, writes:

You go to the church, and likewise the Jew goes to his synagogue, the Turk to his mosque and also the heretic to his house of prayer [*bethauz*] and there they all stay much longer than you – several hours while you are there but half an hour ... Do you observe feasts? So does the Jew and the Turk and they are much better at it than you are. The Jew on Shabbat [*šábes*] does not touch any money, refuses to work, but you do whatever you like; you do not care; a feast or an ordinary day, it is of small difference to you with the little exception you go to a church for a little while. Do you fast? So does the Jew and the Turk, and much better than you, for they have much stricter fasts; they do not eat all day long and you deem yourself a saint when you avoid meat during fast. What is then, I say, the difference between us and the Jews, the Turks and the heretics?<sup>47</sup>

While Christians work on Sundays and feasts, the Jews carefully observe their religious duties. The preacher criticized such behaviour of his parishioners and partially blamed the nobility for it because it failed to secure rest during feast days among their subjects.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, we can conclude that the Czech preaching at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not significantly anti-Jewish and the Jewish themes occurring in sermons were rather marginal. Medieval anti-Jewish legends aside, religious anti-Judaism was moderated in sermons; instead, it was the social criticism aimed at ruling classes which found its verbal outlet in this medium.

In spite of the fact that almost every Baroque postil contains anti-Jewish invectives and passages which were fully intended, didactic and were a conscious part of the preacher's persuasive method, it cannot be simplistically

<sup>43</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 60–63.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 34–35.

<sup>45</sup> However in protocols of the Episcopal consistory in Olomouc we can find several complaints against Jewish inns which attracted Christians during lent. See Zuber, *Osudy moravské*, 484, 486.

<sup>46</sup> Teter, *Jews and Heretics*, 76–79.

<sup>47</sup> Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 460–461. Other examples see also pp. 394, 119.

<sup>48</sup> Laštovka, *Čtvrtý článek*, 463.

claimed that these were always displays of the anti-Judaism and the Judeophobia of the time. In rare examples, like in the ethnographical passages found in the postils by Štěpán František Náchodský which he derived from the Hebraistic manuals of the time, we can even find a conscious effort to educate the preacher's audience.<sup>49</sup>

As shown in the printed texts produced at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the pulpit was far from trumpeting anti-Jewish repressive politics; it, in fact, seems to downplay negative stereotypes rather than endorse them. Not a single sermon is to be found which would call for the Jews to be expelled from the Czech lands or would demand limiting their numbers or segregation which legislatively took place at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, the homiletics significantly differed from the official state politics as well as from the polemical texts, pamphlets and leaflets, country fair songs and popular dramas which channelled the social need "to transgress taboo" as well as xenophobia and drastic comic.

## Summary

The main aim of this study is to present how early modern preaching in the Czech lands shaped the image of the local Jewish community in Christian eyes at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Bohemian and Moravian preachers, drawing from medieval literature, were fundamentally influenced by the traditional theological concept of Jews as a living witness to the Christian truth. At the same time, Baroque sermons reused medieval exempla and miracula preserving typical anti-Jewish narratives. Due to the increasing number of Bohemian and Moravian Jewry at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the socio-economical tension between Christian and Jewish communities, catholic preachers pursued contemporary topics and criticized unpermitted contacts, allegedly leading to the inferior status of Christians. On the other hand, these critical notes usually were targeted primarily on Christian believers and their laxity in the observance of religious life, as well as ignorance of social hierarchy. Although the Czech Catholic sermons constructed the hostile perception of Jews, the preachers endeavoured to avoid vulgar anti-Judaism and partly smoothed popular anti-Jewish sentiments.

**Keywords:** Image of Jews, Early Modern Homiletics, Catholic Sermons, Representation of Jews in Literature, Anti-Jewish Rhetoric, History of Jews in the Czech Lands

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<sup>49</sup> In *Sancta curiositas* the descriptions related to circumcision or the Sabbath rituals were to show the harmless nature of Judaism, in the Christian minds often surrounded by superstition. This part of his pulpit oratory is examined in papers by Soukup, "Obraz Židů," 72–106, here 93–99; Soukup, "Sancta curiositas. Židovská obřízka v kázání Štěpána Františka Náchodského," conference talk (forthcoming paper).

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