

FIVE PRAGUE GERMAN „VICTORY SERMONS“
ADDRESSED TO THE VANQUISHER OF THE TURKS,
EMPEROR LEOPOLD I, BETWEEN 1683 AND 1688

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These victory sermons were held in Prague's St. Vitus Cathedral in a desperate period of time when the very existence of the House of Hapsburg was gravely threatened. For years the dynasty had had no male heirs, until Empress Eleonore finally gave birth to two heirs to the throne in 1678 and 1685. The overwhelming forces of the Turks were before Vienna in 1683; the Turks remained for years in that virually „ungovernable“ Hungary of the Turkish fortresses, the rebellion of Emerich Tököly (1682), the „malcontents“, the rebellious-treasonable nobility with its open and hidden attempts on the Emperor (this with the knowledge of his brother-in-law, Louis XIV of France). Only in the context of this situation which seemed hopeless to the people of Prague, Vienna and the hereditary lands between Bohemia and the Adriatic can these sermons of Canon Johannes Becker (1649—1710; from 1701 Bishop of Königrätz) be understood — as ringing appeals to see it through to the end. Their aim was to arouse, to show that Leopold I visibly enjoyed „God's blessing“; that his was not directly to intervene in the war as commander, but it was his duty to abide in prayer for the preservation of throne, altar, *Reich* and Church. Along the lines of the „typology concept“ handed down from the Middle Ages, the Old and New Testament are constantly compared, the crisis presented as „ordained by God“ and thus with a predictable final victory as outcome, and the whole delivered with all the verve of baroque eloquence.