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*STATUS INNOCENTIAE*

The–State–of–Innocence Myth in Late Medieval Religious  
Contestation Movements

The idea of a return to old, bygone times known to have ensured people a happy undisturbed existence, to the times when people committed no evil and felt no hatred for anybody, was known already in the Antiquity. In the Middle Ages it was referred to by word of mouth and in written form: from *belles-lettres*, historical works presenting the ideal beginnings of nations and states (the motif of countries of milk and honey), to works written by scientists. The Middle Ages drew on the Judeo–Christian tradition, in particular on the book of *Genesis* which presented the history of paradise on earth and the first parents of the human beings living there. Later, especially in times close to later generations of writers, the myth of the sinless, innocent life which the first people led in paradise until they committed the original sin occupied the minds of learned theologians, philosophers of history, creators of various concepts concerning the great history of the Church and the world. It sounded topical in prophecies based on the *Apocalypse*, especially those that referred to the concept of Joachim of Fiore (†1202)<sup>1</sup>, a concept known in a general

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<sup>1</sup> The literature dealing with the concept of Joachim of Fiore, especially with the way it was received in the 13th–15th centuries, is enormous and is steadily increasing. There are bibliographies of works on Joachimism and there is also a specialist periodical "Florensia. Bolletino del Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti" (San Giovanni di Fiore; it has been appearing since 1987). I will therefore mention here only these works which serve as a general introduction to the history of prophetic, especially chiliastic (millenarist) movements referring to Joachimism: N. C o h n, *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, London 1957; i d e m, *Das neue irdische Paradies. Revolutionärer Millenarismus und mystischer Anarchismus*

outline, which foresaw the coming of a thousand-year rule by the Holy Spirit, an era that would make humankind happy.

The medieval social and political theories referring to the original sinless state are the subject of Bernard Töpfer's recently published extensive, highly erudite monograph<sup>2</sup>, a result of many years of research work. In this article I will refer partly to the reflections contained in Töpfer's work (they are brought up to the end of the 14th century) and, to a greater extent, to other studies by this German scholar<sup>3</sup> in order to discuss not so much the scientific concepts as the collective beliefs and ideas of the communities that were rejected and condemned by the authorities of religious majorities. The state-of-innocence myth, with which the members of heterodox movements identified themselves and to which they kept referring, expressed their opposition to the existing reality and defined their place in the world of their dreams.

I have no intention of covering the whole subject denoted by the title, nor will I attempt to outline it, but let us have a look at it from the point of view of two ideological currents that were condemned by the Roman Catholic Church and from the point of view of a current which represented a rejected, repressed minority of the Czech Hussite movement.

I. The state-of-innocence motif appeared in the Franciscan Order and among lay people linked to the Friars Minor in the second half of the 13th and early 14th centuries. It was raised in the animated disputes held in those days about the interpretation and implementation of monastic poverty, a principle which was binding on Friars. Let us recall that a current promoting a rigorous, uncompromising interpretation of poverty in the spirit of the original rule set down by Francis of Assisi and by his testament emerged in the Franciscan Order in the Romance countries in the 13th century. The zealots, called Spirituals

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*in mittelalterlichen Europa*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg 1988. The presence of the state-of-innocence myth in millenarist movements is also discussed by J. Delumeau, *Mille ans de bonheur. Une histoire du paradis*, Paris 1995. The book is part of Delumeau's cycle of monographs devoted to the history of paradise.

<sup>2</sup> B. Töpfer, *Urzustand und Sündenfall in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschafts- und Staatstheorie*, Stuttgart 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See especially: *Hoffnungen auf Erneuerung der paradischen Zustandes /status innocentiae/ — ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des hussitischen Adamitentums*, in: *Eschatologie und Hussitismus*, ed. A. Patschovsky und F. Šmahel, Praha 1999, pp. 169–184

(*spirituales*), rejected the possibility of the brethren and the order owning any possessions, and adopted the formula of *usus pauper*, "a poor and scanty use" of means indispensable for life. They based their attitude on the example of absolute poverty (*altissima paupertas*) set by Christ and the Apostles<sup>4</sup>. This was opposed by those circles which favoured a milder interpretation of the rule, an interpretation taking account of changed conditions and the requirements of the apostolic mission. It is known that this trend was supported by the papacy, which had for a long time striven for a compromise, but at the end of the 13th century it adopted a stand hostile to the zealots. The situation was aggravated by the determined stance of the Spirituals who not only recognized the Franciscan "Gospel-based poverty rule" as the highest monastic value but raised it to the rank of a fundamental, unchangeable religious value.

The Franciscan authors who upheld the rule of absolute poverty drew the state-of-innocence motif from the *Bible*. Petrus Joannis Olivi († 1298), a theologian of the Friars Minor of Provence, whose commentary on the *Apocalypse* was later to exert an enormous influence on monastic contesters, pointed out that the way of life of Christ and the Apostles meant that they lived in a state of innocence<sup>5</sup>. Their example became a heritage of supporters of voluntary poverty from the time of St. Francis of Assisi who revived the apostolic way of life. Ubertin of Casale († ca. 1329), an outstanding Italian Spiritual, stressed that the paradisiac state of innocence was a state which did not know possession of goods, it knew only their use<sup>6</sup>. The state-of-innocence motif appeared also as an aspect of the ideal state in reflections inspired by the *Apocalypse*.

The Franciscans, especially those who were deeply affected by the ferment caused by the abandonment of the original principle of poverty by their order, were susceptible to prophetic concepts and prophecies of various types and origins. The ma-

<sup>4</sup> M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty. The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order 1210-1323*, London 1961. See also T. Manteuffel, *Nascita dell'eresia. Gli adepti della povertà volontaria nel medioevo*, Firenze 1975.

<sup>5</sup> B. Töpfer, *Urzustand und Sündenfall*, pp. 417 ff.; R. Manselli, *La "Lectura super Apokalipsis" di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi. Ricerche sull'escatologismo medioevale*, Roma 1955; D. Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty*, Philadelphia 1989.

<sup>6</sup> B. Töpfer, *Urzustand und Sündenfall*, pp. 424 ff.

majority of the Franciscans referred to the tripartite philosophical concept of Joachim of Fiore, who divided the history of the Church and humankind into three great ages, the last of which, a good, blessed age, was yet to come. The Spirituals modified Joachim's prophecies in such a way that, without losing their universal purport, they referred to the situation of the Franciscan Order and the dispute over poverty. But Petrus Joannis Olivi avoided referring to concrete facts and situations. He spoke about the rule of the Antichrist on earth, about the persecution of just people, about the calamities and disasters that would destroy most Christians. He prophesied that a group of chosen people would be saved and would triumph in the seventh, last stage of the Church's history. The great popularity which the works of this Provençal theologian–prophet enjoyed among the Franciscan zealots was accompanied by a natural tendency to make his rather vague opinions more concrete. At the beginning of the 14th century lay brethren from St. Francis' third order, called Beguins<sup>7</sup> in the south of France, joined the Spirituals. Since most of them were ordinary people, in any case people without theological knowledge, they knew the rudiments of Petrus Joannis Olivi's teachings from stories spread by word of mouth or from lectures addressed to them. They knew about the seven stages in the history of the Church, about the presence of the Antichrist and the imminent apocalyptic events. Like their brethren from the first order, they began to identify the prophesied disasters and oppression of the faithful with the persecution they were experiencing. Interrogated and judged by inquisitors, including such famous ones as the Dominican Bernard Gui, they expressed the conviction that the persecution of the just would soon be over. Catastrophic events would destroy all enemies of evangelical poverty, including representatives of the highest ecclesiastical hierarchy and renegades from the Franciscan order (that is brethren from the party of Moderates)<sup>8</sup>. A general conversion would then follow thanks to "spiritual men" (from the group of the Spirituals and the Beguins) and the new, reborn Church would triumph.

<sup>7</sup> R. Manselli, *Spirituali e beghini in Provenza*, Roma 1955; R. E. Lerner, *Writing and Resistance among Beguins of Languedoc and Catalonia*, in: *Heresy and Literacy /1000–1530/*, ed. P. Biller and A. Hudson, Cambridge 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'Inquisiteur*, ed. G. Mollat, vol. I, Paris 1964, p. 146.

In his vision of the seventh, blessed stage of the history of the Church and the world, Petrus Joannis Olivi prophesied that the time would come when the chosen would live in peace and bliss and would participate in the glory of a heavenly Jerusalem on earth. From his learned vision, full of metaphors and symbolic figures, the Beguins adopted a stock of relatively simple ideas. According to them, the future Church, including all its faithful, would be good, gentle, humble and faithful. Relating the views of the Beguins in his inquisitional handbook, Bernard Gui quotes an opinion according to which after the death of the Antichrist and general conversion, "the whole world will be so good and gentle that there will be no evil and no sin among the people living then, except perhaps for some venial sins; everything will be used in common, nobody will attack anybody or induce another person to sin, for great universal love will prevail and there will be one flock and one shepherd"<sup>9</sup>. As we can see, this is a vision of the triumph of the Franciscan ideals, the realization of which was to benefit the saved, renewed humankind. The most important elements of this vision should be evaluated in the general context of the victory of "the rule of evangelical poverty", when all goods will be used in common. This state is identical with the above-mentioned *altissima paupertas*, known from the works of Franciscan authors<sup>10</sup>. Such absolute poverty is a condition for mutual love between people, for general kindness and the coming of a sinless state, which will not yet be perfect for its quality will be reduced by "some venial sins". Most probably, the idea was that the reward on earth could not be compared to the perfection of the eternal salvation after death. This was probably a reference to the life of the first Christian communities, which though idealized, was not regarded as sinless.

In the Beguins' prophetic notions, which were probably thoughtlessly adopted from the rigoristic brethren of the first order, chastity was elevated, for it was one of the fundamental values of monastic life. It was connected with the disappearance of violence in the future perfect society which will be carrying the

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 150, 152: ... *et totus mundus erit bonus et benignus, ita quod nulla malitia vel peccatum erit in hominibus illius status, nisi forte peccata venialia in aliquibus; et omnia erunt communia quoad usum et non erit aliquis qui offendat alium vel sollicitet ad peccatum, quia maximus amor erit inter eos et erit tunc unum ovile et unus pastor.*

<sup>10</sup> B. Töpfer, *Urzustand und Sündenfall*, pp. 417 ff.

Franciscan ideals into effect. According to one of the Languedoc tertiaries who together with his co-religionists on trial presented a vision of the future “faithful, blessed” world, this new world will be so perfect that a young virgin will be able to go on pilgrimage alone from Rome to St. Jacob of Compostela without anybody trying to lead her astray<sup>11</sup>. This modest tertiary who confessed his prophecies-based faith to the inquisitional tribunal was convinced that the awaited future world would be a world of innocence. The Franciscan *status innocentiae* which was on the margin of the earlier disputes over poverty acquired clearer contours during the time when the condemned views and their propagators were suppressed by force. It became a reflection of dreams about the triumph of beloved, ruthlessly persecuted ideas.

II. The state-of-innocence myth had a different foundation and a different content in the ideas of the adherents of what was known as the Heresy of the Free Spirit. The heresy was believed to owe its origin to the pantheistic doctrine of Amalric of Bène (†1209). Some historians regard this heresy as a specific interpretation of thoughts characteristic of Dominican mysticism in the Rhineland whose leading representative was Master Eckhart<sup>12</sup>.

From about the turn of the 13th century this doctrine began to spread among the Beghards, that is, lay adherents of voluntary poverty in Western Europe, mainly in German speaking countries and Flanders. At first diocesan authorities turned against them, being of the opinion that their way of life was not approved by the Church, that it was not laid down in any rule or statute. Later, the Beghards began to be accused not only of beggary but also of spreading fallacious views as regards the faith, of wrongly interpreting the *Holy Scriptures* and of demoralizing the faithful.

<sup>11</sup> Ph. Limborch, *Historia Inquisitionis cui subjungitur Liber Sententiarum Inquisitionis Tholosanae. Ab anno Christi 1307 ad annum 1323*. Amstelodami 1692, p. 308: *Item dixit se credisse quod post mortem antichristi totus mundus erit fidelis et benignus, et in tantum quod una puella virgo poterit sola ire de Roma usque ad sanctum Jacobum et non inueniet qui eam ad malum sollicitet.*

<sup>12</sup> The following are the most important works discussing the Heresy of the Free Spirit: R. Guarnieri, *Il movimento del libero spirito. Testi e documenti*, Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà, IV, 1965, pp. 353–708; M. Erbstösser, *Sozialreligiöse Strömungen im späten Mittelalter. Geissler, Freigeister und Waldenser im 14. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1970, pp. 84–118; R. E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, Berkeley — Los Angeles — London 1972; E. McLaughlin, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit and Late Medieval Mysticism*, “*Medievalia et Humanistica*”, N.S. 4/1973/, pp. 37–54.

Reflecting the Church's tendency to stem secular movements which had apostolic ambitions, the council held at Vienne (1311) sternly condemned the Beghards as heretics. From that time on, they were oppressed as a dangerous sect. The Beguines who led a pious, quiet, semi-monastic life in the towns of Western and Central Europe were declared to be accomplices in heresy. Clement V's bull *Ad nostrum*, well known in the history of the Church's fight against heresies, set down the errors of the incriminated doctrine in points. Its basic core cannot be indifferent to us for the accusations enumerated in the bull were repeated (usually literally) in the questionnaires of inquisitional inquiries until the end of the 14th century. Let us recall that the view that during his lifetime man could reach a state of perfection and become sinless was recognized in the bull as the most serious error. The supporters of the Heresy of the Free Spirit claimed that free people were not subject to obedience and to any human authority for "there is freedom where the Lord's spirit is". Men of Free Spirit did not have to fulfil any religious obligations, they did not have to pray, to fast. They did not need holy grace for a perfect soul was free of sin. Corporal sins were not sins if nature compelled people to commit them. Another accusation raised against the Beghards was that they did not venerate the Eucharist<sup>13</sup>.

The accusations contained in the papal bull referred to all Beghards but in practice they affected mainly those who regarded beggary as the best form of evangelical poverty. As has been mentioned above, the main charge was the sinless perfection of free men, proclaimed by the Beghards. According to the statements of the interrogated Beghards, sinless perfection could be reached through many years of ascetic practices and various spiritual exercises; the chosen knew they had reached it thanks to a miraculous illumination which informed them of their state of perfect freedom.

Let us refer to the examination of Konrad Kannler (regarded by historians as an exemplary case) who testified before an inquisitional court in the Bavarian town of Eichstädt (1381)<sup>14</sup>. He confessed that everything he had said earlier he knew through

<sup>13</sup> E. W. McDonnell, *The Beguins and Beghards in Medieval Culture with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene*, New Brunswick 1954, pp. 505 ff.

<sup>14</sup> An edition of the text H. Grundmann, *Ketzerverhöre des Spätmittelalters als quellenkritisches Problem*, in: *idem, Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Bd. I; *Religiöse Bewegungen*, Stuttgart 1976, pp. 403–408.

the Holy Spirit, for when he was sitting alone in the local church, sunk in ecstasy, he heard the words: "Friend, all your sins are absolved through your repentance and you will no more have to confess, go to communion and receive any other sacrament for you are sinless and of a free spirit"<sup>15</sup>. After this revelation Kannler felt he was boundlessly perfect, in no smaller degree than Christ, and much more perfect than the saints worshipped in churches.

Unlike various individuals who in a state of ecstasy felt that their soul was united with God, the believers in the doctrine of the free spirit regarded their perfection as a permanent, timeless state. They thought that all thoughts, aspirations and actions of free people were perfect. Unlike the Franciscan Spirituals and the Beguins, who were absorbed in Joachimite prophecies, the majority of the Free Spirit heretics did not place their ideas in time. They regarded their perfection as a current state and did not dream that this privilege would spread in the future and become the lot of "the converted". The believers in the free spirit did not manifest any apostolic tendencies and were indifferent to, or even contemptuous of, ordinary people (*grossi homines*), who were sinful, imperfect and subjected to norms established by religion and by a secular authority.

In a description of the erroneous views and practices of the Beghards and Beguines, which was written in the Upper Palatinate at the end of the 14th century, it was stated that these heretics were striving to reach an inner state comparable with the state of innocence of the first parents in paradise<sup>16</sup>. Innocence was in this description regarded as identical with perfection; it excluded the possibility of sin. Asked by the inquisitor about freedom of the spirit, a Beghard of Erfurt replied that freedom of the spirit arose when man got rid of all pangs of conscience and became sinless. If a free man committed a murder or a theft, this was not a sin for this concept did not apply to free people<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p.406.

<sup>16</sup> See E. Werner, *Nachrichten über spätmittelalterliche Ketzer aus tschechoslovakischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, in: *Beilage zur Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwiss. Reihe*, XII, 1963, H. 1, p. 281.

<sup>17</sup> For the inquiry of Johann Hartmann see: M. Erbstösser, E. Werner, *Ideologische Probleme des mittelalterlichen Plebejertums. Die freigeistige Häresie und ihre sozialen Wurzeln*, Berlin 1960, pp. 136-153.

As we have said above, the heretics of the free spirit thought that their state was an individual, inner privilege which had nothing to do with the prospects of universal "great eschatology". But we are more interested in individuals or small communities that in a specific way linked the ideas of the free spirit with Joachimism which, after all, always referred to communities. Konrad Kannler, whom we have already quoted, said he was "a second Adam" established by God and sent to the world to evangelize it. God gave him the power to give signals and do what Christ had done. The second Adam marked the beginning of a new, third generation of people who after the Last Judgment will live in paradise on earth to be later taken up to heaven. His great, boundless perfection as a new Adam confirmed him in the conviction that having been formed in the image of the innocent lamb, he would preside at the Last Judgment, which was due to take place at the turn of the epoch<sup>18</sup>. The great eschatological mission was entrusted to an individual that was perfectly free, sinless and innocent, an individual worthy to become the first inhabitant of a renewed paradise on earth. Kannler, an uncommon representative of the state of innocence, a state which for the time being belonged only to him, did not say a word about actions "prompted by nature", which constituted the unbounded privilege of the free people.

Opinions on this question appeared during the inquisitional trial of the Brussels believers in the free spirit doctrine, called *Homines intelligentiae* (1411)<sup>19</sup>. An illiterate layman (*laicus illiteratus*) who headed this group and a former Carmelite monk stated that they had experienced supernatural illumination which made them perfect. Their opinions were a mixture of the free spirit doctrine with Joachimite phantasms about the history of the world. The layman thought he was the saviour of mankind and an earthly image (or a new incarnation) of Christ. The other heretic did not have such high ambitions and the inquiry he was subjected to concerned mainly corporal matters. The ex-Car-

<sup>18</sup> H. Grundmann, *Ketzerverh re*, p. 406: *Et dicit, quod secundus Adam, quod ipse sit, sit principium tercię generacionis hominum post extremum iudicium habitancium in paradiso terrestri...*; p. 407: *Item dicit, quod, quia sit formatus secundum imaginem innocentis agni, ideo oportet eum presidere extremo iudicio.*

<sup>19</sup> For the text of the examination by the tribunal which was headed by a famous theologian, Bishop of Cambrai, Pierre d'Ailly see: P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticę pravitatis Neerlandicę*, vol. I, Gent 1989, pp. 266-278.

melite quoted the opinion adopted in the sect that sexual relations (including extramarital ones) were but natural acts, like eating and drinking. He, Wilhelm of Hildernisse, held the view that sexual relations (of any kind) did not evoke pangs of conscience for everything done by *homines intelligentiae* was in accord with God's will. The uneducated layman, Egidius Cantoris, called sexual intercourse a paradisiac delight (*delectatio paradisi*); it must have been an expression used in the heretic community. According to him, paradisiac sinlessness permitted any way of sexual intercourse. The one chosen by him was an imitation of what Adam did in paradise<sup>20</sup>. In this case the pattern of paradise life, reduced to acceptance of sexual freedom, was combined with ideas about the universal perfection of free men. The views of the Brussels *homines intelligentiae*, like those of the heretic German Beghards, referred rather to a postulated reality, to the ideology of the believers in the free spirit than to the practice of everyday life. But there was also a community which regarded *status innocentiae* as a real programme for the earthly existence of its believers.

III. The Pikarts were members of an extreme radical section of the Czech Hussite movement. The genesis of this current and the role it played in Hussitism are still a problem discussed by researchers interested in this question<sup>21</sup>. Some sources quite convincingly link these heretics within the Hussite movement with the group of refugees from Picardy who in order to escape repression by the Inquisition went to a country where the truths of the *Gospels* could be openly proclaimed<sup>22</sup>. The Pikarts who arrived in Prague on the eve of the Hussite revolution (1418) were warmly received by the court and the city. However, when it turned out that their religious practices and behaviour were different and that they did not receive the holy communion in both kinds, as the Hussites did, the initial goodwill turned into

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 272.

<sup>21</sup> The results of research on the Pikarts have been presented by F. Šmahel, *Husitský Tábor*, vol. I, part 1, České Budějovice 1988, pp. 282–291, 301–305; *idem*, *Husitská revoluce*, vol. II, Praha 1993, pp. 130–134, vol. III, pp. 73–77. See also P. Čornej, *Potíže s Adamity*, in: *Marginalia Historica*, II, Praha 1997, pp. 33–63; *idem*, *Adamité — tabu 15. i 19. století*, in: *Sex a tabu v české kultuře*, Praha 2000, pp. 142–159.

<sup>22</sup> *Vavřinec z Březové Kronika Husitská*, ed. J. Goll, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemiarum*, vol. V, Praha 1893, p. 431. See F. Šmahel, *Husitský Tábor*, vol. I, part 1, p. 282.

aversion and the newcomers (some of whom arrived with their families) were expelled from the capital of the Bohemian Kingdom.

Not knowing the local language and decimated by diseases and poverty, the Pikarts dispersed across the country and according to the chronicler Lawrence of Březová sowed the seeds of their heresy among the Czechs<sup>23</sup>. This heresy, no matter where it came from, contained themes of the free spirit doctrine, which was well known in what is now the frontier region between France and Belgium and in the territory of Brabant in the 14th and early 15th centuries. However, the persons accused two years later of "Picards' heresy" at Tabor, the main centre of Hussite radicalism, were all Czech.

Without delving into the complex question of "transfer of heresy", which in this case is difficult to solve, let us discuss the early stage of Adventist and chiliastic prophecies in Bohemia (end of 1419–beginning of 1420)<sup>24</sup>. These prophecies, formulated and put down at various times, concerned the great eschatological drama which was to occur at the turn of two epochs in human-kind's history. Their central themes were the annihilation of all enemies of the Hussite "God's truth", the coming of Christ on earth in Bohemia, the triumph of the chosen and their happy life in a millennial kingdom. Christ's presence among the chosen, that is those who by their armed fight had prepared God's kingdom on earth, was to lead to the disappearance of some religious practices, and of sacraments, which were out of date.

An early record of chiliastic articles (which were the subject of doctrinal negotiations between the Taborite priests who spread them and moderate Utraquists, the Prague masters)<sup>25</sup>, contains an incomplete presentation of views which were later recognized as the core of the Pikarts' heresy. I have in mind the Pikarts' negation of Christ's presence in Eucharistic forms.

This modest body of ideas concerning the approaching happy epoch (in chiliastic prophecies its coming would be preceded by

<sup>23</sup> *Vauřince z Březové Kronika Husitská*, p. 431.

<sup>24</sup> For adventist and chiliastic prophecies see in particular: F. Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora*, vol. I, part 1, pp. 249 ff., idem, *Husitská revoluce*, vol. II, pp. 122 ff.; H. Kaminský, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1967, chapters 7–9; A. Patschovsky, *Der taborische Chiliasmus*, in: *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter*, ed. F. Šmahel, E. Müller-Luckner, München 1998, pp. 169–195.

<sup>25</sup> *Vauřince z Březové Kronika Husitská*, pp. 452–462.

disasters and mass extermination) contains but vague references to the state of universal innocence that was to ensue. But it is said in the articles of the Taborite priests of 1420 that "in this renewed kingdom there will be no sin, no depravation, no villainy and no lie, but all people will be God's chosen sons"<sup>26</sup>. Further on it is said that the chosen who survive the coming dreadful events will see the saints rising from the dead, and among them Master John Huss, and they will be privileged to attain "the state of innocence which Adam had in paradise, like Enoch and Elias, and they will experience neither hunger, nor thirst, nor any spiritual or corporal worry"<sup>27</sup>.

In the prophetic texts connected with the Taborite movement the state of innocence was often presented as disappearance of various categories of sin, the replacement of evil by universal good, justice and perfect mutual love, that is traits characteristic of Joachimism: "... paradise will be opened to us, goodness will multiply, perfect love will become generous"<sup>28</sup>. It was believed that the inhabitants of the Taborite community aspired to live according to the apostolic example, that they strove for perfection in the state of innocence and sainthood, and shared all possessions in common, an ideal which was present in various movements of religious contestation. In this text the *status innocentiae* does not refer to a prophesied epoch, it applies to the situation introduced in the Taborite community.

Jakoubek of Stříbro, a theologian representing the moderate Utraquist current, sharply criticized the theories of the propagators of errors (he had mainly the Taborites in mind) and their shameful deeds. He said that some of them believed that they "are attaining the state of innocence or have already attained it and (think) that it befits them to live in a new marriage and that it is not a sin to sin with the one whom one loves"<sup>29</sup>. This "new marriage", an element of the state of innocence, was thought to

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 415.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 416: *Item isti electi, qui sic vivi relinquuntur, ad statum innocentie ipsius Ade in paradiso et ut Enoch et Elias reducentur et erunt abque omni fame et siti et omni alia pena tam spirituali quam corporali.*

<sup>28</sup> The text of the chillastic manifesto is quoted by F. M. Bartoš, *Do čtyř artikulů pražských*, in: *Sborník příspěvků k dějinám Hlavního města Prahy*, vol. V, part 2, Praha 1932, p. 576.

<sup>29</sup> Jakoubek ze Stříbra, *Výklad na Zjevení sv. Jana*, ed. F. Šimek, vol. I, Praha 1932, p. 527.

mean the desertion of the first wife and the taking of another woman to wife, probably from among the co-religionists. Like other Hussite polemicists from the circle of the Prague Utraquists, Master Jakoubek ascribed to all Taborites opinions which were characteristic rather of some sections and which were sharply criticized also by Taborite priests.

The religious minority unmasked at Tabor at the beginning of 1421 scandalized the Taborite majority not only by its propagation of an erroneous conception of the Eucharist but also by its demonstratively manifested contempt for the body and blood of God. Expelled from Tabor which firmly stood guard over its orthodoxy and stern ethical principles, the Pikarts scattered over woods and hills in order to live far from the believers in Hussite (Taborite) orthodoxy, especially its guardians. According to Lawrence of Březova, the exiles from Tabor, living in isolation, fell into insanity and began to go around naked, saying that they had attained the state of innocence of the first parents in paradise<sup>30</sup>. They were reported to have added that all clothing, unknown to people at first, began to be used after the commission of the original sin. Clinging to their insane views, they also asserted that a brother's sexual intercourse with his sister (that is intercourse between the adherents of the Pikarts' community) was not a sin<sup>31</sup>. The Hussite chronicler wrote his story about the Pikarts after a lapse of time but he had at his disposal a specific material, namely the statements of a heretic apprehended during John Žižka's repressive action aimed at the extermination of renegades.

According to these statements, the Pikarts, convinced of their perfection and their unity with their god whose part they were, called themselves God's angels and believed that they alone (and not the Taborites) were entrusted with the mission of clearing God's kingdom on earth of all evil<sup>32</sup>. In their community some persons were believed to be endowed with supernatural authority; according to Lawrence of Březová the leading role in the community was played by Peter called "Jesus, God's son" and Nicolas, a peasant (*rusticus*) who took the name of Moses<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> *Vavřince z Březové Kronika Husitská*, p. 475: ... *quod tam viri quam mulieres abiectis vestibus nudi penitus incedebant dicentes, se fore in statu innocencie, et quod propter primorum parentum transgressionem vestes assumeptae fuissent.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 475.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 518.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 517, 518.

According to another historiographic account based on unknown materials, the Pikarts "had a god called Rohan, a blacksmith from Veselé, and they also had a Mary"<sup>34</sup>. In a much later text (rather unreliable) Rohan assumed the name of Adam and under this name visited the neighbouring settlements, telling their inhabitants about life in paradise<sup>35</sup>. In *Historia Bohemica* by the Italian humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini (the later pope), who heard about the Pikarts and Adamites from a Czech magnate, there appears another Adam, leader of the newcomers from Picardy (*ex Gallia Belgica*)<sup>36</sup>. The cult of the first father, Adam, treated here and there in the Middle Ages as a pre-figuration of Christ<sup>37</sup>, did not exist in the Hussite movement; it did exist, as we have said above, among the adherents of the free spirit heresy in the West of Europe. In the case of the Hussitic Pikarts this must have been a story created *ex post*; it is not surprising that the members of the religious group, traditionally known as Adamites, felt the need to appoint an Adam, a new first father, propagator of the paradisiacal way of life, their master.

There are sources describing the ritual practices of the Pikarts-Adamites and their way of life when they were not restricted by alien surroundings, but they refer only to the months when they lived in the woods and on the banks of rivers in southern Bohemia. Various accounts speak of naked heretics living in a state of innocence, like Adam and Eve who did not know what shame is. Irrespective of the inventions and distortions probably produced by authors ill-disposed towards heretics, nudism, restricted of course to rites and ritual behaviour, could reflect the free people's programmatic return to the conditions of life in paradise. It could also be an ostentatious rejection of the customs imposed by the Church and observed by Christian societies, customs which no longer applied to the chosen individuals. Lawrence's account, based on the statements made by a Pikart who narrowly escaped a pogrom, depicts in detail the practices of the inhabitants of a paradise lying in the natural

<sup>34</sup> *Staré letopisy české z vratislavského rukopisu*, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1937, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> *E "Locustario" Joannis Aquensis partes selectae*, in: A. Neumann, *České sekty ve století XIV a XV*, Velehrad 1920, pp. 73 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Enea Silvio, *Historia Bohemica — Historie česká*, ed. D. Martínková, A. Hadravová, J. Matl, Praha 1998, pp. 116, 118.

<sup>37</sup> See the remarks made by P. Čornej, *Potíže s adamity*, p. 46.

landscape south of Tábor. It speaks of dances and singing round a fire, accompanied by a ritual formula, of undressing and surrendering to the leader Moses, and of sexual relations<sup>38</sup>; all this was rather of a ritual than a spontaneous character. This is confirmed by a remark that people who objected to the norms established in the Adamite community were severely punished. Peter Chelčický, an author intimate with the Taborites and a determined antagonist of the Pikarts, asserted that the Pikarts ascribed a religious value to ritual sexual intercourse and regarded it as a sacrament<sup>39</sup>. Lawrence of Březová, finishing his story about the renegades condemned by the Hussites, referred rather surprisingly (for he knew more about them than other people did) to the stereotype formed at that time: 'They feared neither cold nor heat but went around naked, as Adam and Eve did in paradise'<sup>40</sup>.

As we know, the epos of the Pikarts–Adamites, entrenched in their last position in the river's bend, ended with their murder after a long, determined fight against a regular unit commanded by an excellent Hussite leader. The determination of the heretics was strengthened by their conviction that they were endowed with supernatural power. Before they succumbed to the obvious superiority of Žižka's warriors, the Pikarts set out on nightly armed expeditions against the inhabitants of neighbouring villages in order to procure food for themselves and perhaps also to witness the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies. "And so at night they were engaged in murders and during the daytime in debauchery. They called their fight and their murders sacred but regarded the fight for God's law as accursed", says Lawrence of Březová with indignation<sup>41</sup>. Another reason why he condemned the Pikarts was that they evaded participation in the combats of Hussite troops.

In exile, the Czech Pikarts tried to put into effect the vision of paradise known to them from earlier chiliastic and Taborite prophecies. That was the source from which they adopted apocalyptic and Joachimite motifs (the coming of the era of the Holy

<sup>38</sup> *Vavřince z Březové Kronika Husitská*, p. 518.

<sup>39</sup> Petr Chelčický, *Replika proti Mikulaši Biskupcovi*, in: *idem, Drobné spisy*, ed. E. Petrá, Praha 1966, pp. 156–157.

<sup>40</sup> *Vavřince z Březové Kronika Husitská*, p. 519.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 519.

Spirit) and the realization that they were living at the beginning of the final period in mankind's history. The millenarian prophecies provided them with the motif of the state of innocence which was to prevail on earth in a renewed paradise. The Pikarts did not share the Hussite masses' disappointment at the non-fulfilment of the prophecies and the prolonged absence of Christ, who failed to descend on Czech soil. They came to the conclusion that they themselves were called upon to create paradise on earth. Their conviction that by their actions they were fulfilling the words of the *Scriptures* and that being God's angels they were called upon to fight against evil people came from Taborite ideology. As to the motif of self-deification, of perfection, they most probably inherited it from the heretics of the free spirit<sup>42</sup>. Like the adherents of this heresy, they were led by charismatic leaders who took their names from the *Old* and the *New Testament* (so they may have really adopted this custom from the newcomers from Picardy).

Both in Utraquist, moderate Prague and in radical Tábor the enthusiasts of paradisiacal life on earth were regarded as licentious sinners and inveterate heretics (they were accused of promulgating errors, blaspheming and profaning the Eucharist). Žižka, who was fighting for the victory of the Hussites' God's law knew about this and he murdered them zealously, for though they were not really a great force, they were independent and stood in the way of the victorious Taborite revolution.

The state-of-innocence myth can probably be found in many other heterodox movements, especially those which linked their ideas with prophecies of a Joachimite character (e.g. the Apostolic Brethren of northern Italy). The above-mentioned three heretic movements which represent different types of religious contestation and developed in different conditions testify to the appeal of this myth, though the appeal was not equal everywhere. The *status innocentiae* which was most closely connected with notions of life in an earthly paradise appealed above all to the communities which as regards inner perfection identified themselves with the first sinless inhabitants of paradise. The paradisiacal state of innocence which was to prevail on earth in the future, or

<sup>42</sup> See H. Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, pp. 166–186; F. Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora*, vol. I, part 1, p. 283.

was already coming into effect, was for its enthusiasts and propagators a great compensation for the oppression and persecution they had experienced in life and a triumph of the idea rejected by bad people. The claim to perfection or to having a free spirit, brought to extremity by the adherents of this idea, was also a compensation. The imitation of the biblical reality, based on interpretations which differed from those spread by the Church, was conducive to the appointment of new Saviours, Adams and Moses destined to play roles of eschatological dimensions on earth. Let us add that such persons, frequently worshipped by crowds of admirers and believers, can be found in the late Middle Ages outside the free-spirit current and religious communities.

We have followed the state-of-innocence myth in three environments which differed by their beliefs and ideas. What characterized the Spirituals and the Beguins, linked with them ideologically, was their belief in a future hazily outlined triumph of radical Franciscan ideas; this was to be a world subordinated to the general pattern of Joachimite prophecies. Believers in the free spirit applied their ideas to their own generation and did not expect that the state of innocence would become general in the future. The individuals with prophetic aspirations in these environments, individuals who set themselves great eschatological missions, must of course be treated differently. Finally the Pirkarts, rejected by the Hussite majority, without waiting for the materialization of the Chiliats' prophecies, applied their beliefs and ideas referring to the state of innocence to their existence on the strips of Czech soil, their paradise.

For people representing both Catholic and Hussite orthodoxy (in their two different religious versions), the state-of-innocence myth and especially the endeavours to reach it, were not hazy dreams unworthy of attention. In the texts of inquisitional interrogations, in treatises written by theologians and lesser publicists as well as in historical works (which after all were also committed ideologically) the claim to a state of innocence was presented as an error, as a heresy, and those who believed in it were regarded as demoralizing sinners.

*(Translated by Janina Dorosz)*