

Wojciech Iwańczak

UNITY IN MULTIPLICITY — THE MEDIEVAL CZECH CLASSIFICATIONS OF SOCIETAS CHRISTIANA

The medieval people's predilection for various classification systems, sometimes rather complex and elaborate, had various manifestations and differing motives. One of them was to introduce distinctions and divisions into the Christian community. The divisions were based on many criteria and the number of the components distinguished also differed. The most popular was certainly the division of society into three groups, but there were also systems distinguishing two,¹ four² and even more components. The divisions distinguishing several parts or social strata within the Christian community did not exhaust the inventiveness of medieval authors. There existed various other classification systems which were a specific parallel to the social hierarchisation. As a rule, they did not use concepts concerning social categories or estates with their accompanying functions, but frequently gravitated towards the religious division into *ordines*, though this was not the only division used.

The present study will deal with various types of classification based on the triad.³ They can be divided into two groups. One group consists of

¹ Cf. K. Bosl, *Potens und Pauper*, in: *Alteuropa und die moderne Gesellschaft*. Festschrift für Otte Brunner, Göttingen 1963, pp. 60–87; reprint in: K. Bosl, *Frühformen der Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Europa*, München — Wien 1964, pp. 106–134.

² W. Iwańczak, *Mieszczanie kreacją diabła? "Trzy stany" społeczne a problem miasta w średniowieczu (Were the Burghers Created by the Devil? The "Three Estates" and the Problem of Towns in the Middle Ages)*, "Przegląd Historyczny", 1989, No. 1, pp. 17–39.

³ For an attempt at a typology see D. Dubuisson, *Matériaux pour une typologie des structures trifonctionnelles*, "L'Homme", 93, 1985, 1, pp. 105–121.

metaphors seeking an analogy for the structure of society in sacral buildings, the Holy Trinity or human organism; in the other group we have divisions using other terminology than social strata and the occupations assigned to them. These divisions coexisted with the popular medieval sociological model which divided the whole population into clergymen, warriors and peasants, each group having been assigned a specific function: prayer, fighting and work, respectively. The tripartite systems we shall be dealing with deserve attention for at least two reasons. First, as an independent phenomenon which will allow us to better understand certain secrets of collective imagination, and secondly, as a background, a context in which the social tripartite division was born and functioned, reflecting the dream about a perfect, harmoniously operating community.⁴ The material for our reflections has been taken mostly from Czech sources, but it will be viewed against the background of European Latin civilisation, which constituted one whole from the cultural point of view.

A great career in the Middle Ages was made by the concept which identified society and its components with the human body and its parts which depended on one another functionally and by performing various functions ensured the successful existence of the entire organism.⁵ This idea is usually connected with St. Paul who devoted to it a well known passage in his *First Epistle* to the Corinthians.⁶ But the roots of this metaphor go back to pre-Christian times. It was used as early as the end of the 5th century B.C., in the story about Menenius Agrippa, and its first version appeared in the collection of fables ascribed to Aesop. This version only opposed the feet to the belly. Menenius Agrippa is said to have persuaded rebellious plebeians to come to an agreement, by arguing that, like the individual parts of the body, they should harmoniously co-operate with the patricians. Livy expanded this theme.⁷ Aristotle, whose theory of the organism was frequently quoted in the Middle Ages, may have contributed to the popularisation of this

⁴ G. Duby, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, Paris 1978; O. Nicoli, *I sacerdoti, i guerrieri, i contadini. Storia di un'immagine dell'a società*, Torino 1979.

⁵ T. Struve, *Bedeutung und Funktion des Organismusvergleichs in den mittelalterlichen Theorien von Staat und Gesellschaft*, in: *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, ed. A. Zimmermann, ("Miscellanea mediaevalia" 12), vol. I, Berlin — New York 1979, pp. 144–161.

⁶ St. Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 12: 12–26.

⁷ Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, Book II, 32.

metaphor. The human body was also identified with society in Hellenistic philosophy and by the Stoics, Cicero and Seneca.⁸ Paul of Tarsus may have come across the doctrine of the Stoics in his native town and adopted it for his own purpose. St. Paul compared the Church to the body whose head is Christ and whose parts are all the faithful.⁹ This was the beginning of the frequent presentation of society as the human body; it was introduced through the identification of the Church with society. The identification of the head with Christ was soon replaced by its identification with the clergy or with the pope. The comparison of the members of the body to the members of society is not specific to European civilisation; it can also be found in the Indian Vedas. Had it reached Europe from India? It is difficult to say, for no intermediate links have been found so far.

An essential role in the introduction of the motif in question into the medieval tradition should probably be ascribed to St. Augustine (though not all researchers perceive this)¹⁰, who also used the passage from St. Paul's epistle mentioned above. In his *Sermones de Scripturis* he wrote: "The body has members and each can do something else. God united the body and did not predestine the ears for seeing, or the eyes for hearing, or the forehead for smelling or the hands for eating; He did not do this, but He gave health and unity to all the members, animated them all equally with the spirit and united them."¹¹ In *Sermones de Tempore* we read: "The body is made up of many members and they are all animated by one spirit ... The functions of the members differ, but they are united by one spirit... it is the spirit that gives orders and the members serve it. This is our spirit, our soul for our members, and this is what the Holy Ghost is for the members of Christ, for the body of Christ,

⁸ O. Nicco i, *I sacerdoti*, p. 4.

⁹ Cf. f. 6.

¹⁰ St. Augustine's role is not taken into account in works of such great importance for the history of the social tripartite partition as: G. D u b y, *Les trois ordres*; O.G. O e x l e, *Die Funktionale Dreiteilung der Gesellschaft bei Adalbere von Laon. Deutungsschemata der sozialen Wirklichkeit im früheren Mittelalter*, "Frühmittelalterliche Studien", 12, 1978, pp. 1 ff.; O. Nicco i, *I sacerdoti*, passim.

¹¹ *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Latina, ed. J.P. Migne (henceforward referred to as PL) 38, col. 782: "*In corpore membra sunt: alius potest illud membrum, alliud illud. Compegit corpus Deus, non tribuit auri ut videat, nec oculis ut audiat, nec fronti ut olfaciat, nec manui ut gustet; non dedit haec: sed omnibus memsanitatem dedit, compagem dedit, unitatem dedit, spiritum omnia pariter vivificavit et univit.*"

that is, the Church... So be watchful brothers in our body and weep for those who are cut off from the Church... as long as we live and are healthy, all our members fulfil their duties. When one member suffers, all the others feel this.”¹² We see that Augustine and St. Paul, lay stress on similar matters, namely, that the interdependence of the individual parts of our body creates the conditions for the functioning of the body as a whole. The Church, which is the unity of Christ’s body, the unity of all its members, is at the same time a union of various groups of the faithful. A very similar view was expressed by the 8th and 9th century authors: St. Boniface,¹³ Hraban Maur¹⁴ and Walahfrid Strabo.¹⁵ Haymo of Auxerre,¹⁶ writing in the second half of the 9th century, already showed the inclination to identify the various parts of the body with definite social groups, and the same was done by Atto of Vercella (10th century)¹⁷ and Humbert de Moyenmoutier (11th century).¹⁸ The 12th century brought a successive major change in this respect. In *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury replaced the metaphor comparing the body to the Church by a binary comparison in which the body was *res publica*, the state. This was an evident laicisation of the model; instead of Christ, the prince became the head, and going down the social ladder, John of Salisbury, making use of Plutarch, compared the heart to the senate, the

¹² *Ibidem*, col. 1232: “*Multis membris constitutum est corpus, et vegetat membra omnia unus spiritus... Officia membrorum disparita sunt, sed unus spiritus continet omnia... unus iubet, uni servitur. Quod est spiritus noster, id est anima nostra, ad membra nostra; hoc spiritus sanctus ad membra Christi, ad corpus Christi, quod est Ecclesia... Attendite ergo, fratres, in nostro corpore, et dolete eos qui de Ecclesia praeciduntur... quamdiu vivimus, cum sani sumus, implent omnia membra officia sua. Si unum membrum dolet alicunde, compatiuntur omnia membra.*”

¹³ G. D u b y, *Les trois ordres*, p. 92.

¹⁴ In *De universe*, I, 2 — PL III, col. 21 ff.

¹⁵ Walahfrid S t r a b o, *Liber de exordiis et incrementis*, ed. A. K n ö p f l e r, 2nd ed., München 1899, p. 102.

¹⁶ PL 117, col. 579: “*manus qui operantur unde alli vivant; pedes, qui in negotiis saecularibus ad utilitatem caeterorum discurrunt.*”

¹⁷ PL 134, col 384.

¹⁸ *Humberti cardinalis libri III Adversus Simoniacos*, ed. F. T h a n e r, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Libelli de Lite I*, Hannover 1891, p. 235: *ordo clericalis* corresponds to the eyes, *laicalis potestas* to the breast and shoulders, and *vulgus* to the lower parts of the body. Cf. C. C o r o z z i, *D’Adalberon de Laon à Humbert de Moyenmoutier: la désacralisation de la royauté*, in: *La cristianità dei secoli XI e XII in Occidente: coscienza e strutture di una società* (“Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Modioevali”, X) Milano 1983, pp. 67–84.

eyes, ears and tongue to “*iudices et praesides provinciarum*”, armed hands to “*milites*” and unarmed ones to “*officiales*”, etc.¹⁹ According to G. Duby, *Policraticus* contained the first systematic presentation of the ideology of authority and social order.²⁰ In addition to laicising it, *Policraticus* shows yet another tendency: the body of Christ changes from the community of the faithful into a hierarchy with the pope at its head or into a community of various Christian states also with the pope as its head. The hierarchisation of the concept was often reflected in the stress put on some parts of the body at the expense of others,²¹ but the egalitarian version identifying the unity of the faithful with the unity of the parts of the body continued to exist.²² It was the head therefore that was the top. What is interesting is that in modern times, in the 16th and 17th centuries — let us note the long duration of this concept — the head was replaced by the heart. Such was the situation presented in the dialogue between Cardinal Reginald Pole and the humanist Thomas Lupset, written by Thomas Starkey, chaplain to King Henry VIII, in 1533.²³ O. Niccoli thinks that this change may have been caused by new scientific discoveries in anatomy.²⁴

The presentation of the Christian community in the image and likeness of the human body was not alien to Czech thought. Some of the authors who dealt with the tripartite division of society also used this image. Tomáš Štítný, a nobleman dabbling in writing, discussed this question repeatedly in the second half of the 14th century. He says, for instance: “...the body of every man is made up of smaller and larger members and they are all useful, both those with which man keeps on the ground, that is, the feet, and those which please the feet and other members, that is, the hands and, naturally, the head; in accordance with

¹⁹ PL 199, col. 540.

²⁰ G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, pp. 318 ff.

²¹ See H. Kontorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1957, pp. 194—232; H. De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum. L'Eucarestia e la Chiesa nel Medioevo*, Torino 1968; L. Barkan, *Nature's Work of Art. The Human Body as Image of the World*, New Haven — London 1975, pp. 61–115.

²² For instance Giovanni de San Gimignano, a Dominican working in Italy (turn of the 13th century) in: *Summa de exemplis ac similitudinibus rerum*, Venetiis 1497, f. 276^v: “*Unitas fidelium ecclesiae debet esse sicut unitas membrorum in corpore.*”

²³ T. Starkey, *A Dialogue between Reginald Pope and Thomas Lupset*, ed. K.M. Burton, London 1948, p. 57.

²⁴ O. Niccoli, *I sacerdoti*, p. 7.

the discernment of the head the hands take care of the entire body and defend it, while the feet carry and support it. And just as they (the parts of the body) are linked by great love, so it should be among the people divided according to the tripartite order. The head willingly offers its reason so that the feet, hands and other members might exist; the hands, too, often defend the head and the feet if somebody wants to strike them; the feet also faithfully carry all the members and support them: when one foot gives way, the other quickly helps it.”²⁵

After characterising the various parts of the human organism Štitný passes on to the social mechanism which functions in an analogous way and is made up of three components. “...Similarly, the Church members (i.e. elements of the Christian community — W.I.) should live in mutual love. The estate of clergymen should do its best to lead the other two estates to salvation, the estate of the secular lords should ensure peace to the remaining two estates, while the working people should work in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the other two estates. When each estate loves only itself... and wants to turn everything to its own profit, it will lose everything.”²⁶ In addition to a general characterisation, Štitný also identifies the individual social groups existing in his times with various parts of the body. He says, for instance, that “in the community of holy Christianity the knighthood performs the same function as the hands do in our body.”²⁷ He lays stress on cooperation between the individual elements. Like the parts of the body, the social estates should live in harmony and not be envious of one another. “The foot should not be envious of the foot and the hand of the head; they should be glad that the head enjoys greater respect than they do, similarly, although the priesthood enjoys greater respect, nobody from among the working people or the secular estate should envy it”²⁸ The view is that God has wisely arranged this world, having given something to each estate and no estate has been given everything. As a result of this arrangement, the Christian community consists of all its members, its head being the Son of God, Christ. This head is the centre of all goodness, which is transferred to the various component parts of

²⁵ Tomáš ze Stitného, *Knížky o hře šachové a jiné*, ed. F. Šimek, M. Kaňák, Praha 1956, p. 130.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 130–131.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

society.²⁹ This shows that Štítný is inclined to hierarchise the individual parts of the body and, consequently, the social estates; the fact that he identifies the head with Christ places him in the current of the tradition initiated by St. Paul.

The three social estates are also viewed as parts of the human body by Štítný's contemporary, Johann, a German preacher at the church of St. Gall in the Old Town of Prague. In his treatise *Communiloquium* he says that according to scholastic knowledge "the working people are called feet."³⁰ This theme is also taken up by John Hus in his work *De ecclesia*. He says that the Apostle (St. Paul) compared the body of the Church and its members to the human body. The Church in his view has many members but they all make up one body, which is Christ. There are not only analogies, but also differences between the human body and the mystical body. Hus mentions three in each group. The head is linked quite closely with the feet and reason with feelings. In the human body as well as in the Church organism no members should lord it over the others but should confine themselves to performing their role properly. There is a hierarchy among the parts of the body, a high rank being given to the eyes, which correspond to the clergy in Christian society. The parts of the body which arouse shame among people are carefully hidden. The principal difference between the mystic body of the Church and the human body, says Hus, is the structure of their internal connections. In the human body an important role is played by the position of its individual parts, in the Church it is love that is the binding medium.³¹

The metaphor under review was used by many authors during the Hussite revolution. Jan Želivský, a radical Prague leader, spoke of "the feet which carry the entire body, and these are the holy peasants."³² The

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ "*Quia laborantes dicuntur pedes et causa istorum pedum*" — Ms V.B. 4, f. 53 in the (State) University Library in Prague, quoted after F. G r a u s, *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Čechách w době předhusitské* vol. II, Praha 1957, p. 269.

³¹ M. Johannis H u s, *Tractatus de ecclesia*, ed. S.H. T h o s o n, Praha 1958, pp. 12; cf. R. K a l i v o d a, *Husitská ideologie*, Praha 1961, p. 171; J. M a c e k, *Jean Hus et son époque*, "Historica", 13, 1966, pp. 71 ff.

³² "... *pedes totum corpus portantes, sunt sancti rustici*", quoted after F. G r a u s, *Dějiny*, vol. II, p. 303. In medieval writings the farmers are, as a rule, compared to the feet which support the entire edifice of society; e.g. John of Salisbury says (PL 199, col. 540): "... *agricolae... qui totius corporis erigunt, sustentant et promovent molem*"; for this subject

Hussite hetman, Jan Žižka, asserted that all the social estates, like the members of one body, were under divine law.³³

Petr Chelčický, an interesting and original 15th century author, makes frequent use of the passage from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians which speaks of the body divided into members; he develops and enriches it. He criticises the state of society and of all its parts and says that it departs from the picture of harmony between the parts of the body, postulated by St. Paul. All the members of the organism, and like them the social groups, should take care of one another, for if one of them suffers, all the others suffer too, while the joy of one member becomes the joy of the others.³⁴ Reality in Chelčický's opinion is much more pessimistic; the presence of this desired harmony and equality is in no way to be seen. "How far we are from St. Paul's words that the troubles of one member should be felt by all the others," complains Chelčický. "Some members weep for they are being robbed and imprisoned, while others laugh at their great distress. And since those who wield the sword are the hands in this body while the common people are the feet, let us see what the hands are doing to the feet in the light of what St. Paul says. How pleasant it is to visualise what the hands do to the feet, putting shoes on them so that they should not get sore, frozen and muddy. When they get muddy, the hands wash them at once, when they get sore the hands take care of them, cure them and render them useful services."³⁵ Such is the desired situation, whereas reality is far less optimistic in Chelčický's opinion. He continues: "But these hands armed with the sword snatch away from the feet everything the latter have gained; the hands are incapable of doing anything but robbing the feet. The hands hold the sword. Instead of using medicine for the feet, they use the sword, the feet then begin to bleed, but the hands have no respect for them and beat them, treating them like loathsome cattle."³⁶ This most expressive picture shows us a world of

see F. von Bezold, *Die "armen Leute" und die deutsche Literatur des späteren Mittelalters*, "Historische Zeitschrift", 41, 1879, pp. 1–37; T. S t r u v e, *Pedes rei publicae. Die dienenden Stände im Verständnis des Mittelalters*, "Historische Zeitschrift" 236, 1983, pp. 1–48.

³³ V. Ch a l o u p e c k ý, *Selská otázka v husitství*, Bratislava 1926, p. 55.

³⁴ *O církvi svaté*, in: Petr Chelčický, *Drobné spisy*, ed. E. P e t r u, Praha 1966, p. 103.

³⁵ *O trojiem lidu*, *ibidem*, p. 123.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

social injustice in which the common people fall victim to brute force and repression by the upper strata of society. There is an unjust hierarchy among the parts of the body as there is among the social strata. The lords as the hands and the clergy as the head are the respected members of the social body while the common people correspond to the ignominious feet. In Chelčický's opinion they have no peace for nobody listens to their recommendation that the people of lower birth should be treated better and protected.³⁷

The same metaphor returns in the acts of Jednota Bratrská (Communion of Brethren), a community which regarded Chelčický as its spiritual father. *Psání o moci světské neb o moci mečové* (*A Message on Secular Power or the Power of the Sword*), attributed to brother Gregory Krajčí, a leader of the Communion, refers to Chelčický's texts and quotes almost word for word the above-mentioned passage about the hands which take no care of the feet.³⁸ It calls into question the division of Christ's mystical body into three parts where the lords wielding power are the hands, the clergy are the eyes and the working people are the feet, for the first two parts do not properly fulfil their obligations.³⁹ What is particularly painful is that there is no harmonious cooperation between the three parts. "If one member fulfils the duties resulting from his office, this will jeopardise the activity of another member and the effects of his activity will be lost. What kind of members are there then in this body, if they are an obstacle one to another?"⁴⁰ The lack of cooperation between the individual parts of the body, a lack which to a large extent results from the conflicting interests lying at the foundation of their activity, calls into question the sense of the division of society on the model of the human organism.

In 14th and 15th century Czech thought, the metaphor comparing the parts of the body with the parts of society can be found especially in authors who in their works acknowledge the tripartite division of society. One can ask about the origin of this motive. Since the Czech authors quote St. Paul, their knowledge of his epistles is indisputable. The analogy may have also been borrowed from St. Augustine whose works were utilised in the Czech territories, as is proved by the example

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

³⁸ *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, ed. J. Bidlo, vol. I, Brno 1915, pp. 541 ff.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 534 ff.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 537.

of Tomáš Štíttný⁴¹ We should also add Wyclif. His influence was strong in the Czech territories and lay at the foundation of Hussite ideology, and in his works, Wyclif too employed the motive of the human body divided into members. In one of the sermons, written either by Wyclif or an adherent of the Lollards, we read: "This Holy Church is our mother and it is also a body; in this body one part corresponds to another, in accordance with what Jesus Christ ordained in this matter... And so in accordance with St. Paul, each member of the Holy Church should be as a member of man and each should help the others; a kind hand should help the foot, and the foot should help the rest of the body... and so it should be with the parts of the Church."⁴² This, as well as other sermons which come from Wyclif's circle present a picture of the Church community in line with St. Paul's words. The cooperation and equality of the parts of the body imply that a similar situation should exist among the faithful; this excludes the hierarchy of the estates, so strongly supported by Tomáš Štíttný. Out of the various possible interpretations of the tripartite social division and its components, Wyclif and his circle chose the egalitarian version which corresponded to the social programme of the Lollards. When recording the acquaintance with the motive in

⁴¹ Štíttný repeatedly refers to St. Augustine, e.g. *Thómy z Štíttnéhe Knihy Naučeni Křestánského*, ed. A.J. Vrtátka, Praha 1873, pp. 3, 7, 9, 20, 26, 221, 228, 236, 291, 320, 325, 333, 334 etc.

⁴² *Selected English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. T. Arnold, vol. III, Oxford 1871, pp. 130 ff.: "That holy Chirche, as ho is oure moder, so ho is a body; and hele of this body stoude in this, that one part of hir answe to another, aftir the some mesure hat Jesus Crist haves ordeyned hit... And so by lore of Seynt Poule, iche membre of holy Chirche schulde be as membre of a man, and iche schulde helpe other; for kyndely monnis hond helpis his foote, and his foote his body... and thus schulde hit be in partis of the Chirche." Let us supplement this quotation by the words of another two English authors, Wyclif's contemporaries. John Bromyard, a 14th century Dominican, wrote in *Summa Predicantium* that God had created three groups of people, the working people corresponding to the feet, the knights to the hands, and the clergymen to the eyes; — see G.R. Ows t, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, Cambridge 1933, p. 554. In his sermon delivered in the second half of the 14th century (MS Harl 3760, f. 61^r–61^v in the British Museum; cf. also G.R. Ows t, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 587), Thomas Brunton, Bishop of Rochester, not only dealt with the identity of the parts of the body and various parts of the social organism, but also presented an interesting analysis of the social reality: "*Unum corpus multi sumus. Huius mistici corporis multa sunt membra: quia capita sunt reges, principes, et prelati, oculi sunt iudices, sapientes et veraces consiliarii, aures sunt religiosi, lingua doctores boni, manus dextra sunt milites ad defendendum parati, manus sinistra sunt mercatores et fideles mechanici, cor sunt cives et burgenses quasi in medio positi, pedes sunt agricolae et laborantes*

question in the Czech territories, we should therefore remember that it could have arrived there in several ways.

In search of an analogy to a society identified with the community of the faithful, authors also turned their attention to the external attributes of ecclesiastic activity, that is, to sacral buildings. The best known example of such a comparison was formulated by Honorius Augustodunensis in *Gemma animae*. He writes as follows about the component parts of a church:

“About the church windows

Clear, transparent windows which exclude storm and let in light are the doctors (spiritual teachers) who combat the winds of heresy and instil the light of the Church doctrine. The glass in the windows through which the beam of light penetrates are the minds of the doctors who contemplate the complex celestial matters as if in a mirror.

About the church columns

The columns which support the building are the bishops who have rightly raised the organisation of Church life to its heights. The supporting beams which hold the building together are the secular princes who constantly defend the Church. The tiles isolating the building from the rain are the knights who protect the Church from pagans and enemies.

About the floor

The floor trodden by the feet represents the common people whose work nourishes the Church.”⁴³

quasi totum corpus firmiter supportantes. Et licet in omnibus membris istis, precipue in duobus principalibus sollicite veritas est servanda, videlicet in capitibus discrete et iuste ad regendum, in cordibus perfecte ad diligendum. Dixi primo quod in capitibus veritas est servanda discrete et iuste ad regendum, quia capita et rectores tam temporales quam spirituales debent esse uni cum Doe per firmam adherenciam... Secundo, principes et rectores debent esse unanimes cum subditis, eos in periculis tamquam capita precedendo...”

⁴³ PL 172, col. 586: *Cap. CXXX — De Fenestris ecclesie. Perspicuae fenestrae, quae tempestatem excludunt ei lumen introducunt sunt doctores, qui turbini haeresum obsistunt, et lumen doctrinae Ecclesiae infundant. Vitrum in fenestris, per quod radius lucis jaculator, est mens doctorum, quae coelestia quasi per speculum in aenigmate contemplatur. Cap. CXXXI — De columnis ecclesiae. Columnae, quae domum fulciunt, sunt episcopi, qui machinam Ecclesiae vitae rectitudine in alta suspendunt. Trabes, quae domum conjungunt, sunt saeculi principes, qui ecclesiam continendo muniunt. Tegulae tacti, quae imbrem a domo repellunt, sunt milites, qui Ecclesiam a paganis et hostibus protegunt. Cap. CXXXIV — De pavimento. Pavimentum, quod pedibus calcatur, est vulgus cuius labore Ecclesia sustentatur.”* The parallels between society and artifacts were not confined to sacral buildings. For instance,

As far as social structure is concerned, this comparison is a development of the tripartite division. We have here the clergy who teach, the knights who defend and the peasants who maintain the other two groups. But the author has introduced more detailed divisions into this general picture; among the clergy he has assigned a separate position to bishops and has distinguished as separate social strata the knights and secular princes, who on the whole have identical duties. Such an interpretation can be regarded as a specific compromise between the old scheme and the actual stratification of the Christian community.

A less refined picture, though based on similar principles was later presented by the Franciscan Konrad, a preacher from Germany, who lived in the 13th century. In his construction the altar corresponds to Christ, the church spires to the pope and bishops, the choir to the priests and the nave to the secular crowd.⁴⁴ This division clearly departs from the functional tripartite division; it ignores the tasks of the individual social groups and does not distinguish the individual strata of the secular crowd.

The identification of the component parts of society with the parts of a church or a ship went hand in hand with comparisons which extended to a completely different sphere, namely, the sphere of religious symbolism. As A. Guriewicz rightly points out, it was difficult in medieval Christian Europe to find a more natural and accepted symbolic analogy to justify the tripartite division of society than the Holy Trinity.⁴⁵ It was the Holy Trinity that Adalberon of Laon, one of the leading theoreticians of the tripartite division, referred to at the beginning of the 11th century. "God's edifice," he said, "divided into three parts, is linked by the idea of a higher unity. Just as the individual parts of the Holy Trinity are united in a way which prevents any break, so the social estates are united by a functional bond which creates a harmonious whole."⁴⁶

the English sermon from MS Bodl. 649 *Abiit trans mare* from the years 1421–1422 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, F. 129^a, compares the English Kingdom to a ship and says that the bow corresponds to the clergy, the stern to the king and barons, and the entire middle part of the hull to the commoners, i.e. merchants, craftsmen and other working people; see G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 72.

⁴⁴ J. Le Goff, *La Civilisation de l'Occident Médiéval*, Paris 1967, p. 326.

⁴⁵ A. Guriewicz, *Tripartitio christiana — Tripartitio scandinavica (Concerning the interpretation of "The Song of Rig")*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", 1973, No. 3, p. 555.

⁴⁶ Adalberon de Laon, *Poème au roi Robert*, ed. C. Carozzi, Paris 1979, p. 20: "Res

A reflection of this concept, though marked by a slightly different interpretation, can be found in the writings of Matthew of Janovo, a theologian and preacher living in the second half of the 14th century, a predecessor of Hus. For him the body of Christ is a temple of divinity, of the Holy Trinity, and at the same time a temple of the chosen Christians.⁴⁷ Matthew was thinking of the receiving of Christ's body during the Holy Communion, but the text clearly links religious symbolism with a social metaphor. Stanislai of Znoyma, a prominent theologian and Hus's teacher, also looked for an analogy between the Trinity and man. In his concept he came near Augustinianism and frequently departed from Aristotle's idea. He also made use of Wyclif's concepts, but only those which did not criticise the Church dogmas; he rejected the heterodox views of the English theoretician, but this did not save him from being accused of heresy. In his treatise *De Felicitate*, Stanislai of Znoyma says: "*Nam homo secundum naturam suam intellectualem est et vivit ad ymaginem et similitudinem Dei Trinitatis...*"⁴⁸ The idea that man is a being constituting an image and likeness of the Holy Trinity resembles Adalberon of Laon's view whereby God's tripartite edifice was united by a bond of a higher kind. If the human being is a copy of the Trinity, one can presume that it consists of three closely united elements which can be regarded as a miniature of the tripartite social edifice. The comparing of the Christian community to the Trinity also attracted the attention of Wyclif and his circle. In the sermon *The clergy may not hold property*, which comes probably from the years 1365–1375 (though there are doubts about its authenticity) we read that

fidei simplex, status est sed in ordine triplex"; p. 22: "*Triplex ergo Dei domus est quae creditur una... Quae tria sunt simul et scissuram non patiuntur... Est igitur simplex talis connexio triplex.*" For analogies between the human world and the Holy Trinity see the works of St. Augustine, who in this respect created a kind of paradigm for the Middle Ages: *De Trinitate* XI, XI, 18, ed. P. A g a ë s s e (*Bibliothèque Augustinienne*, 15, 16), vol. I–II, Paris 1955, vol. I, pp. 570 ff; vol. II, pp. 209 ff., and *De Genesi ad litteram* IV, III, 7, ed. P. A g a ë s s e (*Bibliothèque Augustinienne* 48, 49), vol. I, Paris 1972, pp. 288 ff. and pp. 635 ff. Cf. also W. B e r g e s, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1938, pp. 56 ff., p.81 f.2; C. C a r o z z i, *D'Adalberon de Laon à Humbert de Moyenmoutier*, pp. 77 ff.

⁴⁷ V. K y b a l, *M. Matěj z Janova*, Praha 1905, p. 253.

⁴⁸ Stanislai de Znoyma *Tractatus De Felicitate*, ed. S. S o u s e d i k, "Mediaevalia Philosophica Polonorum", 19, 1974, p. 84; Giovanni da San Gimignano, whom we have already mentioned, says in *Summa de exemplis*, f. 76: "*Trinitas divinarum personarum in unitate essentie representatut generaliter in omnibus creaturis... Item apparet representatio trinitatis in omnibus substantiis.*"

the Church established by God is divided into three estates which correspond to and accord with the three persons of the Holy Trinity and their qualities. "So that the Father in the Trinity, to whom power is ascribed, has His counterpart in the estate of secular lords... The estate of the clergy corresponds to the second person of the Trinity, to whom wisdom is ascribed. The third person in the Trinity, connected with true love of, or good will towards, the Father and Son has its counterpart in the estate of the commoners."⁴⁹ The same Wyclif, characterising one of the three parts which he distinguished in the Church (*ecclesia triumphans, ecclesia dormiens, ecclesia militans*), viz., the militant Church present among the people, wrote that its three components (the clergy, the defenders and the working people), having been created in the image of the Holy Trinity, should live in harmony, for on this depends the health of the whole body of the militant Church.⁵⁰

This theme returns much later in the works of the Czech writer, diplomat and statesman Ctibor Tovačovský of Cimburk, who lived in the second half of the 15th century. Justifying the tripartite social division, he recalls the image of the Holy Trinity and of Christ and the three attributes which Christ took in his incarnation: corporality, the human soul and divinity. After the example of these three forms, Truth, one of the protagonists of Ctibor's *Hádání Pravdy a Lži o kněžské zboží panování jich*, established three estates, one of which was continuously working, the second was constantly reigning, and the third always served God.⁵¹

The sphere of religious symbolism certainly gave the theoreticians of the tripartite division strong support, but the imagination of medieval writers did not end there. They looked for analogies to the three estates and their three functions in rather unexpected fields, namely, in the

⁴⁹ *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto unprinted*, ed. F. D. Matthew, London 1880, pp. 362 ff.: "So that to the fadir in trinyte, to whom is appropred power, answerith the state of seculer lordis... To the secunde persone in trinyte to whom is appropred wisdom... answerith the state of the clergy... To the thridde persone in trinyte, to whom is appropred true loue or goode wille to the fadir and sonne, answerith the state of the comonte."

⁵⁰ *Johannes Wyclif, Polemical Works*, ed. R. Buddensieg, vol. II, London 1883, p. 654: "Et in armonia ista trium parcium ad imitacionem trinitatis increate consistit sanitas corporis ecclesie militantis."

⁵¹ See R. Urbánek, *Věk podebradský*, vol. 3, Praha 1930, p. 914; J. Vlček, *Dějiny české literatury*, vol. I, Praha 1960, p. 171.

animal world. In his *Liber de sancti Anselmi similitudinibus*, worked out at the beginning of the 12th century, Eadmer of Canterbury, Bishop of St. Andrews, wrote that God had established among the people three *ordines* which were to fulfil three important functions in the world: prayer, defence and work on the land. These tasks should be implemented by the clergy, whose counterparts were rams, by defenders, who corresponded to dogs, and farmers, who were compared to oxen.⁵²

The above mentioned constructions meant to find analogies to the division of the Christian community were paralleled by other divisions which also had the triad as their axis. Their primary idea was always to embrace the entire society, to subject it to a specific social or religious categorisation. Attempts of this kind were already made in the early Middle Ages, if only to quote the scheme *praelati, monachi, laici* which reached its apogee in the 9th century, but which goes back at least to St. Augustine. The division into priests, monks and laymen can be found in works on theology and canon law practically throughout the Middle Ages.⁵³ Its reflection appeared in the works of such 11th and 12th century authors from the territory of France as Dudon de Saint-Quentin or Benoit de Saint-Maure.⁵⁴ Another formula of a similar type is the division into *liberi, milites, servi* cited by, among others, Honorius Augustodunensis. In a way he reverted to the tripartite division known from the texts of Adalberon of Laon and Gerard of Cambrai (11th

⁵² PL 159, col. 679: "*Tres quippe sunt ordines hominum, videlicet orantes, agricultores et defensores. Hos autem ordines sic ac diversa officia Deus in hoc mundo disposuit, quemadmodum quidam paterfamilias oves, et boves, et canes maximos in domo sua, distribuit*"; for the social metaphors of Anselm of Canterbury to whom Eadmer devoted his work, see R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm and His Biographer*, Cambridge 1963, pp. 107 ff. From among the more original parallels to the social organism let us mention that John Bromyard, a 14th century Dominican, compared it in his *Summa Predicantium* to the harp and its strings. A concerted cooperation between the various parts of society corresponds to the situation when the strings being in their proper place and playing correctly, create a beautiful melody. Discord among the members of the community resembles badly sounding strings, as a result of which the melody is ugly — see G. R. Ows t, *Literature and Pulpit* p.558.

⁵³ G. Folliet, *Les trois catégories de Chrétiens, survie d'un thème augustinien*, "L'année théologique augustinienne, 14. 1954, pp. 77-96.

⁵⁴ Dudon de Saint-Quentin, *Des moeurs et des actes des premiers ducs de Normandie*, in: "Mémoire de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie", 23, ed. Lair, Caen 1865, pp. 200 ff.: *Benoit, Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, ed. C. Fahlin, vol. I, Uppsala — Wiesbaden — Haag — Genève 1951, p. 271.

century).⁵⁵

A system of classification which enjoyed exceptional longevity in the Middle Ages was the division of society according to three degrees of sexual purity. The division into the chaste, the continent and the married appeared already in St. Jerome's treatise *Adversus Jovinianum*.⁵⁶ After some time it began to be used in exegetic literature. An anonymous French 12th century commentary on *The Song of Songs* read: "*Tota pulchra (the Church) es in omnibus membris tuis, scilicet in continentibus, viduis et coniugatis, vel in oratoribus vel praelatis et defensoribus et agricolis.*"⁵⁷ According to the author, the chaste, the widowed and the married correspond to the functional division of the Church into the clergy, the defenders and the agriculturists.

A similar version was proposed by the English Benedictine William of Ramsay (first half of the 12th century), author of a commentary on *The Song of Songs*: "*Diversi sunt ordines in Ecclesia, quasi acies ordinata. Sunt clerici, milites, coloni. Sunt virgines, continentes et coniugati. Sunt activi, sunt contemplativi et praelati.*"⁵⁸ William of Ramsay mentions three classification types of the members of the Christian community in one breath. Of course he sees the differences between these types, but in his opinion they all have a common characteristic in that they consist of *ordines*. These Church-established component parts of society were given certain obligations, a specific *officium* which defined their place in the entire organism. The joint occurrence of the *ordines* and the idea of the social tripartite division can be found in the 12th century, and its traces are also evident later.

This kind of division which used criteria connected with the personal status and type of what we would call private and not social position fell on fertile ground in the Czech territories. Tomáš Štitný wrote a treatise *Concerning the Three States — of the Chaste, the Widowed and the Married*⁵⁹, the very title of which defines a tripartite division which the

⁵⁵ Cf. G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 306; C. Carozzi, *Les fondements de la tripartition sociale chez Adalberon de Laon*, "Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations", 33, 1978, pp. 683–702, passim.

⁵⁶ PL 23, col. 213 ff.

⁵⁷ MS in the National Library in Paris, Lat. Nouv. Acquis. 1360, f. 55^v; quoted in: H. Riedlinger, *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hoheliedkommentaren des Mittelalters*, Münster 1958, p. 123 f. 9.

⁵⁸ J. Leclercq, *Les Distinctiones super Cantica de Guillaume de Ramsay*, in: "Sacris Erudiri", 10, 1958, p. 345.

author then develops in greater detail. This theme was taken up by Matthew of Janovo. In his *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* he points out that Christ's body (i.e. the Church — W.I.) is subjected to various divisions and, inter alia, is divided into three parts which correspond to the three general states: the married state, the continent state and the state of the chaste.⁶⁰ A similar opinion was expressed in a sermon given in the Bethlehem Chapel by Master Jakoubek of Stříbr, a friend of Hus, who also mentioned these three states in an ecclesiological context.⁶¹ This specific division of the Christian community also found a place in Petr Chelčický's reflections. He put the essence of the problem in this way: "the estates of the clergy, the knights and the working people; the chaste, widowed and married estates — this is how the Holy Church has been formed."⁶² Chelčický, like the west European authors, places these two divisions side by side. Though their criteria differ, they cover the whole of the Christian community. Chelčický finds many faults in these classifications. He regards the tripartite social division as an instrument allowing the upper classes to exploit the lower, while the main defect of the division into the chaste, the widowed and the married is that it offers no protection against laxity of morals and licentiousness. Since none of the three states fully meets this condition, they cannot, in his opinion, be regarded as equitable elements of the Holy Church.⁶³ However, for Chelčický the two types of classification are much nearer to each other than they are for William of Ramsay, who wrote that the Church comprised three estates: of the knights, i.e. those who bore the sword, of married people who produce children to be baptized and of the peasants working on the land.⁶⁴ We see that the author exchanged the elements of the two divisions, which must have been quite a natural operation for him. Ottavia Niccoli is of the opinion that the two divisions had

⁵⁹ *O trojím stavu, panenském, vdovském a manželském*, in: *Tomáš ze Štítneho. Knížky*, pp. 47–97.

⁶⁰ *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. V. K y b a l, vol. II, Innsbruck 1909, p. 208: "*Est adhuc et alia divisio corporis Christi in tres iuncturas, id est in tres status communes et notabiles condistincta, videlicet in statum coniugalium et in statum continencium et in statum virginum.*"

⁶¹ *M. Jakoubek ze Stříbra, Betlemská kázání z roku 1416*, ed. K. S i t o, Praha 1951, p. 82.

⁶² *O církvi svatě*, in: *Petr Chelčický, Drobné spisy*, p. 101.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

a different origin: the division into the clergy, the warriors and the peasants was created by the lay clergy while the division into the chaste, the continent and the married came from monastic circles. According to Niccoli, the second division died out far more quickly than the first, and she attributes the greater durability of the first division to the new concept of *ordines*, based on various *officia* and worked out in the times of Gregory VII. The crusades enhanced the value of knighthood, and this was the reason for the stability and durability of the functional tripartite division.⁶⁵ This opinion seems to be only partly right. As is proved by the examples we have cited, the division into the chaste, the continent and the married survived for quite a long time, reaching well into the 15th century (the examples cited by Niccoli do not go beyond the 12th century).

In connection with this classification let us now discuss the presence of women in the tripartite scheme. Generally speaking, they were neither a separate group nor participants in the activity of any of the three parts.⁶⁶ This assertion can, however, be applied only to the social tripartite division, where women are not obliged to help in the fulfilment of the tasks assigned to each of the estates. The situation is slightly different if we look at the division into the chaste, the continent and the married. The use of conceptual categories from the sphere of sexual life could not but introduce women, although in their arguments the authors avoid paying special attention to them or assigning to them specific duties in which men have no part. For instance, in *De Statu Ecclesiae*, a treatise dating from the first half of the 12th century, which speaks of three *ordines*, Bishop Gilbert of Limerick assigned an insignificant role to women. The author permitted the presence of married men in the estate of the clergy and in his view the sole task of women in all the three groups was faithful service in marriage and outside it.⁶⁷

As has been said above, Matthew of Janovo recorded that the Church was divided into the married, the continent and the chaste.

⁶⁵ O. Niccoli, *I sacerdoti*, pp. 27 ff.

⁶⁶ G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ PL 159, col. 997: "*Qui autem his gradibus intra sinum parochialis ecclesiae continentur, trifarie dividuntur. Ex quibus superiores in pyramide oratores intellige: et quia quidem ex his coniugati sunt, ideo viros et foeminas nominavimus. Sinistrales vero in pyramide aratores sunt, tam viri quam foeminae. Dexterales quoque bellatores sunt, viri atque foeminae. Nec dico foeminarum esse officium orare, arare aut certe bellare; sed tamen his coniugatae sunt aut subserviunt, qui orant et arant et pugnant.*"

Elsewhere the same preacher wrote that “our fathers (a reference to patristic works) divided the Christian people into three grades, namely, the beginners, the proficient and the perfect or the married, the widowed and the chaste.”⁶⁸ This is a symptomatic list. Matthew of Janovo implies that traditional patristic works regarded the two classifications mentioned by him as very similar, if not identical. If we recall that Petr Chelčický identified the division into social estates with that into the chaste, the widowed and the married, we shall see the line linking these different divisions.

Pre-Hussite and Hussite theologians and preachers knew the division into the beginners, the proficient and the perfect from the writings of scholastic mystics, but the division is certainly much older. It was already anchored in the catechumenal tradition of the first centuries of the Church. Its traces can also be found in Origen. The triad distinguishing three groups among people, depending on the moral merits qualifying them for salvation, was also formulated by St. Augustine and Gregory the Great.⁶⁹ A similar division was created by Dionysius the Areopagita (6th century), who divided the Christian community into *perfecti*, *imperfecti* i *ypocrite*, and this version was repeated by Honorius Augustodunensis.⁷⁰ The tripartite division into “the beginners, the proficient and the perfect” also found its place in the works of authors of the developed Middle Ages, such as Hugo of St. Victor, Bonaventura, David of Augsburg and Thomas Aquinas. In the ordinary course of events the concept was adopted in the Czech territories. Its influence is clearly seen in the *Malogranatum*, a work from the middle of the 14th century,⁷¹ the threshold of the pre-Hussite era. That was a specific handbook comprising excerpts from the works of various authorities, and its aim was to satisfy religious as well as moral needs. Permeated with *devotio moderna*, the work undoubtedly cont-

⁶⁸ *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. O. Odložilík, vol. V, Praha 1926, p. 55: “...patres nostri in tres gradus famosos profectum in christiano populo distinxerunt, scilicet incipientium, proficiendum et perfectorum, vel coniugatorum, viduarum et virginum.”

⁶⁹ G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 105; the division into *praepositi*, *continentes*, *conjugati* in St. Augustine, in: PL 40, col. 717.

⁷⁰ PL 172, col. 1011.

⁷¹ V. Kallab, *Malogranatum a jeho puvodce*, “Věstník Královské České Společnosti Nauk”, 1911; J. Tříška, “Nová literatura” doby Karlovy a Václavovy, “Sborník Historický”, 10, 1962, pp. 35 ff.; *idem*, *Literární činnost předhusitské univerzity*, Praha 1967, pp. 9 ff.

ributed to the initiation of a spiritual reform in the Czech territories, which ended with the Hussite revolution. *Malogranatum* was of a mystical, contemplative character and was addressed to people in three stages of religious perfection (*incipientes, proficientes, perfecti*). Edited in the monastery at Zbraslav, it enjoyed great popularity greatly transcending the frontiers of Central Europe. It was used, among others, by Matthew of Janovo (according to him the saints were on the highest rung, i.e. among the perfect)⁷², by Tomáš Štitný and Matthew of Zbraslav (he took the side of the traditional Catholic camp and not that of the Wyclif-Hussite wing). This specific tripartite division was not unknown to the authors of the pre-Hussite and Hussite generations. Hus used it in the collected sermons *Ad te levavi*.⁷³ He returned to it again in *Vyklad viery* (Exposition of Faith), saying that God had created “three sides of the world, the heavens, the earth and the sea, in three stages and wanted the “ternary people” to read Him (the Bible is probably meant) on Sundays. This people divided into three was made up of — to start with the highest rung — those thinking of God, who in their spirits are in heaven, the industrious people acting well on earth, and those starting penance. The way for those desiring perfection would, therefore, end in contemplation and in reaching maturity for independent meditations about the Supreme Being.⁷⁴ The question was put in a similar way by Jakoubek of Stříbro, whom we have already mentioned.⁷⁵ His successor in the Chapel of Bethlehem⁷⁶ (the chapel was set up in Prague in the 1390s and developed into a strong preaching centre) was Vaclav of Dráchov. In his *Výklad žalmu* (*Commentary on the Psalms*) Vaclav, who graduated from the arts department of the University in 1415 and obtained the master’s degree in 1430, frequently used the triad: the beginners, the proficient and the

⁷² V. Kybal, *M. Matěj z Janova*, p. 231.

⁷³ J. Tříška, *Literární činnost*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ *Výbor z české literatury husitské doby*, ed. B. Havránek et al., vol. I, Praha 1963, p. 148; cf. J. Vodehnal, *K pramenům a složení Husova českého “Vykladu viery”*, “Časopis Českého Muzea” 90, 1916, pp. 21–35, 151–162, 278–293, 393–407.

⁷⁵ J. Tříška, *Literární činnost*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ Cf. F.M. Bartoš, *První století Betléma kaple*, Praha 1922, pp. 9–21; O. Odložilík, *The Chapel of Bethlehem*, “Wiener Archiv für Geschichte des Slaventums und Osteuropa,” 2, 1956, pp. 125–142; the pre-Hussite inscriptions on the walls of the Bethlehem Chapel are in: *Betlémské texty*, ed. B. Ryba, Praha 1951.

perfect.⁷⁷ Another preacher, Johlin of Vodňany, divided his *Postilla Zderaziensis*, worked out in 1403–1404, into the Advent, Lent and Summer parts, which were to correspond to the three stages of man's improvement.⁷⁸ This classification was also known to Mařík Rvačka (Mauricius de Praga), an interesting, though controversial figure,⁷⁹ inquisitor in Prague and Poland, professor of theology at the University of Prague from 1406 at the personal request of Pope Innocent VII, and author of anti-Hussite satires. Rvačka deserves attention in our reflections as author of the sermon *Sermo de triplici statu hominis (Tres sunt status vite christiana)*, in which he used the above-mentioned principles of the division of the faithful.⁸⁰ This brief survey shows that the division in question cannot be linked to one political party since it was used by representatives of both the Hussite movement and its antagonists.

It is amazing that this triad was not abandoned when the Hussite movement died out but was incorporated into the opinions of the Bohemian Brethren. At the beginning of the 16th century the Communion of Brethren divided its believers into the Beginners, the Proficient and the Perfect. But even earlier, in 1464, the first act of the young Communion spoke of the division of the Brethren into four groups: 1. priests and teachers, 2. single people, 3. married people, 4. people doing penance or rather waiting. Amedeo Molnár is of the opinion that this already augured the later division into three groups of perfection.⁸¹ According to Molnár there were two reasons for introducing this triad. First, this was a reversion to the old system of organising the faithful, a system which had its roots in the pre-Constantine times, that is the period which in later times was frequently regarded as the model period in the history of the Church.

⁷⁷ J. Tříška, *Literární činnost*, p. 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 66; cf. R. Řičan, *Johlin z Vodňan, křížovník klášteřa zderazského*, "Věstník Královské České Společnosti Nauk", I, 1929 (published separately, Praha 1930).

⁷⁹ Cf. R. Urbánek, *Mařík Rvačka jako protihusitský satirik*. "Časopis Společnosti Prátel Starožitnosti," 63, 1955, pp. 1–24; F.M. Bartoš, *Z politické literatury doby husitské*, "Sborník Historický," 5, 1957, p. 21; P. Spunár, *Repertorium auctorum bohemorum protractum idearum post Universitatem Pragensem conditam illustrans*, vol. I, Wratislaviae 1985, pp. 308–326.

⁸⁰ MS ID 32 in the (State) University Library in Prague; cf. J. Tříška, *Literární činnost*, p. 71.

⁸¹ A. Molnár, *Počínající, pokračující, dokonali*, in: *Jednota bratrská 1457–1957*, Praha 1956, pp. 147–169.

Secondly, the division into three degrees of perfection may have been introduced in the groups of the Communion with a view to disputing the traditional division of society into the lords, the clergy and the working people. Combating the old system, the Bohemian Brethren rallied in the Communion opposed to it another system, based on completely different principles. The idea of the congregation divided according to the gifts of the Holy Ghost was also a continuation of the concept of the ideological patron of the Communion of Brethren, Petr Chelčický, who, interpreting the passage about the division of the body from St. Paul's epistle, wrote: "For St. Paul does not enumerate the parts of Christ's body according to their corporal properties, but according to the various gifts of the Holy Ghost. This teaching is meant for the many members of this body through the intermediary of the gifts from which the members draw knowledge of their God, fear Him, they also act justly towards God and their neighbours in corporal and spiritual matters."⁸² The pagan tripartite social division found here a counterpart in another division; the former was based on brute force and oppression, the latter invoked very noble principles. This was succinctly put in the acts of the Communion which say that "the power of the sword is incapable of doing what the power of faith does."⁸³ As time went by, the opinions of the Brethren evolved and the division into the beginners, the proficient and the perfect was no longer strongly emphasised as a counterweight to the division into social groups. This happened when the Brethren became interested in the participation of the lords in the Communion. Nevertheless, the Brethren still retained their negative evaluation of the existing social relations for a long time.⁸⁴

There are still other examples of the use of triadic mental structures, but they are rather arbitrary and can therefore be hardly subordinated to an unequivocal organising rule. Not all of them aimed at classifying the entire society, many concerned only its parts, selected according to necessity and the historical context. Others concerned the tripartite division in the sphere of ideas, religious or economic thought, to mention Jakoubek of Strěbro's sermon *Accipiebant spiritum sanctum* which considers the spirit divided into three.⁸⁵ A competitive system to

⁸² Petr Chelčický, *O trajím lidu*, in: *Drobné spisy*, p. 128.

⁸³ *Akty Jednoty*, vol. I, p. 543.

⁸⁴ A. Molnár, *Počínající*, p. 151.

⁸⁵ *Studie a texty k náboženským dějinám českým*, ed. J. Sedláček, vol. I, Olomouc 1914, pp. 371–372; cf. F.M. Bartoš, *Literární činnost M. Jakoubka ze Strěbra*, Praha 1925, p. 26.

the three-functional one was the division according to the degree of wealth. The author of *Utrum quelibet civitas ad sui regenciam requirit prudentiam ordinatam*,⁸⁶ an anonymous university treatise from about 1412, deals nominally with the urban community and divides it into the rich, the poor and people of average means (*mediocres*). The author sympathises with the last-named group because it does not have other people's property and is not the object of envy by anybody, as the richest group is.⁸⁷ The unknown author of the treatise uses passages from Aristotle's *Politics* word for word, but his support for the middle burgher class places him in the numerous body of university masters sharing this view. It does not seem that he wanted to confine his description to the urban community. One can assume that his classification, disregarding birth and traditional privileges and based on the size of property owned, could be applied to the whole of society for which the town should, in the author's opinion, be a model. The lack of strictly defined boundaries between the urban community and the state and the interchangeable use of the term *civitas* and *politia*⁸⁸ militate in favour of such an interpretation. Jakoubek of Štříbro's sermon *Beati pauperes*,⁸⁹ which discussed three kinds of poverty, also made use of economic categories, but had a narrower social reach.

Criticism of various spheres of life was also frequently based on the trifunctional division of the Christian community. Tomáš Štitný, an ardent propagator of the tripartite division, used the expression *trójstav* (three estates) to denote usurers, dice players and rogues, a trinity of questionable conduct.⁹⁰ The unknown author of *Desatero kázanie božie* (*God's Ten Commandments*),⁹¹ a satirical work dating from the second

⁸⁶ MS X E 24, ff. 345^v–347^r in the (State) University Library in Prague.

⁸⁷ Quoted after J. K ě j ř , *Stát, církev a společnost v disputacích na pražské universitě v době Husově a husitské*, Rozpravy Československé Akademie Věd. Rada společenských ved 74, No. 14, Praha 1964, p. 44 f. 223: "...^o noto, quod secundum Philosopum Politicorum in qualibet civitate sunt triplices homines, scilicet divites, pauperes et mediocres, inter quos mediocres maxime salvantur in civitate, nam nimis divites et potentes nec sciunt nec volunt subici. Qui vere sunt nimis egere et viles, nesciunt participari, mediocres autem cives non desiderant aliena, ut desiderant pauperes, nec alii desiderant eorum bona, ut divitum, igitur frequencius sine sedicione vivunt."

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

⁸⁹ *Studie a texty k náboženským dějinám*, vol. I, pp. 377–392.

⁹⁰ *Thómy ze Štitného Knihy*, ed. J. V r t á t k o , p. 99.

⁹¹ *Staročeské satiry Hradeckého rukopisu a Smilovy školy*, ed. J. H r a b á k , Praha 1962, pp. 55–89.

half of the 14th century, enjoys using the term *trój lid* (a ternary people). He says that the ternary people acts against God, thus losing its soul. Whom does the author mean by this expression? It turns out that he has in mind three categories of people engaged in highly reprehensible activities.⁹² The first are those who contribute to the dissemination of paganism, engage in sorcery and magic, thus leading the people astray. The second group comprises misers and usurers, people who love gold and silver more than they love God. They do not care about their salvation, which is worth more than anything in the world. By serving a master for a reward they carelessly expose themselves to danger, for the master will not only forget the reward but will even kill his servant. What is the author's advice to those who value material goods above all? They should find employment with a better master, the King of Heaven, for in His service one can count on eternal reward. If somebody loses his life or property for the Lord, he may be certain of compensation.⁹³ The last group of the ternary people consists of all those who excessively indulge in corporal pleasures, relishing the delights of the table and drinks. They commit a grave sin thereby, for "they regard their belly as God, and they care more for it than they care for their soul and God."⁹⁴ Having characterised the three groups, the author gives an ironic presentation of the people who do not observe the Ten Commandments. We learn that it is the ternary people that is to be blamed for these sins and that each commandment is violated to a greater or lesser extent. We can notice an interesting metamorphosis of the addresses of the concept of *trój lid*; the term refers not only to the three groups characterised above, but in fact, to the whole society. The record of the possible violations of the Decalogue is much broader than the charges levelled against the three categories of people in the initial part of *Desatero kázanie božie*. The further part of the work confirms this interpretation. Discussing various deeds which conflict with the Ten Commandments, the author speaks of the entire social ladder and says that all its rungs are guilty of sin. He does not omit any important social group and class, enumerating princes and counts, voivodes and landgraves, freeholders, shopkeepers and peasants, bishops, monks and students, nuns, canons, petty knights and stewards.⁹⁵ Nobody

⁹² *Ibidem*, pp. 56 ff.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 72

has been spared; the ternary people includes all the essential elements of the social edifice, and has approached the traditional tripartite division. It is an open question to what extent this is a satire distorting the picture of all the estates, a practice which was common in medieval literature,⁹⁶ and to what extent *trój lid* (ternary people) had become an accepted term denoting the entire Christian community; such a notion could have arisen as a result of the growing popularity of the idea of social tripartition. Though unsparing in his criticism of the various groups, the author is far from the radicalism which marked the demands of the early Taborites. He probably came from the urban ecclesiastical intelligentsia. In his opinion evil was caused by the violation of harmonious cooperation between the estates and by their inadequate fulfilment of the tasks they had been assigned. Josef Hrabák attributes this lack of radicalism in satirical pictures to broader social conditions. In his opinion the Czech townsmen, though their importance increased in the second half of the 14th century, did not yet have such a strong estate consciousness as the gentry and were incapable of producing their own genuine social satire.⁹⁷

When considering the significance of the specific presentation of tripartite division in *The Ten Commandments* let us add that medieval literature contains other examples of a parodistic and lop-sided presentation of the theme of tripartitio. Let us quote an excerpt from a goliardic poem:

*“Quod papa concesserat, quis potest vetare?
Cuncta potest solvere solus et ligare,
laborare rusticos, milites pugnare
iussit, ac praecipue clericos amare.”⁹⁸*

In this version the omnipotent pope assigned specific tasks to the various social groups. He reserved work for the peasants, warring for the knights, while the third element of the tripartite pattern, the clergy, were assigned amorous duties, instead of the traditional prayer. Such a formulation is in a way an offshoot of the dispute between a cleric and a knight about precedence in love, known from many medieval texts.

⁹⁶ Cf. R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, New York 1933 (reprinted New York 1962).

⁹⁷ *Staročeské satiry*, p. 14 n of the introduction.

⁹⁸ P. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1963, p. 114.

In concluding these reflections on the various tripartite systems which appeared alongside or independently of the tripartite division using concrete sociological terms, one can formulate several general conclusions. There is no doubt that these systems reveal many similarities with the theory of the three estates, although their divisions are mostly based on criteria originating from the religious sphere. The comparison of the social tripartite division with the parts of the human body, with sacral buildings, the Holy Trinity, the animal world or with musical instruments appealed to the imagination of people; it familiarised them with a doctrine which tried to explain the necessary order in the Christian community. The proliferation of various other tripartite systems did not occur in a vacuum, but in definite social and cultural conditions. What is interesting is that these various tripartite divisions often coincided with the social tripartition. G. Duby says that the division into three social functions, which can be found in the 11th century in Adalberon of Laon and Gerard of Cambrai, was preceded and facilitated by various other earlier classification systems which could not give a reliable and adequate picture of social relations.⁹⁹

A similar trend can be observed in the literature in the Czech territories. When reflecting on the three degrees of perfection, that is, the widowed, the chaste and the married, Matthew of Janovo made an observation which explains a lot. He said that the distinction had derived from the Gospels.¹⁰⁰ And as we remember, the division into the married, the widowed and the chaste was identified with the division into the clergy, the knights and the working people (Chelčický). The circle is thus closed for we can draw the conclusion that all the classifications discussed herein have, in fact, their roots in the Gospels and that they all owe much one to another. Therefore, in sum, although all these orders, all the various *ordines* are not homogenous, they certainly do not contrast (I have in mind the general trend, for the situation could vary in the individual cases). Seen together, they show us *societas christiana* as a coherent whole made up of many segments which serve the supreme idea of unity.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

⁹⁹ G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 105: "Il est indéniable que l'affirmation, au seuil du XIe siècle, de la trifonctionnalité sociale fut facilitée par la longue présence de l'autre figure tripartite..."; cf. *idem*, *Aux origines d'un système de classification sociale*, in: *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, vol. II, Paris 1973, p. 185.

¹⁰⁰ *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, vol. V, p. 55: "Et hoc distinctio ex ewangelio accepit exordium..."