

modern and contemporary examples could be justified by the fact that the bodily emulation of the pains of the suffering Christ has proved a central, although extreme, religious manifestation within Roman Catholicism since the times of Saint Francis of Assisi, where the points of reference (the Gospels and the legends and artistic representations of previous stigmatics) constituted a rather closed and repetitive tradition, especially as regards the individual, experience of the stigmatics. While the religious, social and intellectual contexts of these extraordinary, shocking miraculous manifestations, and the various apologetic or critical discourses around them, were largely varied throughout history,<sup>75</sup> the bodily manifestations – including the problems of infirmity and illness – should be compared in the *longue durée*.

Naturally, one should be very cautious not to impose modern medical diagnoses to inadequately documented medieval or early modern cases. And even in the better documented, more or less observable modern cases, such diagnoses are very fragile and controversial. But the puzzle is fascinating, and a systematic exploration of historical data could advance our understanding.

<sup>75</sup> These changing religious, social and medical discourses have been examined in the conference papers I have recently edited in a monographic issue of the *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà*: Gábor Klaniczay, ed., *Discorsi sulle stimmate dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea – Discours sur les stigmates du Moyen Âge à l'époque contemporaine* (2013).

## Chapter 8

# Imagery of Disease, Poison and Healing in the Late Fourteenth-century Polemics against Waldensian Heresy

Reima Välimäki

### Introduction

Leprosus est doctrina haereticorum falsa atque varia, vel Judaeorum infidelitas, sive contaminatio peccatorum, [...] Leprosi sunt haeretici Dominum Jesum Christum blasphemantes. Leprosi in barba, id est, haeretici de incarnatione Salvatoris, vel de sanctis apostolis prava sentientes. Leprosi toto in corpore, id est, qui et supra blasphemiam suam in omnem scripturam seriem permiscentes.<sup>1</sup>

Leprosy is the false and diverse doctrine of the heretics, or faithlessness of the Jews, or contamination of sins [...] Lepers are heretics, who blaspheme Lord Jesus Christ. Leprous in beard means heretics having perverse opinions about incarnation of the Savior or about Holy Apostles. Leprous in the whole body means those who mix their blasphemy in and over the whole Scripture.

As the quote from Hrabanus Maurus' ninth-century encyclopaedia shows, the body of the Church and its believers was considered to be under constant attack, just like the human body, and there existed connections between the ailments of body and soul. Among these a serious infection threatening both the health of an individual soul and the well-being of Christian community was heresy. Thus in the medieval concept of heresy and in the polemical language composed to refute it, the imagery of disease, pestilence, infection and poison and conversely healing and purification have a prominent place. The correlation of disease, impurity and dissidence is the legacy of late Antique Christian polemical rhetoric and ecclesiastical sanctions which prohibited interaction

<sup>1</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, in *Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina*, vol. CXI, ed. J.P. Migne (1852), 502. All translations by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

with 'diseased' and contagious schismatics and heretics.<sup>2</sup> As the excerpt from a prominent Carolingian intellectual demonstrates, this view persisted as a learned conception through the early medieval centuries when prosecution of heretics was almost non-existent in Latin Christendom. When heresy started from the eleventh century to be seen as a threat to the order in the Christian society, the authors describing heresy deployed the imagery of disease and pestilence together with other metaphors of corrupted dissidence.<sup>3</sup>

Analysis of the occurrence of such metaphors throughout the centuries, as intriguing as it would be, is well beyond the scope of a single article, or would easily become a mere survey of authors and works. Instead I shall confine my study to the end of the fourteenth century and to a single heretical group: Waldenses, a lay apostolic movement condemned heretical in the late twelfth century because of unlicensed preaching.<sup>4</sup> I argue that the rhetoric of disease and infection, together with related vocabulary of filth and corruption, as well as their counterparts healing and purification, were used in the late fourteenth century anti-heretical literature to distinguish certain aspects of Waldensian heresy, namely how it spread and was carried around in secrecy by Waldensian preachers, so called 'heresiarchs'. Although a common reservoir of biblical and patristic metaphors was shared by medieval authors, the application of figurative language was not haphazard. How authors experienced heresy at a certain moment influenced their choice of language, which in turn shaped the perception of heresy. Thus the descriptions of the clandestine Waldensian preachers differ from those relating the outbreak of Hussite revolution in Bohemia, although separated from each other only by few years.

This chapter thus complements the interpretations of the previous scholars treating the comparison of heresy and disease. The most important scholarly work on the topic is R.I. Moore's essay from 1976, titled 'Heresy as Disease', and concentrating on the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Moore sees imagery of disease directing attitudes towards heresy primarily during the early encounter and invention of high medieval heresies. According to him the metaphor, although at times still used, loses its prominence in the period of inquisitions against heresy, starting in the first half of thirteenth century, when the image of heretics and heresy was increasingly formed through direct contact and more precise knowledge on heterodox doctrines. Although Moore's results can only partially be applied to later texts, the notion that eleventh- and twelfth-century

<sup>2</sup> Christian Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens: rituelle und zeremonielle Exkommunikationsformen im Mittelalter* (2013), 341.

<sup>3</sup> R.I. Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th C.)*, eds W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (1976), 1–11.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview on medieval Waldenses, see Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (2000).

authors adopted the patristic metaphor of disease and heresy is crucial to our understanding of medical figurative language in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

Historian Lucy Sackville has extended the arguments of Moore into the descriptions of the thirteenth century, arguing that the metaphor of corruption and disease is used generically: 'A generalized vocabulary of corruption and infection is employed in the descriptions of heresy in what at times seems to be an almost inadvertent manner.'<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the development in the medical vocabulary of faith was prominent in the emerging understanding of the Church's relationship to sin as comparable to the physician–patient relationship, also an adaptation of patristic literature: sin was a disease, the sinner a patient and Church, imitating Christ, a doctor.<sup>7</sup> Concerning the same period, but using also Spanish material, Emilio Mitre Fernández has arrived to similar conclusions about heresy as disease and priests as healers of souls.<sup>8</sup> As we shall see, the understanding of inquisitor or priest as doctor healing the heretic has an equivalent in late fourteenth-century texts, but the figurative language of disease and infection was no longer used in an inadvertent manner, but oftentimes very consciously to carry specific meanings.

The end of the fourteenth century was, especially in German-speaking Europe, a period of intense persecution of Waldensian heretics,<sup>9</sup> and related composition of treatises against Waldensianism, along with the copying and reading of older treatises. Not only does this prolific output make it instructive to inquire if the imagery of disease had a significant status in contemporary descriptions of heresy; in addition it is interesting because of the fundamental importance and impact of the outbreak of bubonic plague (later known as the Black Death) in 1347–48. With subsequent outbreaks, plague and pestilence were a very real presence in late medieval culture.<sup>10</sup>

The most important text of the period – in terms of length, popularity, as well as expertise of its author – is the treatise written by Celestine inquisitor Petrus Zwicker in 1395. The work is usually known today as *Cum dormirent homines* from its initial quote from the gospel of Matthew (13:25). Zwicker's treatise became one of the most popular anti-heretical treatises of the Middle

<sup>5</sup> Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', 9–10.

<sup>6</sup> Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics in the Thirteenth Century: the Textual Representations* (2011), 171.

<sup>7</sup> Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 171–2.

<sup>8</sup> Emilio Mitre Fernández, 'Muerte, veneno y enfermedad, metáforas medievales de la herejía', *Heresis: revue d'histoire des dissidences européennes* 25 (1995): 63–84, esp. 82–4.

<sup>9</sup> While there is no comprehensive treatment of the prosecutions of heretics in the last decade of the fourteenth century, the best survey is offered by Georg Modestin, *Ketzler in der Stadt: der Prozess gegen die Strassburger Waldenser von 1400* (2007), 1–12.

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Bergdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa: die große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters* (1994), 151–62, 207–22.

Ages, as there are around 50 extant manuscripts including *Cum dormirent homines* or sections of it.<sup>11</sup> In this article the references are based on the most accessible printed edition, a reprint of Jesuit Jacob Gretser's publication (1613/1677).<sup>12</sup> Representatives of the same era and cultural milieu include an anonymous treatise *Refutatio errorum*,<sup>13</sup> and a shorter tractate written probably by Viennese theologian Petrus de Pilichdorf.<sup>14</sup> Yet another anonymous treatise, *Attendite a falsis prophetis*, was composed earlier, by 1390.<sup>15</sup> Besides the works

<sup>11</sup> See Peter Biller, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise Cum Dormirent Homines of 1395 and Its Author', in *The Waldenses 1170–1530, Between a Religious Order and a Church* (2001), 264–9. See also the recent survey by Georg Modestin, who however relies completely on Biller's results with regards to the manuscript tradition: Georg Modestin, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise Cum Dormirent Homines: Historical Context, Polemical Strategy, and Manuscript Tradition', in *Religious Controversy in Europe, 1378–1536*, eds Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup (2013), 211–29.

<sup>12</sup> Petrus Zwicker, '[Pseudo]-Petri de Pilichdorf contra Haeresin Waldensium Tractatus' (hereafter: 'Cum dormirent homines'), in *Lucae tvdensis episcopi, Scriptores aliquot succedanei contra sectam waldensium*, ed. Jacob Gretser, Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, et Antiquorum Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum. Tom. XXV (1677), 277F–299G; Jacob Gretser falsely attributed the work to Petrus de Pilichdorf, Viennese university theologian contemporary to Zwicker. Evidence presented by Peter Biller in his dissertation and subsequent publications has confirmed Zwicker's authorship. See Peter Biller, 'Aspects of the Waldenses in the Fourteenth Century', (1974), 354–62; Biller, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise'.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Segl has tentatively proposed that Zwicker was the author of *Refutatio errorum* as well, see Peter Segl, 'Die Waldenser in Österreich um 1400: Lehren, Organisationsform, Verbreitung und Bekämpfung', in *Friedrich Reiser und die 'waldensisch-hussitische Internationale' im 15. Jahrhundert*, eds Albert de Lange and Kathrin Utz Tremp (2006), 185, n. 102; the text has been likewise published by Gretser, see Jacob Gretser, ed., 'Refutatio Errorum, quibus Waldenses distinentur, incerto Auctore', in *Lucae tvdensis episcopi, Scriptores aliquot succedanei contra sectam waldensium*. Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, et Antiquorum Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum. Tom. XXV, (1677), 302G–307F. Gretser's print stops abruptly in the middle of the tenth chapter. The complete text includes a total of 12 chapters, preserved e.g. in Augsburg Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 2<sup>o</sup> Cod. 338, fols 159r–70r. All sections relevant to the present topic are covered by Gretser's print, and I cite it. In my forthcoming dissertation I will treat the relationship of *Refutatio Errorum* and *Cum dormirent homines* in greater detail.

<sup>14</sup> Petrus de Pilichdorf, 'Fragmentum ex Tractatu Petri de Pilichdorff contra pauperes de Lugduno', in *Lucae tvdensis episcopi, Scriptores aliquot succedanei contra sectam waldensium*. Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, et Antiquorum Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum. Tom. XXV (1677), 299E–302F; cf. Biller, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise', 247–51.

<sup>15</sup> Biller, 'Aspects', 261, 365; Peter Biller, 'The Waldenses in German-Speaking Areas in the Later Fourteenth Century: The View of an Inquisitor', in *The Waldenses, 1170–1530: Between a Religious Order and a Church* (2001), 290. The references are to a manuscript Stifft Sankt Florian XI 152, fols 48v–50v.

written at the end of the fourteenth century one must take into account two treatises that, although written in the previous century, were still in active use and were also later copied together with fourteenth-century texts. The first one is a compilation against the enemies of the Church (heretics, Jews and Antichrist) by an unknown author, known as Anonymous of Passau.<sup>16</sup> Another important treatise is *De inquisitione hereticorum*, written after 1253, and attributed by Wilhelm Preger to German Franciscan David of Augsburg, an attribution which is now considered to be very doubtful.<sup>17</sup>

Polemical descriptions of heresy have been sometimes read merely as masking underlying political motives, which the historian must unravel.<sup>18</sup> However, to perceive a change in the application of these metaphors, it is more fruitful to consider texts on heresy as representing the medieval typology and exegesis, as proposed by Beverly Kienzle. Contemporary occurrences or persons are foreshadowed by the Scriptures, and in their turn may foreshadow the end of times.<sup>19</sup> I have also been inspired by a flexible understanding of medieval *topos*, proposed by Teemu Immonen. *Topos* should not be conceived self-evidently as a convention of texts obscuring the historical facts. Rather, *topos/locus* is in a very concrete way a place: a starting point to various, even contradictory interpretations and explanations of a concept.<sup>20</sup> In the case of anti-heretical literature this means that an author could pick from a variety of metaphors, some of which could lead into several different interpretations in the minds of contemporary readers. Thus the careful reading of the metaphors can reveal what aspects of heresy were stressed by certain authors or during certain periods, and consequently, the function of heresy in contemporary culture. These methodological guidelines recall Lucy Sackville's views on reading descriptions of heresy: instead of static *topos* she has tracked layering and accumulation of

<sup>16</sup> References are to sections on Waldenses published in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser* (1973), eds Alexander Patschovsky and Kurt-Victor Selge, 70–103.

<sup>17</sup> Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 139. References are to 'Der Tractat des David von Augsburg über die Waldesier', ed. Wilhelm Preger, *Abhandlungen der historischen Classe der königlich bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 14 (1879): 203–35.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Mark Gregory Pegg, *A Most Holy War: The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (2008), 51: 'Raimon V [the Count of Toulouse], couching his blunt political fears in the soaring apocalypticism of rebellious heretics poised to destroy his lands'.

<sup>19</sup> Beverly Mayne Kienzle, 'The Bestiary of Heretics. Imaging Medieval Christian Heresy with Insects and Animals', in *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, eds Kimberley Patton and Paul Waldau (2006), 104.

<sup>20</sup> Teemu Immonen, 'Building the Cassinese Monastic Identity: A Reconstruction of the Fresco Program of the Desiderian Basilica (1071)'. PhD diss. University of Helsinki, 2012, 15.

certain elements in thirteenth-century literature, as well as adaptation of these elements to the purposes of the text.<sup>21</sup>

### Heretics and Lepers

Heresy had a special connection to one disease in particular, itself a symbol of sin, corruption and depraved sexuality: leprosy.<sup>22</sup> Leprosy was as much cultural diagnosis as medical one, and actual leprosy caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* was commonly confused with other skin diseases. To this was added religious and moral shunning of leprosy, deriving from Leviticus and other Old Testament examples.<sup>23</sup> As the quote from Hrabanus Maurus demonstrates, this patristic and biblical metaphor was used throughout the Middle Ages. Sometimes the equation heretic = leper is used in a way implying that it was self-evident. Anonymous of Passau, usually rather moderate in the use of polemical metaphors, states bluntly that heretics 'docent eciam in domibus leprosorum'.<sup>24</sup> This not only links preachers of heresy and lepers, but the passage demonstrates a commonplace notion of secret meeting places of heretics as nests of sin, decay and disease; here articulated as leper-houses. As Sackville points out, this idea was not confined to the literary world of polemical treatises but was manifested in anti-heretical legislation as a requirement to destroy the physical shelters of heretics – and consequently in actions taken by persecutors.<sup>25</sup>

In our period of interest these measures were implemented in Ödenburg (Sopron) on 9 January 1401. The inquisitor Petrus Zwicker ordered the houses where heretics had congregated to be demolished.<sup>26</sup> Although the disease

<sup>21</sup> Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, esp. 9, 175, 177.

<sup>22</sup> The greater part of Moore's article actually treats heresy and leprosy. See Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', 4–9.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Zimmerman, 'Leprosy in the Medieval Imaginary', *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 559–61.

<sup>24</sup> 'They teach in leper-houses'. *Quellen*, eds Patschovsky and Selge, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 126.

<sup>26</sup> Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. ch. f. 51, f. 24v: *Item dicimus et summaliter pronunciamus quod omnes domos in quibus heresiarche scilicet hospicia sunt aut pro quolibet per hereticos aut hereticas intronissi a cristi fidelibus maledicti habeantur. Et ubi cristi fidelium communitati magnum ex hac incomodum prouenerit funditus diruantur et in posterum nullatenus reedificentur, ut ibi sit perpetuo receptaculum sordium ubi prius fuit aliquando latibulum hereticorum.* This sentence, preserved in a late (1470s?) copy, has been edited by Herman Haupt. My reading differs significantly only in one point. Haupt reads 'aliquod latibulum hereticorum', according to my interpretation 'aliquando' is preferable. Cf. Herman Haupt, 'Waldenserthum und Inquisition im südöstlichen Deutschland seit der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3 (1890): 401–3, quote 403.

metaphor is not explicit, the parallel of heretical community and pollution is implicit. The symbolism of filth is loaded into the sentence: 'ut ibi sit perpetuo receptaculum (ms: *receptaculum*<sup>27</sup>) sordium, ubi prius fuit aliquando latibulum hereticorum'. Interestingly Zwicker uses almost identical language to earlier inquisitorial sentences and legislation. Orvieto formulary from mid-thirteenth century, quoted by Sackville, 'condemns a house as a "perpetual refuge of filth, where at times there was a den of heretics"'.<sup>28</sup> The crucial word here is *receptaculum sordium*. Sackville translates it as 'refuge of filth'. The former house of heretics should thus be remembered as a symbolic place of filth and corruption. This certainly was the goal of inquisitors. However, the means may have been more tangible than simply a declaration of sentence. *Receptaculum sordium* can be translated in more concrete sense, and I am arguing that at least in the case of the Ödenburg sentence by Zwicker this is a more likely interpretation. *Receptaculum sordium* is simply 'rubbish dump', 'compost-heap' or even 'sewer'. In the seventeenth-century dictionary by Jesuit Michael Pexenfelder the word is explained as follows: 'Schwindgrube/cloaca, receptaculum sordium'.<sup>29</sup> *Receptaculum sordium* appears as translation for *Schwindgrube* also in a German dictionary by Caspar von Stieler (1691).<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the dungheap was considered to be a fitting resting place for a heretic; the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel in a letter (1411) to Pope John XXIII expressed a wish to throw John Wycliffe's bones onto such, although a different Latin word *sterquilinium* is used.<sup>31</sup>

Consequently I would propose to translate 'ut ibi sit perpetuo receptaculum sordium, ubi prius fuit aliquando latibulum hereticorum' as 'so that there would

<sup>27</sup> The last letters of the word are unclear, but based on the context and similarity of the phrase in other inquisitorial sources it seems obvious that *receptaculum* is the intended word. The copy has many other scribal errors.

<sup>28</sup> *Perpetuum receptaculum sordium, ubi fuit aliquando latibulum hereticorum.* Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 126, translation by Sackville; the destruction of houses was common additional punishment for condemned heretics, and the wording of the sentence originates from legislation given by Popes for Italian communes in thirteenth century. See Sascha Ragg, *Ketzer Und Recht: Die Weltliche Ketzergesetzgebung des Hochmittelalters unter dem Einfluss des Römischen und Kanonischen Rechts* (2006), 108, 145, 150. The model was available for Zwicker through an inquisitor's manual containing earlier French and Italian legislation and used by Zwicker in 1390s. About the manual, see Alexander Patschovsky, *Quellen zur böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert* (1979), 93–4, 130–54.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Pexenfelder, *Apparatus Eruditionis tam rerum quam verborum per omnes artes et scientias. Ed. 4. auct* (1704), 138.

<sup>30</sup> Caspar von Stieler, *Der Teutschen Sprache Stammbaum und Fortwachs oder Teutscher Sprachschatz* (1691), 689.

<sup>31</sup> H.E. Salter, ed., *Snappes Formulary and Other Records* (1924), 135; Cf. Michael Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (2012), 99.

forever be a waste-heap, where once before was a hiding-place of heretics', thus transforming a demolished home of heretics into a community dump. Dumping waste in the ruins was by no means uncommon in medieval towns – abandoned constructions and wells were used as waste deposits in addition to actual latrines,<sup>32</sup> but here it is explicitly decreed as part of the punishment for heresy. Furthermore, the houses could by no means be rebuilt ('in posterum nullatenus reedificerentur [*sic.*']), unlike other ruins or empty plots in the town. These very tangible measures in no way undermine the metaphorical interpretation of houses of heretics as places of filth, corruption and disease. On the contrary, the sentence makes the literary concept of heresy and heretics visible in everyday urban environment. The existence of a compost-heap should remind the parishioner that already before there was a den of corruption and filth in the place of the waste, although back then in spiritual sense.

Petrus Zwicker explicitly describes heretics as leprous in *Cum dormirent homines*: 'ergo percussus es lepra, ut Ozias, qui accepto thuribulo, voluit adolere incensum Domino. 2 Paral. 26'.<sup>33</sup> This merits closer examination, especially because figurative language of disease in a strict sense does not appear elsewhere in Zwicker's treatise, and generally speaking *Cum dormirent homines* is dry and doctrinal rather than demonizing and zealous. Why then choose a strong figure of leprosy? The answer lies in Zwicker's strategy of argumentation and invocation of the Bible, not in his conviction that God would strike heretics with leprosy. The revilement of leprosy appears in the chapter where Zwicker refutes Waldensian claims of being equal to ordained clergy or inheriting pastoral authority directly from God and the Old Testament character Uzziah relates to this thematic. Uzziah was the King of Judah, victorious and mighty as long as he was afraid of God. Following his success he grew proud, and against the warnings of priest Azariah and other priests he entered the temple, intending to burn incense upon the altar, something which was reserved only to the priests, 'sons of Aaron', who were consecrated to that office.<sup>34</sup> Neglecting the warning, King Uzziah grabbed the censor, and leprosy rose up in his forehead, resulting in his expulsion from office.

The parallel to heretics and the priesthood of Zwicker's own days is thus evident. Waldenses claimed that they were true followers of the Apostles and at

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Liisa Seppänen, 'Rakentaminen ja kaupunkikuvan muutokset keskiajan Turussa. Erityistarkastelussa Åbo Akademin päärakennuksen tontin arkeologinen aineisto'. PhD diss. University of Turku, 2012, 871–2.

<sup>33</sup> 'Thus you are struck by leprosy, like Uzziah who having taken the censor wanted to burn incense for the glory of the Lord. 2. Chron. 26'. Zwicker, 'Cum dormirent homines', 279D.

<sup>34</sup> *Non est tui officii, Ozia, ut adoleas incensum Domino, sed sacerdotum, hoc est, filiorum Aaron, qui consecrati sunt ad huiusmodi ministerium.* 2. Paral. 26:18. All direct quotes from Bible follow Vulgate according to the Clementine Vulgate Project.

least equal or even superior to sinful and negligent clergy of the Church and that they enjoyed such a great reputation among their followers.<sup>35</sup> Zwicker confronts this claim, and does it using the indisputable authority of the Scriptures. If even a victorious king, first blessed and aided by God, could not usurp the power reserved for the consecrated priests, how then could simple laymen think that they could consecrate themselves, and even pretend that they are sent by God? Such insolence caused God's revenge, not his blessing. In demonstrating this Zwicker could again rely on anti-heretical tradition: the same biblical quote appears in a similar context also in the treatise of Anonymous of Passau, though only in passing.<sup>36</sup>

What we see here is the opposite of generalizing, reflex or repetitive use of *topos* heresy as disease. When a Waldensian heretic is represented as 'struck by leprosy', the description becomes *topos/locus* which concentrates the plurality of meanings and interpretations: Waldenses claim authority that belongs to consecrated clergy, and thus are like Uzziah, who wants to burn incense himself. Like Uzziah they do it against the warnings of rightful guardians of this sacred power, priests. This can be read referring to Zwicker himself and other inquisitors – were they not showing error in the ways of heretics? Subsequent punishment, leprosy, simultaneously proves that the monopoly claimed by priests is God's will, and that those acting against it are damned. The established parallel heresy-leprosy adds yet another layer, evoking the images of impurity, depravity and revulsion attached to lepers in medieval culture. In only one short quote Zwicker manages to undermine the Waldensian claim, reinforce the authority of the clergy and justify punishment of obstinate heretics. Zwicker continues: 'Deglutit te terra, id est infernus, ut Dathan & Abiron'.<sup>37</sup>

### Poisonous Heretics

While Zwicker and others writing against Waldenses use imagery of pestilence and leprosy sparingly, there is another metaphor of infection that is very

<sup>35</sup> On the Waldensian lay apostolate and Zwicker's response see Kathrin Utz Tremp, 'Multum abhorrerem confiteri homini laico. Die Waldenser zwischen Laienapostolat und Priestertum, insbesondere an der Wende vom 14. zum 15. Jahrhundert', in *Pfaffen und Laien, ein mittelalterlicher Antagonismus?* (1999); Modestin, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise Cum Dormirent Homines', 219–20.

<sup>36</sup> Patschovsky and Selge, *Quellen*, 90: *Ozias fit leprosus, quia usurpat sibi sacerdotium*; the treatise of Anonymous of Passau was a probable source of Zwicker's work, see Biller, 'The Anti-Waldensian Treatise', 256–61; Biller, 'The Waldenses in German-Speaking Areas', 272–3.

<sup>37</sup> 'You are swallowed up by earth, that is, hell, like Dathan and Abiram'. Zwicker, 'Cum dormirent homines', 279D.

commonplace: heresy as poison and poisoning.<sup>38</sup> In Zwicker's texts it appears several times: *haeresiarum sectae Waldensium haereticorum plurimam Christi fidelium multitudinem suis peruersis doctrinis, sub quibusdam simulatae sanctitatis dulcedinibus errorum veneno mortifero lethaliter infecerunt.*<sup>39</sup> The heresiarch is a venomous frog (*rana venenosa*),<sup>40</sup> and the 'little women' (*mulierculae*) helping him spread his poison to others: *venenum bibitum de te taliter consueverunt in alios fundere.*<sup>41</sup> The metaphor of poisoning is forcefully used by Zwicker also in his letter to the Austrian Dukes (1395) in order to invoke their support: *et timendum est sectam illam valde dilatari plurimosque catholicos utriusque sexus ab orthodoxa fide abduci et ab hereticorum veneno letaliter infici nisi eis obstitum fuerit ab acie christiana.*<sup>42</sup>

As Peter Biller has pointed out, the prevailing image Zwicker creates through the metaphor of poison, poisoning and venomous animals is that of working in secrecy, hidden either by pretended sanctity or taking shelter at night and subterranean places.<sup>43</sup> Here Zwicker could again be drawing on a long tradition of anti-heretical, especially anti-Waldensian literary conventions. A succinct exemplification is a description of new heresies by Pseudo-David of Augsburg:

Surrexerunt nove, latenter in angulis serpentes, nocivius venenum erroris simplicibus infundentes, quo magis periculosum est malum occultum, quod nescias cavere vel adhibere remedium, quam apertum, quod poteris effugere et sanare.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Heresy as poison is yet another metaphor of Augustine adopted by high and late medieval authors; see Irene Bueno, 'False Prophets and Ravening Wolves: Biblical Exegesis as a Tool against Heretics in Jacques Fournier's Postilla on Matthew', *Speculum* 89, no. 01 (2014): 54.

<sup>39</sup> 'The heresiarchs of the sect of Waldensian heretics lethally infect the greatest multitude of Christ's believers with their perverse doctrine, the death-bringing poison of errors under the sweetness of pretended sanctity.' Zwicker, 'Cum dormirent homines', 278A.

<sup>40</sup> Zwicker, 'Cum dormirent homines', 279G.

<sup>41</sup> 'So they are accustomed to pour into others the poison they have drunk from you.' Zwicker, 'Cum dormirent homines', 280D.

<sup>42</sup> 'It is to be afraid that this sect should greatly expand and that a great many Catholics of both sexes would be led astray from the orthodox faith and infected lethally with the poison of heretics, should they not be opposed by Christian blade.' Wilhelm Preger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Waldesier im Mittelalter* (1877), 246.

<sup>43</sup> Biller, 'The Waldenses in German-Speaking Areas', 276–8; On a more general level, see Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, esp. 172–4, 176–7; and Florence Chave-Mahir, 'Venenum sub melle latet. L'image du poison dans le discours anti-hérétique au Moyen Âge', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 17 (2009): 161–72.

<sup>44</sup> Preger, 'Der Tractat des David von Augsburg', 204.

The new [heresies] have arisen, crawling secretly in corners, pouring onto simple laymen the more harmful poison of error, for much more perilous is hidden evil, which you do not know how to avoid or how to apply remedy to it, than public, from which you can escape or that you can heal.

Authors of the late fourteenth century clearly found venom and poisoning to be suitable metaphors to describe heresy. In addition to above-mentioned quotes from Zwicker, heretics are called 'venomous serpents' (*venenosi serpentes*) by Petrus de Pilichdorf.<sup>45</sup> In an anonymous treatise *Refutatio errorum Waldenses* are accused of introducing the venom of heretical articles with 'honey-sweetened sentences'.<sup>46</sup> *Attendite a falsis prophetis*-treatise likens the teachings of heretics to the gall of dragons and incurable venom of asps described in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:33).<sup>47</sup> Venom as metaphor of spiritual corruption was widespread and understandable also to Zwicker's adversaries, Waldensian brethren – and it was even sometimes used by them.<sup>48</sup>

Like the leprosy image used by Zwicker, neither was the application of poison metaphors simply a casual motif adopted from earlier treatises. Representations of heretics as poisonous serpents and propagation of heresy as infection with poison were intimately connected to how inquisitors and theologians perceived Waldensian heresy at the end of the fourteenth century. This becomes evident when one compares the frequency of poison metaphors to the virtual non-existence of another commonplace image of heresy: pestilence or plague (*pestis*).<sup>49</sup>

R.I. Moore has demonstrated how heresy was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries commonly described as a pestilence ravaging the land and threatening to overcome the Christians. He has also proposed that after the beginning of inquisitorial proceedings against heretics the concept of heresy and with it the figurative language describing it changed so that disease metaphor lost its

<sup>45</sup> Petrus de Pilichdorf, 'Fragmentvm Ex Tractatu Petri de Pilichdorff', 302C.

<sup>46</sup> Gretser, 'Refutatio Errorum', 303A: *His tamen sententiis mellitis venenum iniquitatis Articulorum haereticorum, per sanctam Romanam Ecclesiam reprobatorum inferunt, simplices decipiunt, animarum salutem subtrahunt, & furantur, & infinita mala introducunt.* On the metaphor of honey and poison, see Chave-Mahir, 'Venenum sub melle latet', 164.

<sup>47</sup> Stift Sankt Florian Cod. XI 152, fol. 48v: *fel draconum vinum eorum et venenum aspidum insanabile.*

<sup>48</sup> See the correspondence between Italian and Austrian Waldensian brethren in 1360s, edited in Biller, 'Aspects', here 284. Waldenses saw the beginning of their history in Constantine Donation and subsequent corruption of the Church, demonstrated in a story of a voice from heaven declaring 'Hodie diffusum est vennum in ecclesia Dei'. Cf. also p. 348.

<sup>49</sup> I have only encountered a few instances of heresy and heretics referred to as *pestiferus*, 'bringing pestilence or destruction'. See e.g. a provincial statute of John of Jenstein, Archbishop of Prague, 1381: *insunt haereses multum pestiferae [...] contra tales pestiferos.* C. Höfler, ed., *Concilia Pragensia = Prager Synodal-Beschlüsse* (1862), 26.

prominence.<sup>50</sup> The application of the pestilence metaphor, however, does not diminish unremittingly. Little more than a decade after our period, with the outbreak of conflict between the Catholic Church and the Hussites in Bohemia as well as the Lollards in England, the comparison of heresy and pestilence seems to acquire new popularity.<sup>51</sup>

Philip Repingdon, Bishop of Lincoln complained in a letter (1413) that people of England could be infected with the 'stinking plague of heresy'.<sup>52</sup> This was also known in the Curia, and corresponding rhetoric was used. Pope Martin V, writing to English clergy in 1428, calls Hussites 'pestifera et abominanda haeresis' (plague-bringing and abominable heresy), and uses *pestis* as a synonym for heresy.<sup>53</sup> The next Pope, Eugene IV, also uses the rhetoric of plague against Hussites in his bull *Quoniam alto* (1431), stating how he watches 'nephandum ipsius heresis pestem pullulare in dies'.<sup>54</sup>

Thomas Ebendorfer, Viennese theologian and historian active in the middle of the fifteenth century, also shows a fondness for the pestilence metaphor for both modern and ancient heresies as well as for general immorality. He laments how during schism 'omnium viciorum pestes infrunite ebuliunt',<sup>55</sup> or tells how Pope Liberius condemned two 'Arriane pestis fautores' ('supporters of Arian pestilence').<sup>56</sup> Even more interesting is Ebendorfer's Chronicle of Bishops of Passau, where he links the Waldensian heresy of the late fourteenth century to Hussites of his own days, complaining that the indulgence of heretics in most heinous crimes was manifested by 'Bohemica rabies nostro infelici evo hac Waldense peste infecta'.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', 1–2, 10–11.

<sup>51</sup> The following quotes do not reflect any comprehensive survey of polemical literature against Hussites and Lollards, both of them vast areas of research, but simply exemplify the robustness of the pestilence metaphor.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (2005), 87.

<sup>53</sup> Cit. in Michael Van Dussen, 'Bohemia in English Religious Controversy before the Henrician Reformation', in *Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, vol. 7, eds Zdeněk V. David and David R. Holeton (2009), 48, n. 17.

<sup>54</sup> 'The abominable plague of this heresy to sprout daily'. Joannes de Segovia, *Historia gestorum generalis synodi Basiliensis. Volumen I, Liber I–XII*, ed. Ernestus Birk (1873), 68, Lib. II. Caput III; Cf. Loy Bilderback, 'Eugene IV and the First Dissolution of the Council of Basle', *Church History* 36, no. 3 (1967): 252.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Tractatus de Schismatibus*, ed. Harald Zimmermann (2004), 5, cf. 93: 'Plagues of all vices senselessly break out.'

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Tractatus de Schismatibus*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Catalogus Praesulum Laureacensium et Pataviensium*, ed. Harald Zimmermann (2008), 227–8: 'Bohemian fury of our unhappy times, infected by this Waldensian pestilence.'

It is noteworthy that the Waldensian heresy described by Thomas Ebendorfer acquires a completely different complexion from the clandestine movement excoriated by Zwicker and his contemporaries. Even when describing from his perspective historical Waldenses of the 1380s, Ebendorfer ascribes to them deeds that remind him of the experiences with the Hussites: burning with hatred towards clergy they defiled all sacraments and polluted holy shrines.<sup>58</sup> Contemporary heretics were even worse: according to Ebendorfer, after the outbreak of Hussitism the Waldenses also abandoned their clandestine methods and took up arms.<sup>59</sup> Ebendorfer's description may indeed be referring some real events during the initial phase of the Hussite revolution in the late 1410s, when in many German towns in the vicinity of Bohemia Hussites found sympathizers and citizens took action against clerics and churches.<sup>60</sup> Whether Ebendorfer was describing something he had witnessed or was simply indulging in polemical exaggeration is not important to my argument, which is that in the political and religious atmosphere marked by the Hussite problem, the imagery of pestilence and plague was a fitting metaphor for the corresponding experiences of both the author and his intended audience.

Why then did Zwicker or his contemporaries not use the metaphor of pestilence and plague – certainly available to them – instead of that of infection and poison? Again I suggest that it was question of matching figurative language to one's own argumentative strategy. We can best analyse this in Zwicker's texts. I agree with Peter Biller who has argued that Zwicker's polemical rhetoric did not seek to exaggerate the extent and power of heresy, but on the contrary to undermine heretical claims of authority and apostolic succession by demonstrating the insignificance of the supporters of Waldensian brethren.<sup>61</sup> To this program the metaphor of plague and pestilence was inappropriate, perhaps especially so in a society that had witnessed several outbreaks of bubonic plague and its consequences. However, refuting heretical propositions was not Zwicker's only aim. He also wanted to convince his fellow Catholics, laymen and

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Catalogus Praesulum Laureacensium et Pataviensium*, 227: *Qui odio in clerum inflammati omnia ecclesiastica sacramenta contaminant, sacras pollunt edes.*

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, ed. Alphons Lhotsky, in *Scriptores Rerum Germanicum. Nova Series* 13 (1967), 362: *Ibi quoque sumpta occasione Waldenses, qui usque latuerunt, suas cervices erexerunt primum latenter suos inducentes errores, postea vero armata manu defensare et alios ad eosdem visi sunt compellere.*

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Franz Machilek, 'Aufschwung und Niedergang der Zusammenarbeit von Waldensern und Hussiten im 15. Jahrhundert', in *Friedrich Reiser und die 'waldensisch-hussitische Internationale' im 15. Jahrhundert*, eds Albert de Lange and Kathrin Utz Tremp (2006), 284–5.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Biller, 'Bernard Gui, Peter Zwicker, and the Geography of Valdismo or Valdismi', *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi – Bulletin de La Société d'Histoire Vaudoise* 124, no. 200 (June 2007): 41–2; cf. also Biller, 'Aspects', 125–6.

clerics alike, of the danger of heresy, hence the metaphors of poisonous words masked as sanctity or creeping in shadows like a venomous frog and serpent. In order to suggest a heretical sect that was weak and scattered but at the same time potentially lethal to the Christian community, Zwicker preferred the clandestine imagery of poison to the doomsday figures of plague. The metaphor of *pestis heresis* had not lost its power, as the examples of fifteenth century prove; it just wasn't compatible with the image of heresy the polemical authors of the late fourteenth century sought to convey.

### Healing

The mirror image of the dangers of heretical disease and poison was the remedy offered by priests and inquisitors. As stated above, this was intimately related to the general vocabulary of pastoral care. The rhetoric found its way into inquisitorial manuals, and often quoted examples can be found from the famous *Practica inquisitionis* of Bernard Gui, where the inquisitor is represented as a prudent doctor of souls, selecting proper medicines – ways of examining and inquiring – for each disease.<sup>62</sup> The German treatises written at the end of the fourteenth century belong more to the genre of theological polemic than actual inquisitor's manuals. Consequently there is little theoretical treatment on how to conduct an interrogation or how to be a good inquisitor, and little need of metaphors of doctor, remedy and healing, though some examples can be found.

The Archbishop of Prague, John of Jenstein offered 'oportuna remedia adhibere' ('to apply suitable remedy') should the inquisitors he urged to be appointed in dioceses Regensburg, Misnia and Bamberg in 1381 encounter any resistance. The remedy he had in mind was apparently a kind of shock treatment, because he promised to deliver it with the help of the secular arm.<sup>63</sup> There are however no traces of any trials or persecution resulting from this letter. *Refutatio errorum* offers a more refined case of healing imagery. It is a part of an answer to the Waldensian proposition that prelates of the Church do not have authority to excommunicate anyone. Excommunication of rebellious members of community is equated with amputating a putrid body part to stop further infection, or separation of sick sheep from the flock to prevent contamination:

Item, Omni medicina spirituali & salutari vtendum est medicis spiritualibus contra morbus spirituales vitiorum & peccatorum. Sed excommunicatio est medicina. [...] A corpore enim humano secatur membrum putridum, ne caetera

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Christine Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (2009), 163–4.

<sup>63</sup> Höfler, *Concilia Pragensia = Prager Synodal-Beschlüsse*, 26–7.

infiat & a grege ouis morbida, ne caeteras contaminet. Item, a congregatione, collegio & ciuitate separantur & eiiciuntur rebelles & contumaces, ne fermentum malitiae paucorum totam massam corrumpat.<sup>64</sup>

All spiritual and health-giving treatment is to be used by spiritual doctors against spiritual diseases of vices and sin. Also excommunication is a cure. [...] From a human body a putrid member is cut off so that it would not infect other parts, and from a flock a sick sheep, so that it would not contaminate others. Likewise from congregation, collegium or city rebellious and disobedient persons are separated and cast off, so that the fermenting of evil would not corrupt the whole lump.

Again there was little literary innovation involved: amputation to protect the rest of the body was a metaphor long used in anti-heretical literature. In high medieval texts it often meant the action taken against the preachers of heresy, heresiarchs, in order to protect the laymen, who were considered to be simple and easily led astray.<sup>65</sup> Similar rhetoric is to be found in the metaphor of sheep flock, typically referring to the community of believers that were the responsibility of pastors. Nevertheless it is worth noting that argumentation here is not directed only against the heresiarchs, but to justify more generally the clerical – actually episcopal – power to excommunicate disobedient members from amongst their community. According to *Refutatio errorum*, an inquisitor must be a ruthless doctor, prepared to use the severe measures: 'Medicus autem corporalis, non solum utitur lenitiuis, sed quandoque asperis; sic etiam facere debet medicus animarum'.<sup>66</sup>

The imagery of healing is sparse in the texts treated here, and when it is used, it does not represent a spiritual doctor examining the soul to find a proper treatment, but that of a surgeon cutting off a rotting member. A more hopeful prognosis is offered only to refute the Waldensian claim that there are no venial sins but all sins are mortal:

Sicut non est ad mortem omnis infirmitas, vel vulnus coporale: sic nec omnis laesio vel infirmitas animae est mortalis. Item sicut non omnis casus corporalis est fractio colli & capitis: Ita nec est semper ad mortem casus spiritualis.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Gretser, 'Refutatio Errorum', 305H.

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. John H Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (2001), 19–23.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Doctor of the body not only uses easing [treatments], but at times also severe ones; similarly that is required from the doctor of the souls'. Gretser, 'Refutatio Errorum', 306A.

<sup>67</sup> Gretser, 'Refutatio Errorum', 307B.



Just as not every sickness or bodily wound is lethal, neither is every injury or sickness of the soul mortal. Likewise not every bodily fall causes fracture of the neck and head; similarly not always is spiritual lapse lethal.

It goes without saying that heresy did not belong to these minor lapses, but was counted among the most mortal spiritual diseases and the most lethal venoms.

### Conclusions

In the imagery of late fourteenth-century polemicists like Petrus Zwicker, heresy was not pestilence ravaging the Christian lands. It was an almost imperceptible poison working invisibly. Yet it was no less dangerous, quite the contrary. The spreading infection that threatened the body of the faithful was still found to be a fitting comparison, but the polemicists clearly preferred the metaphor of poison over pestilence or plague. It is difficult to say whether this choice was due to the all-too-real presence of plague epidemics in the late fourteenth-century Central Europe, or resulted from how the authors perceived the Waldensian heresy. In any case it does not seem to be arbitrary, but a choice on the part of the authors. This is further corroborated by the fact that the literary model of heresy as pestilence was available, as it was revived in describing Hussites and Lollards only few years after the polemics written against Waldenses.

All this demonstrates that medieval polemicists were not randomly pouring fire and brimstone into their texts. When the experience of the heresy went through a change, so did the figurative language, in turn further endorsing the new perception of heresy. The difference between the poisoning Waldensian preacher and the plague of the Hussites was not a simple rhetorical decoration. The former implied individual agency, the latter uncontrolled uproar. It is tempting to see a parallel to attempted remedies to the respective problems: inquisitions against the Waldenses and a military solution in the Hussite Wars. Correspondingly, the polemical language should not be seen as a veil obscuring reality, but as an attempt by contemporaries to discern that reality.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> The author wishes to thank Prof. Bruce Johnson and the seminar group in the course 'Publishing in English' at the University of Turku for valuable comments on the draft-version of this article in the Spring 2014.

## Chapter 9

# *Infirmity Romana* and its Cure – Livy's History Therapy in the *Ab urbe condita*

Katariina Mustakallio and Elina Pyy

### Introduction

In the ancient literary tradition the discourse concerning cultural decay is usually connected with periods of crisis and with the breakdown of collective identity. The idea of degenerative historical development was introduced into classical literature as early as in the seventh century BCE – it was first applied by the epic poet Hesiod, who utilized the concept to discuss the social changes that challenged the traditional lifestyle of the rural upper class.<sup>1</sup> Six hundred years later, the moral decline of the people was a major theme in the work of the Roman historian Titus Livius. Livy, too, lived during a transitional period – in his case, between the Roman Republic and the Principate.<sup>2</sup> By Livy's lifetime the bloody civil war, the proscriptions, murders and the political chaos had led to deep disillusionment among Roman intellectuals. The Augustan authors found the future difficult to imagine and many of them turned their minds to the mythical past instead. Anxiety about the present and nostalgia for the past can be clearly observed in Livy's history, as well as in the poetry of his coevals, Virgil and Horace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hesiod, *Erga kai Hemera*, 110–74. Ludwig Koenen, 'Greek, The Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and the Catalogue of Women', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 124 (1994): 1–34.

<sup>2</sup> The Republican period covers the time span from the expulsion of the kings (traditionally in 509 BCE) to the beginning of the reign of Augustus in 27 BCE. Many scholars, however, would push the end of the Republic back to Octavian's triumph in the great sea battle of Actium in 31 BCE, or even to Caesar's invasion of Italy in 49 BCE. See Harriet I. Flower, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. H.I. Flower (2004), 1–11, at 2–3.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Hor. *Epod.* 16; *Od.* 3.6. In Virgil's epic, this characteristic is particularly evident in the *Bucolica*, in the *Georgica*, and in the last three books of the *Aeneid*. See e.g. Eve Adler, *Virgil's Empire: Political Thought in the Aeneid* (2003); Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (1989); Robert Gurval, *Actium and Augustus. The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (1995); Joseph Farrell, 'The Augustan Period: 40BC–AD14', in *Blackwell*