



The condemnation of the Beghards in The State and The Weeping of the Church by Álvaro Pais (14th century)

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ABSTRACT. This article proposes the analysis of two articles contained in the work *The State and The Weeping of the Church* by the Galician Franciscan Álvaro Pais (1275/80-1349), which deal with the heresy of the Beghards, condemned by *Ad nostrum* in the Council of Vienne in 1312. Our objective was to understand the author's propositions about this group of heretics and the arguments presented by him against this heresy. Methodologically, we chose to carry out qualitative research based on the filing and analysis of the source that is in Latin/Portuguese, using the hermeneutic analysis of this piece. As a result, we hope to broach a little-known subject in Álvaro Pais, which is his vision of a heretical movement of his time, whose documents he had access to, especially because he was a penitentiary of Pope John XXII in Avignon.

Keywords: beghards; Álvaro Pais; heresy.

A condenação dos Begardos no Estado e pranto da Igreja de Álvaro Pais (Século XIV)

RESUMO. Este artigo propõe a análise de dois artigos contidos na obra *Estado e pranto da Igreja* do franciscano galego Álvaro Pais (1275/80-1349), que versam sobre o tema da heresia dos begardos, condenada pela *Ad nostrum* no Concílio de Vienne de 1312. Nosso objetivo foi entender as proposições do autor sobre este grupo de heréticos e os argumentos apresentados por ele contra essa heresia. Metodologicamente, optamos por realizar uma pesquisa qualitativa a partir do fichamento e análise da fonte que se encontra em versão latim/português, utilizando a análise hermenêutica da mesma. Como resultados, esperamos trazer à tona um assunto pouco conhecido em Álvaro Pais que é a sua visão sobre um movimento herético de seu tempo, a cujas documentações ele teve acesso, especialmente por ser penitenciário do papa João XXII em Avinhão.

Palavras-chave: begardos; Álvaro Pais; heresia.

La condenación de los Begardos en el Estado y llanto de la Iglesia de Álvaro Pelagio (Siglo XIV)

RESUMEN. Este artículo propone el análisis de dos artículos incluidos en la obra *Estado y llanto de la Iglesia* del franciscano gallego Álvaro Pelagio (1275/80-1349), que tratan sobre el tema de la herejía de los begardos, condenada por la *Ad Nostrum* en el Concilio de Vienne de 1312. Nuestro objetivo ha sido entender las proposiciones del autor sobre este grupo de heréticos y los argumentos presentados por él contra esta herejía. Metodológicamente, optamos por realizar una investigación cualitativa a partir de un registro de fichas y análisis de la fuente que se encuentra en versión latín/portugués, utilizando el análisis hermenéutico de la misma. Como resultados, esperamos sacar a la luz un asunto poco conocido en Álvaro Pelagio, que es su visión sobre el movimiento herético de su tiempo, a cuyas documentaciones tuvo acceso, especialmente por ser penitenciario del Papa Juan XXII en Aviñón.

Palabras clave: begardos; Álvaro Pelagio; herejía.

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Introduction

Since the Dawn of Christianity, many religious movements have expressed interpretations that suggested the conception of doctrines contrary to the officially declared faith. Over time, and with the strengthening of dissenting religious perspectives within the diverse forms of “experiences of the sacred”, the Christian

doctrine, until then hegemonic, became fragile against the different trends of thought. These confrontations were responsible for numerous doctrinal visions and the creation of various Christian traditions, many of which stemmed from popular beliefs. Such currents of thought claimed for themselves the legitimacy of the truths of faith proclaimed by Christ and the first Apostles and those contained in the Gospels. This process forced the establishment of a general doctrine, whose foundations were forged by the Church, responsible for formulating norms of faith concerning Christianity. Medieval heresies, as examples of divergent thought from what the orthodoxy established, serve as an example of subversion, not only in the religious sphere but also in the social and political arenas. According to Amores Bonilla (2019, p. 22), many groups considered heretical were accused of having some form of psychic disorder, having been categorized within some “[...] moral, religious and mental alienation.”

The way Christian authors conceived their relationship with the pagan world may explain the almost always condemnatory representations of customs considered to diverge from orthodox Catholic thought, which sought to impose itself doctrinally against pagan philosophies (Mitre Fernandes, 2003). In this perspective, the major ecumenical councils that occurred in the early centuries of the Church, such as the Council of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451), marked the institution's effort to reaffirm Christian doctrine, formulating the “profession of faith” and confronting heretical currents. In this context, it is possible to list a multitude of movements considered heretical currents. In this context, it is possible to list a multitude of movements considered heretical, which somewhat increased the clergy's concerns with the emergence of groups opposed to orthodoxy. Frequently, religious manifestations, when they did not pass through the sieve of the Catholic dogma, were labeled as heretical.

The intensification of dissonant movements from Christian orthodoxy occurred in a context that pressured the Church to establish limits regarding other polytheistic religions and radical Judaizing trends (Grangiotti, 1995), as is evident, for example, in Irenaeus of Lyon (130-202) (*Against the Heresies*), in Augustine (354-430) *Against Faustus* (2008) and *Against Mendacium* (2008), in *Christian Doctrine* (1991) or in *De haeresibus* (2008), as well as in Isidore of Seville (560-636), in his *Etymologies* (2009), which lists the 70 most dangerous heresies of his time. A little before Isidore, Martin of Braga (518-579) in his *De correctione rusticorum* (2013), written at the Second Council of Braga (572), admonished against idolatries, divinatory arts, and other rites discouraged by ecclesiastics.

From the 12th century onwards, a “[...] new religious consciousness” (Bolton, 1983, p. 73) solidified, leading laypeople to seek different forms of participation in religious life through experiences of individual or communal spiritualities, such as the Waldesians and the Humiliati in the 13th, who aspired to a lifestyle in accordance with the *vita apostolica*. The ideal of the *vita apostolica* was a central element of spirituality in the Late Middle Ages; this desire to follow the way of life of the apostles and Jesus Christ pointed to poverty, penance, and preaching as fundamental elements.

This was a period of intense change in various spheres of society, such as the growth of cities and urban life, which was driven by demographic expansion. In the political aspect, there was a less fragmented and more organized power in the administrative realm. In this context of intense transformations, the Church also needed to seek answers for the various groups yearning for a greater experience with the sacred. The search for personalized faith experiences, a mystical union with God, and a deeper understanding of evangelical poverty became more prominent (Bara Bancel, 2008). Between the late 11th century and the first half of the 12th century, new forms of religious life adapted to the needs of laypeople developed. According to Bernard McGinn (2017), in his work *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)*, the year 1200 is significant in the history of Western mysticism, marked by new attitudes in the relationship between the world and the cloister, between men and women in their mystical journeys, and in the new forms of language and presentation of mystical experiences.

In this context, the first heresies differed from those that occurred between the 12th and 14th centuries, not only due to their philosophical and theological character but particularly because of the popular appeal of these movements. In a context of uncertainties of all kinds, men and women expressed their fears, anxieties, and hopes for the ultimate goal: eternal beatitude. Spiritual movements began to emerge in various regions of Europe, the vast majority being popular and penitential in nature, where there was no clear distinction between orthodoxy and heresy. In this realm, notable examples include the processions of flagellants in Italy, southern Germany, and Bohemia (1260, 1300, 1334, 1348, etc.), pilgrims and penitents, beguines and beguards, as well as various sects like the Apostolic Brethren of Gerard Segarelli, the Waldensians, Brethren of the free Spirits, among others (Bara Bancel, 2008), as well as the Cathars, Albigensians, and the Beghards.

The Beghards: Some considerations

Within this myriad of movements that challenged the hegemony of the Church from the 14th century onwards, the term “beghards” became synonymous with heretic. The *vita apostolica*, voluntary poverty, mendicancy, and preaching were adopted as principles of life by this group, whose religious aspirations coincided with those who refused to obey the ecclesiastical hierarchy or lacked the resources to enter a regulated religious order (Bara Bancel, 2008). They were also supported by a strong sentiment of rejection towards the clergy and their *modus vivendi*, sparked by the temporal domination of ecclesiastics, a factor that contributed to the adherence and the sustenance of many heresies (Théry, 2012).

Spiritually, the beghards were greatly influenced by the ideas of the beguines, a female movement rejected by the clergy, exemplified by Marguerite Porete, who was burned at the stake for her heretical treatise *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. According to Miura Andrades (1999), they formed associations or fraternities of devoted men, living a common religious life without submitting to monastic or conventual rules.

As Miura Andrades (1999) points out, this group received various names: they were called Brethen of Poor Life, Brethen of penance, Blessed, Beguines, or Beghards, which caused confusion in their categorization, as although there were similarities with the beguine movement, especially in the Rhineland case, the beghards were not characterized by forming beguinage or parishes. It was more a designation applied to male religious movements since the mid-13th century. These were men who practiced a common life, without recognizing ecclesiastical discipline and hierarchy, generally belonging to lower social strata.

Begardism, as Álvaro Pias (1275-1349) himself noted, spread across various region of Europe throughout the 14th century. Therefore, Miura Andrades (1999) emphasizes that there is confusion among historians regarding the origin of the beghards and beguines, which also seems to occur concerning their religious ideas. Mañón Garibay (2003) points out that the beghards emerged about 50 years after the beguines. Almost nothing is known about them, as they left no written testimony. What exists in terms of material evidence is the inquisitorial process against them, in which the eight errors condemned by the *Ad nostrum* constitution were pointed out, as well as compilations like those made by the Galician Franciscan Álvaro Pias. Thus, his testimony becomes particularly relevant.

The beghards, unlike other groups considered heretical, did not constitute currents of thought or doctrines but rather simple forms of religious life, without uniform doctrinal content (Miura Andrades, 1999). They very rarely formed groups subject to a rule. Movements like those of the beghards, beguines and Brethen of the Free Spirit, both in their preaching activities and in their “experience of the sacred”, denied the need for clerical mediation to come into contact with the divine. This denial of priestly mediation¹ affected the very sense of the ecclesiastical institution itself (Miura Andrades, 1999).

Regarding the influence of Porete’s writings on Beghard thought’s, Saranyana (2007) emphasizes that although the Inquisition ordered the destruction of the copies of *The Mirros of Simple Souls*, as well as its prohibition under penalty of excommunication, the *Mirror* continue to circulate in various circles, either anonymously or under pseudonyms, “[...] serving as spiritual fodder for various circles of Beghards and Beguines, even after Porete’s cremation [...]” (Saranyana, 2007, p. 267, our translation)². The condemnation of the beghards and beguines at the Council of Vienne in 1312, and of the Spirituals Franciscans and other groups by John XXII in 1318, as well as the censures after the death of Master Eckhart, also by John XXII in 1329, were not enough to prevent the spread of the doctrines of the Free Spirit and those of Porete (Saranyana, 2007).

In this context, there were various attempts by social and religious movements to free themselves from clerical oversight, which the Church sought to subjugate and place under its authority. It is, therefore, a search for another path or spirituality, since the liturgy itself no longer reached the faithful, “[...] where, in many cases, the ceremonies take a back seat because they do not convince” (Ortega Martín, 2020, p. 65, our translation)³. It should not be forgotten that, for the Church, liturgy and religious formulas were essential for divine office and for maintaining control over the population; hence, all of those who attempted its reform or elimination were declared dissidents or heretics (Ortega Martín, 2020).

In light of this scenario, we will examine aspects of the heresy of the Beghards through the eyes of Álvaro Pais and *The State and Weeping of the Church*, which was condemned by the constitution *Ad nostrum* at the

¹ Concerning the need for mediation by the clergy, when combating the heresy of the Novatians, Bishop Ambrose of Milan (340-397) claimed the Church’s right to bind and loose, stating that “[...] the Church rightly claims it, because she has true priests; heresy cannot claim it, because she has no priests of God” (Ambrósio de Milan, 1996, p. 105, our translation). Regarding the Novatians, see Blázquez Martínez (2008). Recalling that Novatian had been a presbyter of the Church of Rome in the third century, he defended the doctrine that Christ remained forever subject to the Father, the Son being the servant of the Father.

² In the original: [...] Sirviendo de pasto espiritual a diversos cenáculos de begardos y beguinas, incluso después de la cremación de Poretas [...].

³ In the original: [...] donde en muchos casos las ceremonias pasan a un segundo plano pues no convencen[...].

Council of Vienne in 1312, during the papacy of Clement V. To do so, we consider it important to highlight some biographical aspects of this prelate.

Álvaro Pais was born in Salnés, in the region of Galicia, norther present-day Spain, between the years 1275 and 1280. He was raised at the court of Castilian king Sancho IV, the Brave (1257-1295), and then directed to the diocese of Santiago de Compostela, where he became a secular cleric. After receiving his initial education as a member of the nobility, he went to Bologna, where he studied law, obtaining a doctorate in civil and canon law, eventually becoming a university professor at the same institution where he graduated. Around 1304, after engaging with the Franciscans, he decided to join the Order of Friars Minor, whose members were, at that time, gathered in a General Chapter in the city of Assisi. In the early phase of his journey as a Franciscan, Brother Álvaro became involved in the internal disputes of the Order, concerning the issue of the poverty of Christ and the Apostles. Initially, he aligned himself with the Spiritual faction that advocated a more rigorous stance on poverty later, he opted for the Community's perspective. Around 1328, Pais became penitentiary of the papal Curia in Avignon under Pope John XXII, and in 1334, for his services to the pope, he was appointed bishop of the diocese of Silves in Portugal. He died in 1349 in Serville.

The Beghards in the eyes of Álvaro Pais

Álvaro Pais, a hierocrat by training and a important political thinker, begins to discuss the Beghards in article 51 of *State and Weeping of the Church*, his first major work. His description of them presents a negative character regarding their customs, making a point to differentiate them from an ecclesiastic, as the latter belonged to religious orders and adhered to a rule of life. For him, the Beghards

[...] live at their leisure, eat and drink, get up and wander, and due to their freedom, they do not fear being corrected, punished, or disturbed by people; in general, they indulge in idleness (a vulgar term in Italy), that is, they want a life of abundance, with liberty and without work, indulging in sleep and continuous daydreaming (Pais, 1996, p. 101).⁴

The author's impressions of this group are important for composing a profile of the events of his time. He, who dealt with the heresies of his day and wrote his last work around 1344, entitled *The Collyrium of the Faith Against the Heresies*⁵, was well-versed in the documentation on dissident movements. In addressing this group, he characterizes them by their excessive freedom, since they did not obey any established rules, having an itinerant nature and opposing the precepts stipulated by the Church, as they wore short hoods, ragged mantles and habits, and did not practice fasting, prayers, or other observances. Instead, they acted according to their own freedom; therefore, the author emphasizes that even if they had good intentions, they faltered before "[...] the first fire, perhaps divine, that burned them; they became worse than if they were cold in the world [...]" (Pais, 1996, p. 101)⁶.

Another aspect condemned that was condemned is that they boasted of practicing the vows of abstinence, silence and poverty, which for the author was nothing more than empty speech without theological foundation, used to confuse simple people without religious training. In this regard, Pais is categorical:

In reality, their initial abstinence turns into gluttony, poverty into wealth, vigilance into drowsiness, silence into much talk, solitude into companionship and familiarity with secular individuals and women. Some of them also live-in cities and villages, and others nearby, and often accept invitations from seculars to banquets under the guise of charity [...]. Simple pretentious individuals nearby meddle in advising souls [...] (Pais, 1996, p. 103)⁷.

It is essential to understand that the words of Álvaro Pais express his legal and priestly training, which fits into a conception that sees those who deviate from the established path as a threat to the constituted order, from which one cannot escape or interpret differently from orthodoxy.

Some of them, even the above-mentioned Apostolics and Beghards, although they say they observe evangelical poverty because they have no purse or don't carry anything with them, are truly wanderers and true gyrovague⁸, who travel the world and eat in the squares. [...] They also do not want to work, because they have scruples about doing any temporal work. They say that their duty is to pray continually so as not to fall into temptation [...] (Pais, 1966, p. 117)⁹.

⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

⁵ In the fourth part of the Collyrium, brother Álvaro Pais briefly cites the 8 errors of the Beghards, without commenting them, since he already did it before in *The State and Weeping of the Church*, and which will be discussed ahead (Pais, 1956).

⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

⁸ Gyrovague - "The fourth kind of monks is called the wanderers, who spend their entire lives in the different provinces, for three or four days in the cells of other monks, always wandering and never stable, slaves to their own will and the seductions of gluttony, and in every way worse than the Sarabitas. About the miserable way of life of all these it is better to remain silent than to say anything" (On the Kinds of Monks, 2020, chap. 1, § 4, our translation)

⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

The author refers to the Beghards as “feigned solitaires”, who, in their mission with others, seek only their own interests. Since they do not obey any monastic or conventual rule, they cannot remain cloistered; thus, they dedicated themselves to “[...] their own daydreams, profits, gluttony, and entertainments, covering themselves with the mantle of charity” (Pais, 1996, p. 107)¹⁰. Regarding the non-observance of a monastic rule, this was a characteristic aspect of the Beguine style, which can be highlighted as a religious innovation in the Late Middle Ages. This independence from cloistered life allowed for a distinctive character among these new religious movements.

Another point of debate for the Galician friar, and an error condemned by *Ad nostrum* of Clement V, concerns apostolic perfection: “But these false apostles and Beghards of this time wish to appear more perfect than the true apostles and the true anachorets who were also apostolic men” (Pais, 1966, p. 119)¹¹. In light of this, the author emphasizes that the fact that they are not authorized to preach in the name of the Church leads to a demonic relationship, possessing, thus, an evil spirit capable of deceiving others (Pais, 1988-1998).

Another issue that the Galician friar raises in article 51 refers to the way the Beghards and other groups acted concerning prayer, as they claimed to practice mental prayer, which at that time had not yet gained support among ecclesiastics because it led to an ecstatic state and contemplation, which the Church did not prescribe – but which we will see later in Saint Teresa of Jesus (Silva, 1983) and Francisco Suarez (Rodrigues, 2004) – but rather “[...] attentive vocal prayer at appropriate times and places” (Pais, 1996, p. 125)¹².

Regarding mental prayer and its combination with an ecstatic state of contemplation, it was a model disseminated among the Beguine communities, with one of the initiators of this model of prayer being the beguine Maria de Oignes (1176-1213), presented by Jacques de Vitry in *Vita Beatae Mariae Oigniacensis* as a practitioner of this form of prayer with long moments of ecstasy before the crucifix. The Beguine Maria de Oignes marked her life by alternating between public apostolate and ecstatic contemplation, something that later appears in the lives of other mystical women such as Catherine of Siena, Bridget of Sweden, and Angela of Foligno.

For the author, who labels them as ‘false apostles and feigned religious’, they should dedicate themselves to manual labor and be content with the vocal prayer of the Our Father, like other simple and uneducated people, so as not to get lost in “simulated and imaginary prayer.” He also denounces that due to these incorrect teachings, many men who had professions such as pig herders, shepherds, animal husbandry workers, masons, charcoal burners, blacksmiths, among others, left them to follow this other mode of life, thus harming the livelihood of their families and their own, switching from one habit to another. “[...] Não obstante, almost none of the aforementioned *sarabaítas*¹³, gyrovague, false apostles, beghards, fraticelli, and those of poor life, want to work with their hands, and live on alms [...] (Pais, 1996, p. 125-127)¹⁴.

The author points to a social problem, as by abandoning their trades to live another lifestyle, they began dedicating themselves to begging even though they were not suitable for it, since they did not belong to a religious order with the proper authorization. It should be emphasized that legal begging was based on pre-established requirements; therefore, those who had means to obtain food and necessities for life, or those who were capable of working and seeking food through their craft or with their own hands, could not dedicate themselves to this activity. Thus, Pais accuses the *Fraticelli*, Beghards, and false apostles of begging “[...] and, since they can work, if they do not know, they should learn, they commit a mortal sin acting against the laws and the canons if they ask for alms” (Pais, 1996, p. 129)¹⁵.

The problem of begging, in this case, was reproachable because by acting this way, they took alms away from the truly needy – the poor, the sick, or the elderly, and those who could not work. “[...] and because, secure in the food they beg for, they neglected the just work, they should be deprived of food, even when they are hungry, but not, however, until death [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 131)¹⁶. The model of comparison used by the friar is always monastic, since monks with approved rules like those of St. Benedict, for example, were obliged to manual labor, as were the Friars Minor, whose rule also provided for work with their hands, although clerics were exempt from these tasks, “[...] due to the occupation in spiritual labor, divine office, reading, study, preaching, confession, and the like [...] (Pais, 1996, p. 131)¹⁷.

¹⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹³ “Certain wandering and vagabonds monks, who, disgusted with the cenobitic life, followed no rules, and went from city to city living according to their desires. This name comes from the Hebrew *sarab* which means to rebel.” (Bergler, 1835, p. 68, our translation). In the original: *Ciertos monges errantes y vagabundos, que disgustados con la vida cenobítica no seguían ninguna regla, y andaban de pueblo en pueblo viviendo á su discreción. Este nombre viene del hebreo sarab que significa rebelarse.*

¹⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹⁵ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

¹⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 51, v. VI.

After the exposition on the origins of the Beghards, according to historiography and the introduction made by the author in article 51, we will examine the eight errors of this group and the condemning arguments presented by Álvaro.

The errors of the Beghards and its condemnations

Starting from the Clementines (Clementiae, 1550, V, tit. III, cap. III, De haereticis, constitution Ad nostrum) outlined at the Council of Vienne by Pope Clement V and published by John XXII (1316-1334) at the beginning of his reign. Álvaro Pais contemplated the errors by the Beghards condemned by the aforementioned constitution. The enumeration of errors by the author corresponds to that of Clement V's document. The first error of the Beghards pointed out by Brother Álvaro (attached to the fourth error) and condemned by the said Council is based on the belief that: "[...] in this present life, a man can acquire such a degree of perfection that he becomes totally impeccable and cannot progress further in grace. Indeed – they say – if someone could always progress, there could come to be someone more perfect than Christ" (Pais, 1996, p. 159)¹⁸.

In this regard, supported by the Conferences of John Cassian (Conference Théona, titled De anamartício, that is, impeccability), the prelate argues that among men there is no living without sin. For the author, human nature is inherently exposed to sin, given that with the exception of Christ and Mary, all were born with the stain of original sin (Pais, 1988-1998).

Under this conception, the error that the Beghards committed is precisely in asserting, according to the acts of the council, that a man, based on the lifestyle he adopts, could grow in grace enough not worry about sinning anymore, resembling the figures of Christ and Mary, which is interpreted by the author as false and heretical (Pais 1988-1998). In mystical theology, in this life, the mystic undergoes a path of purification but reaches the highest state of purity only in the heavenly Jerusalem (Occhialini, 2003). Thus, the Beghards err by asserting that even in this life they could become pure and sinless.

It is also evident the exaltation of the Marian model when the author states that even in her earthly existence, the Mother of God attained a degree of perfection that cannot be achieved by any man or woman, for "[...] in her, grace and merit always grew until death, because she always relied on grace, living rightly and virtuously" (Pais, 1996, p. 165)¹⁹. In his view, there would be no one more perfect than Christ, and in this, the Beghards would incur another ancient error, that of the Ebionites (Orbe, 1979, 1993), who were considered heretics by Irenaeus of Lyon²⁰ for advocating that Christ became a "righteous man progressively". He also compares them to the Cataphrygians²¹ for justifying themselves as perfect and believing they were in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Pais, 1988-1998).

Regarding the imperfection of man, Irenaeus of Lyon states in Book IV of the work *Against Heresies* that if someone were to ask:

Now! Could God not make man perfect from the beginning? Know that with respect to God, who is uncreated and always the same, everything was possible, but His creatures, since they later received the beginning of existence, were necessarily inferior to Him who made them. Indeed, it was impossible for recently created beings to be uncreated, and by not being uncreated, they are below perfection, and by being subsequent, they are like little children, and as such, they are not accustomed nor trained for perfect discipline (Irenaeus of Lyon, 1995, p. 504).

For Irenaeus of Lyon, perfection in this world is impossible for human beings; thus, Adam would have received the inclination towards perfection, lost with sin. This would have been regained through the redemption of Christ, but would be fully achieved only in eternity.

In the Conference on anamartício (impeccability), Pais finds an argument to refute the mentioned errors. "No one can restrict themselves to the degree they have reached, and the purer someone is in their spirit, the more unclean they consider themselves and the more causes they find for humility than for pride [...]. This authority completely destroys said error" (Pais, 1996, p. 169)²².

He advised the Beghards to recognize that the less sinful they considered themselves, the more sinful they would become. He admonished that they presented many sins and should justify themselves like David before

¹⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

¹⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁰ "The Ebionites are also fools who refuse to admit in their souls, by faith, the union of God with man and remain in the old yeast of their birth. They do not want to understand that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and that the power of the Most High overshadowed her and that, therefore, the one born of her is the Son of the Most High God, the Father of all things, who brought about the incarnation of his Son, bringing about a new birth, so that, having inherited death through the previous birth, through this one we might inherit life" (Irenaeus of Lyons, 1995, chap. V, 1.3, p. 399, our translation).

²¹ Tizzani (1862) brings up a discussion on the baptism of the Cataphrygians.

²² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

his errors and repent so that they could be enlightened, acknowledge their sins, and return to the bosom of the Church (Pais, 1996, p. 169)²³.

Still adhering to the idea that they were perfect, the second error attributed to the Beghards was “[...] that a man does not need to fast or pray after reaching the highest degree of perfection, because then sensuality is so submitted to the spirit and reason that a man can freely grant to the body whatever he pleases” (Pais, 1996, p. 171)²⁴.

For Álvaro Pais, this error is based on another, which is that of the freedom of spirit. He emphasizes that as long as men and women lived, no matter how perfect they were, they would be at the mercy of the desires of the flesh against the spirit (Galatians 5:17). Thus, especially for the religious, fasting and abstinence would always be necessary to curb the impulses of the flesh (Pais, 1988-1998).

He compared this error of the Beghards to the errors of the Jovinianism²⁵ “[...] who do not make a distinction between the abstinent and those who banquet loudly (C.XXIV, q. III, cap. Quidam, vers. Iounianistae)” (Pais, 1996, p. 173)²⁶. The problem here refers to the very identity attributed by this group, claiming that they were perfect, dead to the flesh, free from abstinence and fasting, and living a common life since they had overcome gluttony. This completely contradicted the thinking of ecclesiastics due to the fact that they did not have a specific rule and acted outside the authority of the Church.

Another issue, as already emphasized, pertains to prayer. According to Brother Álvaro's testimony, there was a contradiction in the actions of the Beghards concerning prayer. On one hand, they affirmed the duty to pray constantly and that for this reason they could not devote themselves to manual labor activities; on the other, one who considered himself perfect no longer needed to pray. In this point, “[...] they are contrary to God and to themselves, and therefore, they should not be listened to” (Pais, 1996, p. 175-177)²⁷.

The author concludes the considerations on this error by stating that this group was composed of liars and that they possessed the spirit of carnal freedom and that for this reason, they were incapable of attaining the blessings of prayer, since they were not connected to the Holy Spirit of God. Based on Paul's Letter to the Romans (12:1), Pais is emphatic: “Let these malignant Beghards be sacrificed as a holy and living host [...] mortifying themselves, therefore, these malignant Beghards as a holy and living host [...] by mortifying the flesh with fasting and abstinence in the outer court [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 179)²⁸.

The third error of the Beghards, according to Brother Álvaro, would consist in “[...] saying that those who are in the aforementioned degree of perfection and spirit of freedom are not subject to human obedience [...] And this error also lies in saying that they are not obliged to certain precepts of the Church [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 183)²⁹. Concerning this error, the author notes that it contains three articles, which he proposes to discuss one by one.

“First, I say that the error of claiming that, after being perfected, they are not obliged to obey men is an ancient error of heretics [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 183)³⁰, which appears in both the Old and New Testaments. At this point, the author preaches about the obedience they owe to the members of the Church. For him, the issue of obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy was indisputable. They should obey the clerics as representatives of the Apostles of Christ and especially the Pope, who, by analogy, represented Peter, the first and principal apostle of Jesus.

He attributed the vice of disobedience among the Beghards to what the Greeks called *idioritímia*, “[...] that is, movement, order, rule, form, love, and complacency of one's own will” (Pais, 1988-1998, EPIII, art. 52, v. VI, p. 189), and that by considering themselves virtuous, the Beghards and other groups were deceiving themselves – in this aspect, he proposes St. Francis as a model of obedience. “Venerable Francis said that if a subject sees better things for his soul than those that the prelate commands him, he should sacrifice his will to God and strive to do what the prelate commands” (Pais, 1996, p. 189)³¹. Another example is Brother Egídio, companion of the *Poverello*, for whom being under the yoke of obedience represented following the path of perfection, and being outside of it signified a sign of great arrogance (Pais, 1996, p. 191)³². For the author, a

²³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁵ Jovinian was a monk who lived in the city of Rome at the end of the 4th century. During his monastic practice he would have spread the doctrine according to which there is no difference between married people, that is, the *conjugati*, and the chaste and virgins, the *continentes* [...] (Veloso, 2018, p. 138).

²⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

²⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

convinced hierocrat, the Beghards acting this way were not obeying God as they claimed regarding themselves, “[...] since they do not want to obey the prelates who govern the world out of love for Him” (Pais, 1996, p. 191)³³.

Furthermore, the fact that the members of this movement say that after achieving perfection they are no longer obliged to the precepts of the Church “[...] is undoubtedly a manifest error” (Pais, 1996, p. 191)³⁴.

This second point raised by the author concerns the comparison of the Beghards with the doctrine of the Free Spirit. In this sense, we refer to Ortega Martín, noting that around 1306 and 1308 Margerite Porete, a Beguine from Hainault, had her books burned by order of the Bishop of Cambrai and in this process was sent to Paris accused of spreading the doctrine of the Free Spirit to simple people and especially to the Beghards, an accusation that Álvaro Pais also made in his *State and Weeping of the Church*. Porete refused to answer the interrogations, “[...] but she was declared guilty of heresy before a commission of theologians. She was declared relapsed and was burned at the stake in Paris in 1310” (Ortega Martín, 2020, p. 69, our translation)³⁵. She was condemned for heretical mysticism, especially for the content of her book *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, the original of which circulated anonymously among many convents and monasteries, reaching even to the present day (M. Lambert, o.c., 194-195 apud Ortega Martín, 2020).

For this reason, those who adhered to the mystical movements had to limit the content of their preachings to avoid being associated with the Free Spirit: “*Hubo por tanto una conexión de este movimiento de pobres, de personas que pensaban distinto y que buscaban la pobreza, que en parte quedaron marginados por su disidencia y modo de vida*” (Ortega Martín, 2020, p. 68).

The third point raised concerns the way these heretics viewed freedom, based on an interpretation of the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (3:17) “[...] where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,” and from the Epistle to the Galatians (5:18): “But if you are led by the Spirit of God, you are not under the law [...]”. The fact that they interpreted the Gospels literally led, according to Pais, to a misunderstanding regarding the theme of freedom and its significance for man; thus, he compares them to the heretics of the spirit of freedom, a group that Marguerite Porete belonged to.

According to Brother Álvaro, among their misconceptions, the erroneous interpretation of what freedom is, is the most dangerous point, as it has its origin in the example of ancient heretics. Referring to his time, he reminds us that it was lived in dark times believing in the imminent return of the “Antichrist, the son of perdition” and that these things were occurring through his work. He records his testimony:

One of them, who was from the diocese of Todi, said not long ago, as was ‘proven by witnesses while I was there,’ that hell was nothing else but doing one's own will in everything, and paradise was also nothing else but doing one's own will in everything and freely exercising one's liberty (Pais, 1996, p. 193, author's emphasis)³⁶.

He emphasized that the Beghards and other heretics had no awareness of their errors or sins, including the sin of the flesh, “[...] which is why they are all unclean, as is manifest from their own confessions and ‘by faithful testimonies obtained in my days,’ especially in the parts of Lombardy³⁷ and in the Ducal province, which is the province of St. Francis” (Pais, 1996, p. 193, author's emphasis)³⁸.

The author preached the reconciliation of the Beghards with what he conceived as the true faith, asserting: “Let these Beghards, against whom I have spoken above, return to the Spirit of the Lord, not to the flesh, if they wish to have true freedom. [...] ‘as we experience in these end times,’ the spirit of freedom that runs today is the flesh and not the spirit” (Pais, 1996, p. 207³⁹, author's emphasis)⁴⁰.

The “[...] fourth error of the Beghards is that man can achieve final blessedness in this present life according to every degree of perfection, just as he will attain it in the blessed life” (Pais, 1996, p. 209)⁴¹. This conception might lead to the question: can one become blessed in this life?

According Álvaro, this error finds no support in Sacred Scriptures; based on Matthew 11:11, he challenges it using the example of John the Baptist, who preached the coming of Christ, humbly remembering that even

³³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³⁵ In the original: “[...] pero se declara culpable de herejía ante una comisión de teólogos. Se le declara relapsa y es quemada en la hoguera en París en 1310.

³⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³⁷ It informs that one of the leaders of the sect of the freedom of spirit was the lombard Dulchino, who was condemned by the inquisition and burned with his companion in “Lombardy near the city of Vercelli.” (Pais, The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI, 193). Regarding the accusation of heresy of Dulchino or fra Dulcino, cf. Pierce (2004)

³⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

³⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁰ In another statement, Álvaro Pais also stated: “In my time, in the Province of St. Francis, many seculars and friars minors were imprisoned by the inquisitors of heretical wickedness due to this carnal spirit of freedom. [...] As I was a novice [...]” (State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI, p. 207)

⁴¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

though he was the herald of the Redeemer's coming, he became the least among the servants of God. Likewise, based on Augustine, the prelate reaffirmed that concerning the idea of the kingdom of heaven, preached by the Beghards, humans were still not able to receive it, since the celestial hierarchy is found there, and it must be remembered that men carry in their bodies the weight of sin "[...] burdens the soul and the earthly tent weighs down the mind with its many concerns" (Wisdom 9:15). Pais also recalls, drawing on Jerome, that everyone who is already with God is greater than the one who is still on the earthly plane. This can be used as an argument against this error of the Beghards.

For the Galician friar, all the perfection of man in the earthly realm lies in the theological virtue of charity (Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians, 3:14); if someone wishes to consider himself greater, he is only truly so in relation to love for God and neighbor. According to the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (13:3) "[...] if I have no charity, I am nothing". However, he reaffirms, countering the first error of the Beghards, that there is no perfect charity in this realm as there is in the heavenly realm: "[...] the great fire of charity is in Jerusalem, that is, in the blessed and peaceful homeland, which is what Jerusalem means" (Isaiah 31:19). In this regard, he emphasizes: "Therefore, never can one who sees God in a riddle enjoy such happiness as the one who sees God face to face" (Pais, 1996, p. 211).⁴²

Another argument against this error is attributed to his reading of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (apud Pais, 1996, p. 213)⁴³, in that "[...] the divine punishment did not expel us from a paradise of delights so that human invention could arrange another paradise here." The Beghard's view of blessedness is contested by ecclesiastics, as the very conception of creating a paradise while still alive undermines the idea of the final judgment, and they reiterated the necessity for Christians to remain faithful to the institution as the only mediator of salvation: "For if in this life it were possible to attain a happiness as great as that of the homeland (celestial), the other paradise would be desired in vain, for it would be of no value, which is heretical to feel [...]" (Pais, 1996, p. 213).⁴⁴

Regarding seeing God face to face while still in this life, the author cites the examples of Paul, who, due to the inherent limitations of the flesh and the various impulses of the soul, could not, as he desired, behold the Lord, as well as David: "When shall I go and appear before the face of God?" (Psalms 46:3). Thus, if neither the Apostle nor David saw God face to face when they were alive, how much less could the heretics see Him?

According to his reading of the Church Fathers, "[...] there are two kinds of blessedness: one by grace, the other by glory, one on the way, the other in the heavenly homeland" (Pais, 1996, p. 215)⁴⁵. The blessedness by grace consists of the glorification of the souls of those who are already in celestial Jerusalem, meaning the elevation of the soul to God. The other is that of the body, referring to those who are still on a pilgrimage to the desired city. Although, the author emphasizes: "[...] in this life, even the bodies of perfect men do not have the qualities they have in the other life" (Pais, 1996, p. 217)⁴⁶. His reasoning is that it is impossible for perfect men to be happy in earthly life as they would be in heavenly life when they would be blessed in soul and body. He also refers to Matthew 5 regarding the beatitudes, which by analogy would serve as steps toward the salvation of both the soul and the body. Regarding this interpretation of the Gospels, he concludes: "[...] these wretches, if they do not annul these errors, do not have in this life the blessedness of grace, nor in the other the blessedness of glory, etc..." (Pais, 1996, p. 217)⁴⁷.

The fifth error of the Beghards is in claiming that any intellectual nature is naturally happy in itself and that the soul does not need the light of glory to elevate it to see God and joyfully enjoy Him. This error is akin to that of the Pelagians [...]⁴⁸ (Pais, 1996, p. 217)⁴⁹.

In response to this error, Álvaro Pais reiterated that this form of interpretation was erroneous, as the assertion that they knew the angelic intellectual nature was false, since doctrinally, for the author, "[...] no one is naturally and essentially good and happy except God alone, who is essential, original, perfect, effective, and naturally blessed" (Pais, 1996, p. 219).⁵⁰

⁴² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁵ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁴⁸ In regard to the pelagian quarrel cf. Oliviera (2015).

⁴⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

If only God is truly good, man does not share with Him in absolute perfection or goodness because, according to the Catholic doctrine, every creature is endowed with defects and by nature “[...] tends toward nothingness, because it was created from nothing” (Pais, 1996, p. 219)⁵¹. God is indeed good because His origin is goodness, as He does not receive it from another, since it comes from Himself; Only He is perfectly good because there is no evil or defect in Him; All good derives from Him “[...] since He is the indelible source of all good” (Pais, 1996, p. 219)⁵²; Only God is naturally good, since His nature is immutably good and incorruptible. But if only God is good, what can be said of His creatures? The author seems to contradict what the Scriptures proclaim regarding this, yet he made it clear that man comes from God, which is why he has his degree of perfection; however, he could not be equated with God or angels. “The creature, therefore, is good in its own way, but not perfectly, for if it were essentially good as the nature of God, it could never lose its goodness nor sin as the reprobate angels who fell” (Pais, 1996, p. 219)⁵³.

In respect the Beghards, who claimed to understand the intellectual nature of man, that is, of the soul, and that it would be blessed by itself, it was stated that this assertion was false, citing the example of the first man, Adam. If he had been “[...] created blessed by God and was naturally blessed like God [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 221)⁵⁴, he could not commit sin nor be subject to death. Adam, the author recalls, was created with free will; he could sin or not, die or not. “[...] therefore, Adam was created good in his own way like the angel, but he was not confirmed in the goodness of virtue nor inseparably possessed of good” (Pais, 1996, p. 221)⁵⁵.

Regarding their claim that “[...] the soul does not need the light of glory to elevate it to see God and joyfully enjoy Him, it is false [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 221)⁵⁶. Pais explained that the light of glory is Christ Himself and not the soul of any saint. Even if the soul has the light of grace, it needs the light of glory to be illuminated and not fall into error. “But these wretched and blind Beghards say: How can it be that God is seen by the creature in His inaccessible light without God being the light, when there is no difference between God, who is the uncreated light, and His light because the light with which one sees God is God?” (Pais, 1996, p. 223)⁵⁷.

For Brother Álvaro, the fifth error of the Beghards was linked to the fourth, as in this life one cannot have such a clear contemplation of the face of God, except by a granted privilege. Furthermore, in earthly life, every soul needs divine light to be elevated to God, as humanity carries the mark of original sin (Pais, 1988-1998), because “[...] by sinning, the first man blinded himself with sin, and the vice of nature became rooted” (Pais, 1996, p. 225)⁵⁸.

The sixth error of the Beghards consists in “[...] asserting that exercising acts of virtues is characteristic of imperfect man, and that the perfect soul licenses virtues for itself” (Pais, 1996, p. 225)⁵⁹. This error resembles what was condemned in the second trial against Marguerite Porete, showing the influence of Porete's thought among the Beghards.

According to Josep Ignasi Saranyana (2007), based on Romana Guarnieri, in the records of the second trial composed of two of the fifteen propositions submitted to the experts against Marguerite Porete, the first one confirms our assertion regarding the influence of the author of *The Mirror of the Simple Souls* thoughts in movements like that of the Beghards, specifically in the sixth error attributed to them:

1ª Quod anima adnichilata dat licentiam virtutibus nec est amplius in earum servitute, quia non habet eas quoad usum sed virtutes obediunt ad nutum» (Que el alma aniquilada tiene licencia con respecto a las virtudes, em el sentido de que no hay em ella ninguna dependencia de tales virtudes porque no tiene necesidad de apoyarse em ellas, pues las virtudes obedecen a la menor seña). Esta proposición, según Guarnieri, remite a los capítulos 6, 8, 13 y 21 del Speculum (Saranyana, 2007, p. 267).

Brother Álvaro emphasized that such an assertion is erroneous as it confuses with the precepts of Christ and all perfect saints who exercised virtues, such as “[...] kneeling, vocal prayer, observing bodily poverty, preaching, performing works of mercy and discipline [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 225)⁶⁰. In fact, the author makes it clear that the error of the Beghards was, as previously mentioned, in approaching spiritually the practices of the priestly life without, however, taking vows or submitting themselves to a rule of life.

⁵¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁵ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁵⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

Regarding the issue of a perfect soul licensing virtues, the author reiterated that virtue without practice "[...] is pure theory, for it is impossible to have true virtue without the timely exercise of virtuous deeds" (Pais, 1996, p. 225)⁶¹. In this regard, he posed a question: "Who indeed knows that they are perfect, to be able to dispense with acts of virtue? Surely nobody (1st Cor. 4:7)" (Pais, 1996, p. 227)⁶². For his argumentation, he pointed to St. Paul's letter to the Philippians (3:12): "Not that I have already obtained it or am already perfect." For the Galician friar, the more a man recognizes himself as imperfect, the closer he would be to perfection. Paul, still to the Philippians (3:12-13) stated: "[...] but I press on to see if somehow I may attain it, because I was also apprehended by Jesus Christ. Brothers, I do not consider that I have already attained the goal." In the author's view, if Paul, who was perfect, progressed toward virtues, how much more the heretics who claimed to be perfect and virtuous, and he highlights "[...] this text expressly destroys this error" (Pais, 1996, p. 227)⁶³.

For him, it was inconceivable that anyone could consider themselves so perfect as to exempt themselves from the practice of virtues. Virtues are exercised internally "through desire, thought, and holy meditations" or externally through the practice of holy works. "If one does not exercise in any of these ways, it loses the name of virtue, and the soul without virtue remains bare, for virtues are the veils of the soul" (Pais, 1996, p. 229)⁶⁴. He also stated that it is impossible for the image and likeness of God to exist in souls that do not practice virtues. According to him, such behavior opens the way for the entrance of the devil and not of God: "[...] as virtue departs, vice succeeds it" (Pais, 1996, p. 229)⁶⁵.

The seventh error of the Beghards is their claim that a woman's kiss, since nature does not incline toward it, is a mortal sin, but that the carnal act, since nature inclines toward it, is not a sin, especially when the one practicing it is tempted (Pais, 1996, p. 229)⁶⁶.

To refute this error, the author discussed sin and under what conditions it would be venial or mortal. Regarding the woman's kiss, whether it constituted a sin or not, he stated that kisses, touches, and embraces are neither venial nor mortal sins, as they can be done with good intention, such as "[...] to greet someone, or by custom, especially among relatives, as is customary among provincials, or when the doctor takes the pulse or examines a wound of a woman" (Pais, 1996, p. 229).⁶⁷

Mortal sin, therefore, would arise from disordered and bad causes or from deliberately consenting to a sinful act. He explained that if someone gives a kiss or has contact with another with lustful intent, then a mortal sin is committed, "[...] because not only through touch, but also through sight, and even through affection without sight, the concupiscence of women it pleases and its desired (Mt 5:28) [...]". For him, sins are committed from the "[...] criminal consent of the heart" [...] (Pais, 1996, p. 231). In this regard, Matthew (15:19) warned that "[...] out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries [...]". "Therefore, if the heart is wounded by the dart of sensuality, the kiss is a mortal sin [...]" (Pais, 1996, p. 231)⁶⁸.

Pais also noted that the Beghards spoke falsely when they claimed: "[...] that nature does not incline toward the kiss, because in its own way it inclines toward it as it does toward coitus" (Pais, 1996, p. 231)⁶⁹. He reminded that sin always arises from a corrupt mind, for "[...] it is not the inclination or non-inclination of nature [...]" that brings sin; it is the will based on free will, for "[...] even if nature strongly inclines toward the sin of the flesh, the one who sins by their own will is no less guilty [...]" (Pais, 1996, p. 231)⁷⁰.

Regarding the other aspect of this seventh error, that the carnal act is not a sin because it is part of human nature, the author pointed out that such ideas would be influenced by the spirit of freedom, based on the Book of Exodus (20:14), in the Decalogue, "[...] you shall not commit adultery [...]", to confirm the Beghards' error that "[...] all illicit coitus and the illegitimate use of the members [...]", because simple fornication is a mortal sin [...]" (Pais, 1996, p. 233)⁷¹. Still about fornication, he quoted Isidore: "Fornication is greater than all sins. Fornication precedes all evils. It is better to die than to fornicate" (Pais, 1996, p. 233)⁷². In this regard, the author emphasized that while theft or murder might be excused in some cases, fornication can never be excused.

⁶¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁵ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁶⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

Regarding the third point of this error of the Beghards

[...] that when someone is tempted with this sin, in their opinion, they are excused, since one thing is to be tempted and another is to consent to the temptation. Not being tempted is impossible, for all our life on earth is a temptation [...] (Pais, 1996, p. 235)⁷³.

Temptation, for the author, is a way to overcome sin; in this sense, it becomes something positive, but for a man to combat temptation, he must be in constant prayer, especially the one that Christ taught His apostles. Temptation is also interconnected with sin, which, for the author, is completed in three ways: “[...] through suggestion, which is made by the devil, through delight, which is made by the flesh, and through consent, which is made by the spirit” (Pais, 1996, p. 235)⁷⁴. He revisits the myth of original sin, relating the serpent to the devil who suggested the sin, Eve with the flesh that delighted in it, and Adam as the spirit that consented to sin. Citing Chrysostom, he stated that those who are already in sin are not tempted by the devil, but “[...] if you resolve to be continent, you are tempted by the spirit of lust; if you resolve to fast, you are tempted by the spirit of gluttony; if you resolve to give alms, you are tempted by avarice; if you resolve to maintain humility, you are tempted by the spirit of pride [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 235)⁷⁵. In truth, Christians are always in a struggle against evil while awaiting heavenly glory. “Therefore, let these Beghards not excuse themselves for being tempted in the flesh, since no one sins against their will” (Pais, 1996, p. 237)⁷⁶.

The eighth error of the Beghards was due to the assertion that

[...] in the elevation of the body of Jesus Christ, one should neither rise nor pay reverence to it, claiming that it would be a sign of imperfection if they descended so far from the purity and height of their contemplation that they thought of something about the mystery or sacrament of the Eucharist or about the passion of the humanity of Christ (Pais, 1996, p. 237)⁷⁷.

The author countered this error by using the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (2:10): “[...] at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Regarding the error, he demonstrated that it refers to the body of Christ in the Eucharist, a sacrament instituted by Him before He was crucified (Cf. Lk 22:14-20; Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29). Furthermore, for the Church, since the 13th century, every faithful person is obliged to receive communion at least once a year, according to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215):

All the faithful, of both sexes, after reaching the age of reason, shall personally and faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their parish priest, and shall apply themselves, to the extent of their ability, to fulfill the penance imposed upon them, receiving with respect, at least at Easter, the sacrament of the Eucharist (Lateran Council IV, Cod II-1, p. 525, DzS 812, FC 797, 2005, p. 116, our translation).

The obligation of confession and the fulfillment of the penance imposed by the confessor ensured and regulated penitential practices, which prepared the faithful to receive the Eucharist, and they should also adore Christ by rendering Him worship: the Magi who worshiped Jesus in the manger (Mt 2:10); the leper who worshiped the Lord before asking for healing (Mt 8: 1-4); and the blind man who worshiped Him (Jn 9).

Bringing to light another aspect of this error, the Galician friar emphasized that by saying they would fall from their state of perfection in their contemplation by thinking of the passion of Christ “[...] it is a folly of manifest diabolical arrogance, because by seeing the body of Christ, they see God by faith and His divinity that is united to the flesh of Christ” (Pais, 1996, p. 239)⁷⁸. Regarding the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, even in the 11th century, Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) defined that:

The bread and wine that are upon the altar are, by the mystery of holy prayer and by the words of our Redeemer, substantially changed into the true, proper, and life-giving flesh, and into the blood of our Lord [...] not only in figure and by virtue of the sacrament, but in their own nature and in their true substance (Gregory VII, 2005, p. 51, our translation).

The question raised by the Galician friar challenged the fact that they claimed to contemplate the divinity without contemplating Christ Himself, who is of one essence with the Father and is the same Son and man born of Mary, as expressed in the Council of Nicaea (Pais, 1988-1998).

⁷³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁵ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁶ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁷ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁷⁸ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

The doctrinal problem is present, since for the Galician friar, what is at stake is the very Eucharistic institution by not giving credit to the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated host. “Now, that most holy flesh that is made on the altar is the true flesh of this God and man. Hence Augustine: ‘He received the flesh from the flesh of Mary, and gave this same flesh to eat for our salvation’” (Pais, 1996, p. 239)⁷⁹.

He emphasized that the flesh is inseparable from the Word and that by worshipping it, one does not descend from true contemplation; rather, those who contemplate the God who became human and lived like men are elevated. “Nothing, truly, is more gentle, sweet, and glorious for man than to contemplate that it is indeed true that his Creator is bodily united to his creature and that He is inseparably one with it [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 239)⁸⁰.

According to Brother Álvaro, if such statements were true, then the “Holy Virgin, the apostles, the evangelists, the patriarchs, and the prophets would have been highly imperfect [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 241)⁸¹. He also pointed out that the most accessible path to achieve the contemplation of the divinity consists precisely in contemplating the humanity of Christ.

In this regard, he claimed that the Beghards were “[...] worse than demons [...]” for not wanting to worship Christ in the flesh, “[...] that is, Christ, who is ours through participation in human nature and through redemption [...]” Therefore, if these Beghards truly desire to eat the flesh of Christ, let them truly worship that flesh [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 243)⁸².

Finally, the prelate recorded an important account, as it demonstrated that he was familiar with the doctrine of the Beghards and had even preached against it, especially the eighth error concerning the elevation of the body of Christ during the celebration of the Mass. He stated that “[...] in a monastery of monks of St. Lawrence of Pansperne, where at that time ‘I was staying,’ there was a Teutonic, very spiritual in appearance. [...] During a sermon he attended, ‘I alluded’ to this error against the Beghards of which he was a part [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 243, author’s emphasis)⁸³. He indicated that as he preached, he corrected that man of such error, but he showed himself restless and did not accept it with pleasure. “He covered himself with a vile habit and shed tears, for the devil often ministers tears and apparent ecstasies [...]” (Pais, 1996, p. 243)⁸⁴.

Final considerations

Reflecting on Álvaro Pais and his thought remains urgent, as his work presents many themes to be examined. The case of the Beghards is one of them. One of the challenges encountered in composing this article was the scarcity of studies about Álvaro Pais and his thoughts on this heretical movement. In our research, we found only one work that cites his writings in its bibliographic compendium, which led us to the challenge of presenting, from the source, the eight errors attributed to the Beghards by the constitution *Ad nostram* of Clement V.

Since these are doctrinal errors, we relied on theological perspectives to understand Pais’s conception of the matter. We cannot forget that his view on this movement was concerned with the eternal salvation of the faithful. These faithful, according to his perspective, had deviated from the right path and, worse than that, in addition to being doomed to damnation, would lead others down the same path by devaluing the rites, obeying the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and disapproving of the Eucharistic liturgy.

On the other hand, movements deemed heretical, like the one studied here, sought greater religious freedom and a way of life based on the poverty of Christ and the Apostles. Thus, they significantly diverged from the reality experienced by clerics at that time.

For the author, the lifestyle and mindset of this group were at odds with the dogma established by the Church. These truths of faith could not be questioned and generated movement from both church and secular forces due to their dissonant ideas within Christendom. In this sense, the condemnation of the Beghards and other heretical movements that emerged from the 12th century took place, as outlined in this work.

Thus, we hope that this work has contributed to the studies regarding the works of Álvaro Pais in Brazil and on a little-studied topic which is the Beghard heresy. In the text, we chose methodologically to comment on the eight errors based on the source itself, as the bibliography on the subject is scarce and the Beghards did

⁷⁹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁸⁰ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁸¹ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁸² The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁸³ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

⁸⁴ The State and Weeping of the Church, art. 52, v. VI.

not leave behind writings about their thought; therefore, the work of Álvaro Pais becomes a necessary source for understanding, even if partially, some cornerstones of this movement.

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