

7-2016

## Historical and Cultural Implications of Bogomilism

Maja Angelovska  
*Institute of National History*

Ruzhica Cacanaska  
*Methodius University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Eastern European Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Angelovska, Maja and Cacanaska, Ruzhica (2016) "Historical and Cultural Implications of Bogomilism," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol36/iss4/4>

This Article, Exploration, or Report is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF BOGOMILISM

**By Maja Angelovska-Panova and Ružica Cacanaska**

Professor Maja Angelovska-Panova, PhD (angelovska\_maja@yahoo.com), is a full-time professor in the Department of Ancient and Medieval History at the Institute of National History, Skopje. Her publications include "Bogomilism in the Spiritual Culture of Macedonia," "Religious Formations and Gender Identities," "The Macedonian Orthodox Church: Eastern Christianity and Politics in Twenty-first Century" (with co-authors T. Chepreganov and D. Zajkovski), and "Bogomil Folk Heritage: False Friend or Neglected Source. Heresy and the Making of European Culture" (with co-author A. P. Roach).

Professor Ruzhica Cacanaska, PhD. (ruzica-c@hotmail.com), is a research counselor at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in Skopje of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Among her publications are "Religion in the Period of Transition," "Public Religion," "Historical Basis of Sociological Methodology," and "Religious Polarization of Macedonian Modern Society."

### **Abstract**

Bogomilism represents a spiritual manifestation, dualistic in nature, of a religious expression, and a social and philosophical orientation. The essence of Bogomilism can be followed on the basis of several key postulates, such as dualism, a specific theological and dogmatic characteristic, the support of ethical principles within their social life, and finally the political dimension of teaching the determinants which rise from the overall social and political processes in medieval times. The aim of this article is to present the historical and cultural aspects of this movement, which left visible traces in the spiritual culture of Macedonia, Balkans, and Byzantium.

\* \* \* \* \*

The implications of the appearance of heresies within a certain area and time period were of a different nature, and so determinants of religious, social-political, and cultural-educational character are mentioned in this context. But what is particularly important is the fact that through the heresies (or heterodox teachings and practice), in this particular case through Bogomilism, the people in Macedonia and throughout the Balkans had the opportunity to realize their religious choices in circumstances where Christian orthodoxy was predominant.

Taking into mind the significance of this topic in regards to heresies, which seemed to receive a worldwide scholarly rehabilitation in 2014, an agreement was signed between the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for cooperation on the project “Bogomil Movement and Bogomil Literature.” For this reason, a number of activities were undertaken for the express goal of accomplishing this project, which is expected to be finalized in 2016.

More specifically, in 2015, the Republic of Bulgaria published the work “History of the Cathars, Waldensians and Bogomils in Austria in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century,” where the foreword and editing were prepared by Erika Lazarova, PhD. This work deals with the doctoral thesis by Franz Trdan in 1912, which is kept in the library of the University of Vienna and serves as a relevant study on the dispersion of heresies in Central and Western Europe.

As for the activities undertaken by the participants from the Republic of Macedonia, important field research was conducted in October 2014 in the villages of Bogomila, Sogle, Bistrica, and Nezhilovo,<sup>1</sup> where authentic ethnographic material on the subject matter was recorded and supported through photographs.

---

<sup>1</sup>They are villages where traditions stemming from the Bogomil movement are still felt in the folk literature of a dualistic character.

This gave rise to the idea to organize the exhibition entitled “Accounts on the Bogomils”<sup>2</sup> that took place on December 14, 2015, at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) exhibition hall. Its main purpose was to point to the fact that Bogomilism continued to exist in this area even after it disappeared from the historical scene, and did so through folk stories and tales, as a cultural phenomenon which incorporated itself in folklore by way of apocryphal literary texts.

Serving as one of the oldest sources of information, Petar Arizankovski, born in 1925 in the village of Bogomila, is a man who knows a vast number of stories about the antagonistic position between God and the Devil which can be found, as a leitmotif, throughout the folk literature of a dualistic character.

Arizankovski stated, “I know a lot of stories. Here’s one: ‘The Devil was the Lord’s brother. But they were always in opposition. The Lord could do anything. The Devil made a wolf, but he couldn’t give him a soul. He was told to say: up with you wolf, an’ take the Lord by the leg! He said it, but nothing happened. The wolf did not come alive. He said it three times, but nothing happened. Then he was told: ‘Say this: up with you wolf, an’ take the devil by the leg.’ When he said it, the wolf leapt up and bit the devil’s leg. Since then the Devil limps on one leg.”

The question raised here is: what is Bogomilism and what are its historical–cultural implications that contribute to the interest researchers have in this subject matter?

Bogomilism represents a spiritual manifestation, dualistic in nature, of a religious expression, and a social and philosophical orientation. Its dynamic of alternating expansion and decline, adjusting the method of existence to the current social and political conditions, allowed

---

<sup>2</sup>On the initiative of academician Vasil Gjuzelev and the participants in the Project from the Bulgarian side, the next presentation of the exhibition was mounted on April 13, 2016. at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

it to survive on the historical scene until the 15th century when the last impulses of its existence were manifested.

The main preacher and ideological creator of Bogomilism was the priest Bogomil, who it is believed, had been a priest educated within the Orthodox Church. He was a man who for his time, showed reformatory tendencies regarding many religious and social issues. The idea of Bogomilism as a new spiritual manifestation was probably due to Bogomil's theoretical experience and objective reasoning, but the complete realization of Bogomilism as a teaching with a distinct conception which concerns theological, philosophical, and social aspects was probably the result of many years of team work with his closest associates and followers. Bogomil's pragmatism, in addition to his ideological platform, lies mainly in his ability to coordinate his associates for a complete implementation of this teaching. All of this is particularly important because Bogomilism was not limited only to a theoretical interpretation; it meant a more immediate engagement in organizing the life in heretical communities and developing a literary activity in the spirit of Bogomil theology.<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of heretical experiences and philosophical concepts from the past has left visible qualitative traces on the conception and ideological direction of Bogomilism. At the same time, their attempt to include new contents which would contribute to the authenticity and original articulation of its teaching is an undisputed fact.

The essence of Bogomilism as a movement and as a teaching can be followed and historically reconstructed on the basis of several key postulates, such as dualism, the specific theological and dogmatic determination, the support of ethical principles within their social life,

---

<sup>3</sup>Maja Angelovska-Panova, *Bogomilstvoto vo duhovnata kultura na Makedonija* [Bogomilism in the Spiritual Culture of Macedonia], (Skopje: Institute of Old Slavic Language – Az-Buki, 2004), 71.

and finally the political dimension of its teaching, the determinants of which rise from the overall social and political processes in medieval times.

The dualist ontology in its most general formulation represents an integral part of human spirituality, which in the process of evolutionary awareness has faced and experienced the differentiation between the categories of good and bad. In fact, dualism represents an actual consequence arising from the human perception of the factual and cruel life on earth as opposed to the visionary model of an ideal life which would be realized in God's heavenly realm. Philosophical orientations and religious concepts were formed on the basis of the antagonistic position of the primordial principles of good and bad, that is to say, of spirit and matter. A more specific religious status in the process of dualistic ontology is acquired from Iranian dualism, seen through Zoroastrianism and Mahdaism, religious and philosophical platforms which existed 17 centuries before Bogomilism appeared. Namely, the universe, according to Zarathustra's teaching, was Ahura Mazda's creation and later the world, in its actual and material manifestation, which was corrupted by Ahriman.<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to Bogomil dualism, its assembling character, arising from chronologically older heretical experiences and from the influence of canonical and apocryphal literature, should certainly be taken into account. But the variations of dualism were at the same time largely determined by the actual socio-political and economic conditions in the period between the 10th and 15th centuries, as well as by the existing understanding of the principles of good and bad specified through the characters and acts of God and the Devil. In that respect, Bogomil dualism was able to express either a moderate or, at specific times of its constant development, an absolute (that is to say, extreme) orientation. In principle, the study of the

---

<sup>4</sup>Mircea Elijade, *Istorija verovanja i religiskih ideja*, [History of Beliefs and Religious Ideas] vol. 2, (Beograd: , 1991), 195; Yuri, Stoyanov, *The Hidden Tradition in Europe*, (Sofia: Arcana: 1995), 17-18.

greater part of the relevant original materials suggests the impression that Bogomils were devotees of moderate dualism which represented a kind of compromise solution between the absolute dualism inherent to Manichaeism and Paulicianism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other. Bogomil moderate dualism was based on the Biblical myth of Satan whose apostasy from the heavenly Trinity starts the establishment of the principle of good and bad. According to the beliefs of moderate dualists, most illustratively shown in the *Secret Book*,<sup>5</sup> the principle of bad was in an inferior position in relation to the principle of good; in other words it was its creation.<sup>6</sup> The functioning of the material world relied on the principle of evil, which by itself meant that matter was being treated as an evil substance containing the kingdom of Satan as an antithesis of the kingdom of light. The antagonistic position of spirit and matter represents a philosophical foundation and a supporting point of Bogomil doctrine. This belief brought Bogomils close to Plato's philosophy according to which matter, identified with desolation and emptiness, contradicts the kingdom of light.<sup>7</sup> In spite of the evident dominance of moderate dualistic tendencies, extreme dualism, which in most examples was encouraged by the actual political and social problems within the social system, was also present in Bogomil communities at different times. A typical example of extreme expansion of absolute dualism is detected within the Dragovit's church-heretical community, which is being connected to the traditions of the former Sclavinia with the same name located in the western part of Macedonia, the status of which was, at the time, based on political and economic freedom.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>The *Secret Book* (*Interrogatio Ioannis*) is an authentic literary work which circulated among Bogomils on the East as well as Cathars on the West.

<sup>6</sup>Dimitar Angelov, *Bogomilstvoto*, (Bogomilism) (Sofija: Bulvest 1993), 141.

<sup>7</sup>Nikolai Kochev, "Km vprosa na predstavitelite na gnostiko-dualizma v Vizantija i na Balkanite prez IX-XII v. i antichnata filosofija," [To the Question of Representatives of Gnostic Dualism in Byzantium and the Balkans during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries and Philosophy of Antiquity] *Studia Balcanica*, 14 (1979): 63.

<sup>8</sup>M. Angelovska-Panova, *Bogomilstvoto vo duhovnata kultura na Makedonija*, 90-91.

Bogomils expressed an antagonistic attitude towards the canonical teaching of the official church, as well as towards the feudal order in general, through the established theological and dogmatic principles of its religious and dualistic teaching according to which everything created out of matter is identified with diabolism. This determination of the material world further determines the attitude of Bogomils towards external manifestations and attributes of the Christian religion, concerning the question of credibility of its cultic system. The Bogomils' attack was directed primarily against the church as an institution which, according to their beliefs, had nothing in common with the real Christian ecclesia, particularly because of the fact that it derogated from principles established by gospel texts. Bogomils supported the rejection of the church in its institutional meaning with their own interpretation of the Gospel of Mathew (9: 6) which reads: "And when you pray, enter your chambers and while closing the door pray to your Father." The general impression is that they supported the contents literally pointing out that there is no mention of any kind of church building whatsoever. The interpretation of Apostle Paul's syntagma is probably made in accordance with the same principle; in his I Corinthians, he points out: "Don't you know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God lives within you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God shall destroy him, because the temple of God is holy, and so are you."

In their doctrine of determination, Bogomils were categorical in their nihilism towards liturgies, icons, the cross, christening, Eucharist, relics as a source of miracles, the Resurrection, holidays, the holiness of Virgin Mary, etc. This certainly speaks in favor of the fact that Bogomil theology was not directly against Christian principles, but that it was directed against their interpretation, as an ideological substratum in medieval times, by the official church. In that respect, the intervention of Bogomils was more along the lines of reformulating the gospel



principles regarding exegesis, but it was also used to serve their interests and doctrine as an unprivileged class.

The social and ethical characteristics of Bogomilism can best be seen within the framework of organizational life, realized in their church–heretical communities. Namely, the existence of organized life was evident since the earliest phase of Bogomil existence which was under a strong influence of original apostolic Christianity and in accordance with their concept for equality between people, collective ownership, and applied communism.<sup>9</sup> Supporting the principles of original Christianity, Bogomils were against the hierarchical structure based on material goods. Their definition for hierarchy was connected to the degree of theoretical knowledge in presenting dogmas and practicing a strict ascetic way of life which, from the current point of view, implicates the meaning of the term category. Depending on whether these criteria were met, Bogomils were practically divided in three basic categories: students, believers and perfects, or in the spirit of their own terminology—followers, believers and perfects.<sup>10</sup> The progression from one to the other category took place with a certain preparatory period for confession, spiritual and physical catharsis, and constant contemplation, which in the end finished with an appropriate ritual identified as the second or the real baptism through the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that both the spiritual baptizing, i.e. the change from a follower into a believer, and the elevation in the category, perfect, were accomplished with an identical ritual. This was probably due to their aim of simplicity and complete democratization of Bogomil organizational life.<sup>11</sup> Hence follows the logical conclusion that the preparatory period for crossing from one category to the other was of greater importance for Bogomils than the actual

---

<sup>9</sup>Dimitar Angelov, 'Filosofskite vzgledi na bogomilite', [The philosophical views of the Bogomils] *Izvestija na instituta za blgarska literatura*, 3-4 (1951), 135.

<sup>10</sup>Dimitar Angelov, Borislav Primov, Georgi Bataklijev, *Bogomilstvoto v Bulgarija, Vizantija i Zapadna Evropa v izvori*, [Bogomilism in Bulgaria, Byzantium and Western Europe in Sources] (Sofija:Nauka I izkustvo 1967): 42.

<sup>11</sup>Malkolm Lambert, *The Cathars*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 1998), 34.

ritual, because of the fact that it was then that the three basic principles came to the fore: complete absorption of Bogomil theology, radical asceticism, and absolute poverty. The process, the aim of which was reaching absolute perfection, was long-lasting. According to Euthymius of Akmonia, the period of introduction into heretic dogmas lasted one to two years. On the other hand, when addressing Priest Basil's activities, the principal preacher of Bogomilism at the end and beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, Euthymius Zigabenus and John Zonara point out that Basil studied these dogmas for 15 years.<sup>12</sup> It means that besides the obligatory period which usually lasted one to two years, the perfect Bogomils probably spent a great part of their time on their personal improvement as far as absorbing and exegesis of Bogomil occult is concerned, especially if we have in mind that it is not a static manifestation but a religious and ideological complex manifesting evolving tendencies during its existential impulse.

It should be noted that Bogomils supported the idea for equal status between the sexes.<sup>13</sup> With the realization of the idea of equality between the sexes, women could get a leading role which means the right to participate in the Bogomil religious ritual and the right to communicate with the word of God (logos), which from the rational point of view was identified with a literary activity. It is directly, although with a negative connotation, witnessed in the *Nomocannon of St Sava*, according to whom "women are placed as teachers of dogmas of their heresy, simply by ordering them not only to be chiefs to simple people, but also to head the priests."<sup>14</sup> Favoring the idea of social liberation and emancipation of women within the context of encouraging their

---

<sup>12</sup>Bernard Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, 650-1405*, (Manchester University Press: 1998), 175-178.

<sup>13</sup>Georgi Vasilev, "Bogomili, katari, lolardi - provodnici na visoka pozicija na zenata v srednovekovieto" [Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards—Supporters of a High Position of Women in the Middle Ages], *Rodina*, 4, (1996): 71; Maja Angelovska-Panova, "The Role of the Women in the Bogomil Circles in Comparison with the Traditional Status Established with the Christian Religion," *Balkanistic Forum*, XI, (2002):.221.

<sup>14</sup>Mihailo.M.Petrovich,"Pomen bogomila - babuna u zakonopravilu svetog Save i Crkva Bogomilska," [The Mention of Bogomils-Babuns in the Legal Code, of Saint Sava and the Bogomil Church] in *Istorijski chasopis*, knj. XLIV, (1998): 19.

intellectual potential is partly losing its qualitative meaning by denying the *paidopoia*, or in other words, their biological need to be realized as mothers. In that respect, we cannot talk about a completely positive relationship of Bogomils towards the identity of women but rather an attempt to neutralize the inert and traditional Christian status based on the Biblical myth of Adam's rib. Furthermore, Bogomilism did not represent an imposed and compulsory religious and ideological program. On the contrary, participation in these circles was based on personal choice which would also more specifically mean conformity with certain norms of behavior and acting in the service of Bogomil doctrine. Asceticism as a form of sinless life, and within that framework, the nihilistic relationship towards marriage and *paidopoia* concerned only those women that belonged to the category of perfects and as such, was not practiced by simple devotees.

As an alternative form of religious and ideological belief, Bogomilism also had a dominant influence in cultural processes through its reflection in the spiritual culture of Macedonia, the Balkans, and throughout Byzantium and some countries of Western Europe. One of the achievements of Bogomilism is that it surpassed the local character and in its original or modified form, spread over a wider geographical area, becoming a movement of international importance and character. The identification of Bogomil cultural values and influences can best be seen through literary compositions with an original Bogomil articulation, the apocrypha, and the philosophical aspects of the teaching, as well as through folklore. Actually it was an alternative thought process that went beyond the official Christian stereotypes which made it equally attractive not only for the devotees of Bogomilism, but also for Orthodox Christians.

The basis of Bogomil literature was based on its teaching precepts, expressed in writing by the priest Bogomil and his closest associates. Presbyter Kozma's familiarity with Bogomil

interpretation of dogmas was probably not accidental. Namely, he acquired his knowledge not only through personal contacts with Bogomils who later returned to Orthodoxy, but also through reading original Bogomil books. The data from later sources are somewhat more general. Euthymius of Akmonia mentions the “Satan epodes” which were read on the occasion of the ritual of holy baptism, while Euthymius Zigabenus talks about a kind of “Eucharistic prayers.” Simeon of Salonica, on the other hand, mentions “prayers and songs worthy of scorn.”<sup>15</sup> These prayers probably represented a particular kind of literature, but the sources contain almost nothing specific about their content. It is reasonable to assume that the content was available only to the elite group of Bogomil credo-perfects and possibly to the believers, as these prayers were carried out during ordination from one category to another. The evident shortage of these Bogomil works is due to the status of the Bogomil movement as a heretical teaching which most often caused them to be persecuted. In any case, it is reasonable to assume that the original Bogomil literature expresses two developmental tendencies: the literature which contains the ideological platform of Bogomilism, which was probably supposed to represent a kind of promotional material, and the esoteric literature accompanied by the ritual practice of Bogomils. *The Book of Rituals*, saved in a transcript in Provençal language from the 13th century, certainly belongs to the original Bogomil literature.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of its equivalence in relation to the religious practice, we assume that it is a translation or an adaptation of a Bogomil book of rituals which was not saved in its Slavonic version. The role of the apocrypha, which represents a synonym for unofficial, uncanonical contents, appear as a direct consequence of the need of the medieval people for an additional explanation of Biblical, religious, and Christian concepts from

---

<sup>15</sup>Dimitar Angelov, Borislav Primov, Georgi Batakliiev, *Bogomilstvoto v Bulgarija, Vizantija i Zapadna Evropa v izvori*, 174.

<sup>16</sup>Jordan Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi i legendi*, [Bogomil Books and Legends] (Sofia:Nauka i izkustvo, 1970), 115.

the perspective of current social attitudes.<sup>17</sup> Namely, the Bible and the canonical works, which were the only works recognized by the church as an official source for cultural and spiritual life, ceased to be consistent with people's aspiration to get a more complete idea about how the world came to be and how to understand natural phenomena. In that respect, the apocrypha expressed tendencies which were easier to understand by common people, who built their theological and moral view of the world upon them. Thematically, the apocrypha represent a mixture of pragmatism from Biblical books and legends on which canonical books rest, and very often emphasize heretical elements.<sup>18</sup>

The term apocrypha, in accordance with the establishment of a set canon of God's literary works, was gradually losing its primary meaning and increasingly identifying books that contradicted the basic Christian dogma. Most of the apocrypha that preceded Bogomilism (*The Book of Enoch, Vision of Isaiah, Revelation of Baruch, The Argument between Christ and the Antichrist, etc.*) had an influence on Bogomil cosmogony and eschatology. Bogomil establishment as an ideology and the integral realization of Bogomil worldview was in effect unimaginable without the basic knowledge of the apocryphal literature which, on the other hand, was expressing tendencies close to the general beliefs and thoughts of people in the Middle Ages. *The Secret Book* and *Vision of Isaiah* are considered to be amongst the most important apocrypha of Bogomil origin. A new approach towards writings in the medieval literature was introduced with *The Secret Book*, where canonical motifs are subject to a philosophical opinion and to an additional literary adaptation. As a kind of literature in which one religious system contrasts another, in this case, the Bogomil against the official, *The Secret Book* is very close to

---

<sup>17</sup>Ilija Velez, *Makedonskiot knizeven XIV vek*, [Macedonian Literary 14 th Century] (Skopje, Veda, 1996), 293.

<sup>18</sup>Kirilo-Metodievaska Enciklopedija, [Cyril and Methodius Encyclopedia] vol. I, (Sofija: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1985), 85.

the *Book of Revelations*.<sup>19</sup> Similar tendencies regarding the content, which has a mythological and apocalyptic character, can also be seen in the apocrypha, *The Vision of Isaiah*. The apocrypha in Greek language was well-known since the first and second centuries, and somewhat later, between the second and third centuries. There was a compilation under the title, *The Vision of Isaiah*, enriched with data about the Jewish prophet Ezekiel. The Slavonic text of *The Vision*, saved in two versions—extensive and short, originated from the above mentioned compilation in Greek language, or to be more precise, from its second part. The remarkable significance of the apocrypha and its use is witnessed in writing in Bogomil circles. Namely, in a Greek text which dated from 12th century, besides the ritual formula practiced for converting Bogomils and Massilians to Orthodoxy, it is pointed out that these heretics were using the “shameless and deceptive *Vision of Isaiah* written by them.”<sup>20</sup> The Bogomil aspects in this apocrypha were barely noticeable. This approach was in line with the already established principle in Bogomil literature for presenting heretic tendencies in a discrete manner, subtly and marginally, so that the conclusion about them was due to the interpretation of the text. In that respect, the apocrypha represented a kind of dogmatic and ideological material used for influencing, which circulated not only among Bogomils, but also in Christian circles, especially because of the fact that the essence of the text, amongst other things, also implicated the social aspect of people’s lives. Both *The Secret Book* and *The Vision of Isaiah* had a high rating among devotees of Catharism which speaks in favor of an established cultural cooperation between eastern and western dualists.

---

<sup>19</sup>Aleksandar. Veselovski, *Literaturnoe znachenie eresi*, [The literary meaning of the heresies] *Istorija eresi*, (Moskva: 2004), 487.

<sup>20</sup>Jordan Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi i legendi*, 153; Bernard Hamilton, 'Wisdom from the East', in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, eds. Pete. Biller and Andrew Hudson (Cambridge: 1994), 56.

There were also philosophical ideas incorporated within Bogomilism, which were in a way conditioned by the dichotomic concept of Bogomilism as well as by the diabolistic conviction. The presence of philosophical elements is also a consequence of the influence of philosophical orientations such as Gnosticism, Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism, the ideas of which were partly incorporated in the doctrines of Bogomilism and Catharism, although with greater religious than philosophical connotation.<sup>21</sup> As an example, the use of vegetarian diet, besides the religious and dogmatic as well as the ascetic determination, also had a philosophical justification through the metempsychosis and the transmigration of the soul. The philosophical speculations about the immortality and the transmigration of the soul are very subtly presented in Bogomil circles, probably because of the aspiration that the most secret philosophical and dogmatic determinations should not be manifested transparently. The ideas that a human soul can bear experiences from a previous life can be found in the works of Euthymius of Akmonia. Addressing the Bogomil myth about the transformation of the soul, the author established that “when a man is furious he is like a snake, a dog, a cat...” Further explanations are in connection with the Devil, who in order to keep the opposed soul in the body, ate all kinds of impure animals and later threw them up in order to keep Adam’s soul in his body.

The presence of philosophical ideas and interpretations in the Bogomil system attracted the attention of representatives of the higher social class, or as Ana Komnina mentions, the “wealthy people” and “some high priests.”<sup>22</sup> A typical example is the Byzantine philosopher John Italus, an intellectual and Michael Pselus’s student, who founded the section of dialectics

---

<sup>21</sup>Maja Angelovska-Panova, 'Dogmatsko-filozofskata opravdanost na vegetarijanstvoto vo eretichkite sredini vo sredniot vek', [Dogmatic and Philosophical Justification of the Vegetarianism in Heretical Circles in the Middle Ages] *Filozofija*, 9, (2004): 87-92.

<sup>22</sup>Annae Comnenae, *Alexiadis libri XV*, ed. J. Schopen, (Bonn: 1839), lib. XV, 9, 358; Andrew P. Roach, *The Devil's World, Heresy and Society 1100-1300*, (Longman: 2005), 63.

and history of philosophy.<sup>23</sup> His teaching, despite the philosophical dimensions of metempsychosis, the Resurrection and the Last Judgement exegesis, was confronted with the official Christian normative teaching and attempted to introduce rational behavior in theology. All that led to Italus's teaching to be anathematized at the synod held in the year 1082. A similar example is the Patriarch Eustatij Garida of Constantinople, who under the influence of John Italus's philosophical theology, believed in the metempsychosis of souls and denied the power of icons. On account of his religious beliefs, Eustatij Garida held the position of a Patriarch in Constantinople only for a short time (1081–1084).

And finally, the spiritual and cultural founding traditions of Bogomil teaching also reflected in the folklore. The influence of some aspects of Bogomil ideology was first of all carried out by the apocryphal literature, which with its expression and emotional impulse, showed remarkable similarity with folklore works. A number of Old and New Testament themes, which when combined with folklore motifs had a different meaning and significance, were infiltrated into folkloric legends through the apocrypha. The receptivity of Bogomil elements in folk literature was chronologically and practically accomplished through a long and complex process determined by a number of traditional, socio-economic, and cultural factors, which at the same time, impose the typology of this kind of folklore. In that respect, the folklore with Bogomil character is classified according to the following principle: cosmogonical folk literature, folk tales in which Bogomil dogmatism is interpreted from a folklore aspect and a cycle of folk literature about Adam and Eve.

The importance of this kind of folklore is the fact that the existing conglomerate of ideas is interactively put to work, presenting it in an authentic way and in accordance with the mentality, the socio-political, and social conditions. In this context, it often comes to an

---

<sup>23</sup> Vasil Tatakis, *Istorija na vizantiskata filozofija*, [History of Byzantine Philosophy] (Skopje: Kultura 1998), 262.



alteration of the meaning of some Bogomil determinations from the point of view of the folk narrator. From this point of view, the social factor is the most dominant factor. The folk narrator introduced Bogomil elements, but not always with a religious prejudice of encouraging heresy, but more as a direct consequence of traditionalism, the rational tendencies, and eventually, his own survival.<sup>24</sup> We should have in mind that this kind of literature was established in Christian circles where religious and superstitious devotion was obvious, although they had recognized the inconsistencies of the church institution and of the rituals by subjecting it to criticism. The fact that a large part of the folk literature ends didactically in the style of official and Christian norms proves it best.

With its heterogeneous fund of positive and deviant features, controversies concerning progress/regress and rationalism/irrationalism, and viewed from a historical distance, Bogomilism is a universal achievement that raises an alternative and reformatory thinking process, which would also be partly implemented in some aspects of European humanism.

---

<sup>24</sup>Tanas Vrazinovski, *Narodna mitologija na Makedoncite*, [Folk Mythology of the Macedonians] vol. II, Skopje: Matica Makedonska 1998), 28.