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THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL THOUGHT OF THE BOGOMILLS

Abstract:

The history of the Macedonian people is really rich with, above all, giant figures. The article is dedicated to one such giant - priest Bogomil, to the spiritual source and inspiration of ethics in/among the Bogomils.

It is a philosophy that appears as a new anthropological turn in philosophical knowledge, after the Socrates one. Namely, man is once again the centre of creation and from his moral choice as the choice of a man - a citizen, and not of a subject or a nameless member of the respective church community depends on the vigilance of the Universe, as well as the existing social order.

At the same time, the idea is to give also an additional and sustained contribution to the study and affirmation of the social-ethical thought and action of the Bogomils, very essential, but forgotten, for our national essence.

Keywords: bogomilism, ethics, national essence, church, humanism, responsibility

(...) I said: "Sir, who is he that will betray you?"
And the Lord said: "Whoever puts his hand into fornication and grasps it,
Satan will enter it and will want to betray me."

(Тажната книга на богомилите, 2021: 7)

Introduction

The history of the Macedonian people, if it is at all possible to be objectively reviewed and evaluated from today's perspective, especially due to the increasingly frequent attempts¹ and "combined onslaught of the adversary (neighbours - remark D.D.) who appropriates the right to the historical deed of the heart and the consciousness of the people of Povardarie"² (Spasov, 2003: 28) - is really rich with above all giant figures. I would start my humble research on the spiritual source and inspiration of the ethical in/at/and the Bogomils with just such a giant figure – the priest Bogomil. The idea is to give an additional and sustained contribution in the study and affirmation of the social-ethical thought and action of the Bogomilism, very essential, but forgotten, for our national essence.

A brief history

It is about the philosophy translated into teaching, and also a movement against, above all, in relation to the attempt of Preslav who wanted not only to break the tribal amalgamation of the Slavic ethnicity and through the church to penetrate into their specific ethnic closedness, but also to impose feudal relations that were alien and brought slavery and subjugation to the Macedonian population³. So, in the resistance against that foreign imposition, and in conditions where it was not possible to adequately respond through armed action, the Macedonian Slavs sought a way out in the spiritual field, first in Glagoliticism⁴,

¹ Namely, "the intentional non-distinction between Bulgaria and Macedonia and the presentation of the latter and its historical benefits as "Bulgarian", and hence the appropriation of the Bogomils movement as "Bulgarian", which is done by Bulgarian historians, as in the past, and especially today, stems from the political moment and the aspiration to conquer Macedonia. Conquest of Macedonia in conditions when the principle of self-determination of peoples applies in the world, the Bulgarian chauvinists cannot achieve it otherwise than to present the Macedonian people as part of the "Bulgarian", to appropriate its historical benefits, so under the cloak of the slogan "unification of the Bulgarian tribe" to achieve Bulgarian domination over Macedonia and the Macedonian people". (Tashkovski, 1970: 36).

² Read "Macedonia"! (remark D.D.).

³ It arose from the people in contrast to official Christianity, which was imposed from above by the leaders of the state and imported with the aim of strengthening the power of the new, Slav, feudal aristocracy. This people's movement spread to encompass the broad masses and mobilized them, in a religious form, into opposition to the growing power of feudal slavery." (Racin, 1948:9).

⁴ "Because the Glagoliticism tradition within the Ohrid literary school was also adopted by the Bogomils (...), which can be confirmed by the found traces of the Glagoliticism originals and the adherence to the linguistic peculiarities of the archaic Ohrid School in the Bosnian Bogomils texts from the XV century." (Koneski, 1986: 23).

and then in/with the powerful Bogomil movement, criticizing the cruel Bulgarian feudal state ideology and the ideology of the Orthodox Church from Preslav who wanted to forcefully clear up once and for all the problem of "foreign rule" - which actually happened with the uprising of 969 under the leadership of the four brothers: David, Moses, Aaron and Samuil, but with the opposite effect! It happened not only to the liberation of Macedonia from the yoke of the Bulgarian kingdom, but much more, to the creation of the first Slavic-Macedonian state known as Samuil's State⁵.

Appearing on the soil of Macedonia, Bogomilism immediately acquired "the status of a kind of alternative (oppositional) movement and teaching in relation to the canonically standardized Christian ideology and teaching." (Velev, 2011: 14) That is, according to the words of Obolenski, the unique ambassador of the Bogomils heritage, its undisputed researcher who most contributed to research and knowledge about the Bogomils after the Second World War becoming relevant again in a new light, Bogomilism "did not represent a departure from Orthodoxy for certain points of doctrine or ethics, but a complete denial of the church as such" (Obolensky, 1948: 140), with which they did not intend to reform the Orthodox Church, but simply declared a new church. Hence, Bogomilism should not be considered/understood only as a strong and

⁵ For more details about the Slavic foundations of Samuil's Macedonian kingdom in parallel with the Byzantine kingdom, see Velev, 2011: 8-9.

massive anti-feudal movement⁶ or as a revolutionary⁷, especially national-liberation movement, or also as a social-religious movement (Kantardziev, 1996: 45), but above all, as a learning caused from the consequences of the political and ecclesiastical circumstances⁸ at that time (against the Bulgarian, Byzantine, but no less against the apostolic influence from Rome), which produced the humanistic reaction with which the Macedonian Slavs showed that even in the early Middle Ages they did not reconcile with falling under foreign rule and slavery, i.e. that “under the mantle of the anti-feudal struggle, not only the liberating goals of the Macedonian Slavs, when they found themselves under foreign rule, are hidden.”⁹

⁶ As the Bulgarian historians insistently want to portray it. That is why they are silent and do not recognize that “Glagolism, Bogomilism and the armed uprising of 969 are not only the three links in the chain of one and the same revolutionary movement of the Macedonian Slavs against the Bulgarian rule in Macedonia, but thanks to them, the Bulgarian rulers could not establish some more solid contact with the Macedonian Slavs, and hence there can be no question of any “fusion” with the Bulgarians, especially since during this short period of Bulgarian rule filled with resistance from the Macedonian Slavs, the Bulgarian rulers neither settled Bulgarian masses in Macedonia, nor emigrated Slavs from Macedonia to Bulgaria.” (Tashkovski, 1970: 38-39). With this, their Great Bulgarian conception remains without a scientific basis, because Bogomilism does not speak about the “Bulgarian” character of Macedonia and the Macedonians! Even more, brazenly and shamelessly “in mediavilistics studies there is an attempt the original penetration and spread of Bogomilism as a general spiritual and civilizational manifestation on the Macedonian terrain historically to be dislocated and in modern historiographical representations to appropriate and subordinate it to other people’s spiritual and cultural-historical experiences, especially towards the Preslav Bulgarian spiritual tradition.” (Velev, 2011: 17-18). It is enough to illustrate these Bulgarian “rapes” of history, at least in the part of Bogomilism, by looking at the attempt of Кръстина Гечева, *Богомилството и неговото отражение в средновековна християнска Европа – Библиография*, Гутенберг, София, 2007; and of course the statement that “even the first researchers of the heretical activity direct their attention to Bulgaria and the Bulgarians” despite the remark of the editors of the Proceedings from 1982 - *Богомилството на Балканот во светлината на најновите истражувања*, that “under the name Bulgaria should be understood the Bulgarian state from the X century, which included, apart from the territory of today’s Bulgaria, the greater part of the territories of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania.” (Primov, 1982: 223).

⁷ Although “current scientific research mainly points out that in medieval society Bogomilism had the position of revolutionary opposition to the feudal system.” (Velev, 2011: 20).

⁸ “The reasons for the newly emerging spiritual environment are to be sought in that there religious and cultural forms of expression found themselves caught between the increasingly aggressive Byzantine anti-Latin crisis and the uncreative anachronistic Bulgarian antagonisms.” (Velev, 2011: 15)

⁹ The resignation of Climent Ohridski, which he as bishop of the Bishoprics of Velichka submitted to Simeon, which he did not accept, also speaks of the fact that the Macedonian Slavs did not submit voluntarily to the rule of the Bulgarian tsar Simeon, due to the violence and devastation that the Bulgarian armies carried out in these spaces. “You’re leaving the episcopate throne is a bad sign for me: removal from the imperial throne. If

Namely, this reaction, which was the result of the great pressure exerted on the foundations of the Macedonian society then, which at that time was part of the Bulgarian state, speaks of a classic clash of two worldviews of life that had their supporting points in the reality of life at that time:

- Bogomilism as a reaction of the libertarian Macedonian masses was against all forms of exploitation, violence and slavery offered by the new era and the new masters¹⁰, as well as
- The Bulgarian pressure to implement feudalization, as an attempt to break and destroy the Macedonian people, which was started from the day when, with the blessing of the Byzantine Emperor Mihajlo III, part of Macedonia fell under Bulgarian rule. This is especially so when the Bulgarian tsar Simeon, and after him the tsar Peter, in order to bring the Macedonian Slavs under his control, decided, especially the first one, to destroy their old tribal ways of life.

And quite logically, the resistance against the destruction of clan organizations by Simeon, and then Peter, and before them Boris, and the creation of feudal relations in Macedonia through the two feudal classes: the secular-boylar and the spiritual of the higher clergy - was reflected in the force movement¹¹, which in its expression was above all a humanistic and reformist reaction with social-ethical characteristics¹² because the central theme of interest and action was the affirmation of the free man as a social being, and thus represented a critique of the exploitative system.¹³ At the same time, due to the

I have offended your holiness with anything, I have sinned out of ignorance, because I know for myself that I have sinned in nothing, and you, sparing us as a father, do not want to blame me for my bad behavior towards you, but with an excuse for weakness you cover up the real reason. (...) Either convince yourself, Father, or if not, my word is decisive and no matter what you say I will not be convinced and no matter what you do I will not change my mind, because resignation, I think, is only suitable for the unworthy, and you are above all dignity." (Teofilakt, 2016: 632).

¹⁰ "According to general canonical norms, they recognized the secular authority of the belligerent, but not the authority of the current Bulgarian church hierarchy, because their bishopric was a spiritual organism of the Slavic archbishopric of St. Methodius." At that time, Macedonia was militarily conquered and territorially annexed to the First Bulgarian Empire, in which Christianity was the official religion preached by the Greek clergy, in the Greek language, but under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. (Ristovski, 1989: 348-349).

¹¹ "...due to the absence of direct influence from the Byzantine ruling apparatus and the mediation of Bulgarian warfare..." (Velev, 2011: 15).

¹² "From being a religious sect in opposition, Bogomilism became to a large extent a movement for social reform, and because of its mainly social tendency, it was quickly able to attract a mass of followers among the lowest orders, especially among the peasants and, with its preaching of equality and its struggle against feudal abuses, it incited them to open rebellion against the feudal power." (Nurigiani, 2009: 63).

¹³ Which much later would lay the foundation of modern socialism.

thesis that the exploitation of man by man is not natural and cannot last forever, the Bogomilism was also liberating in its intention and action!

With this, instead of surrendering only to patriarchal traditions and historical inertia, this movement emphasized a new ideological conception and action based initially on the old humanistic principles. It is a new system, "a new ideological antipode to Christianity and its ideology" (Velev, 2011: 15), which was controversial to the Christian ideology from then which blessed slavery and the new feudal order, that robbery that was carried out through its proclaimed social - Christian principles. This is how the Bogomils teaching was created, a movement that very quickly "from being a primitive religious-social teaching, soon became a real political force thinly disguised under a veil of religion" (Nurigiani, 2009: 81), and which was not only a dualistic system for explaining the world and man, but also for solving the burning problems of the Middle Ages. (Ibid., 75)

About the founder and development of the Bogomils teaching

Bogomilism as a "spiritual phenomenon with a dualistic character of religious expression and social-philosophical orientation" (Angelovska – Panova, 2007: 91) is connected with the character and work of priest Bogomil. His heretical teachings, which the oppressed masses from all over Europe in the Middle Ages took as their basis, a discrepancy in their actions, according to many historians initially appeared as a "revolutionary opposition against feudal exploitation that far exceeded the local Macedonian framework and became the leaven and spark of a whole series of heretical currents that shook the church-dogmatic edifice of feudal Europe from its foundations during several centuries." (Tashkovski, 1970: 9-10)

And it is this Bogomils heresy that was born on Macedonian soil in the 30s of the X century (Dragojlovich, 1982: 19), or rather "in 935" (Nurigiani, 2009: 64) and which "spread to many European countries and for five centuries shocked the entire feudal order in Europe" (Ibid., 62), gives the right to characterize "priest Bogomil, a disciple of the great Climent Ohridski, as a more significant and attractive figure that Macedonian society threw out at the dawn of the early middle century." (Tashkovski, 1970: 9) A major historical phenomenon and figure, which was born on Macedonian soil, and provided the conceptual material for many heretical currents in Western Europe, starting with the Patarenas in Bosnia and Italy, through the Albigensians (after the name of the city of Albi) and the Waldensians in France, and on to the Cathars ("pure")

in Germany¹⁴, and who in those five centuries were nothing but a new form of Bogomils thought and movement in the West.¹⁵

The priest Bogomil was the first who started to preach the Bogomil teaching¹⁶, i.e., "freedom of conscience, brotherhood and equality among all people and all nations, that the Kingdom of God and perpetual peace might be realized on Earth." (Nurigiani, 2009: 62-63) As Presbyter Kozma writes, "it came to pass in the days of the Bulgarian orthodox king Peter, that a priest named Bogomil appeared (i.e., "beloved by God" – remark D.D.), but who should more correctly be called Bogonemil (i.e., "not beloved by God" – remark D.D.). He was the first to preach heresy on Bulgarian soil" (Velev, 2011: 52) Apart from this sermon, written around 972¹⁷, similar data are also provided by the Synodik of Tsar Boril, published in 1211 in Trnovo, when a state-church Council was called against the Bogomils, the Biography of Hilarion of Moglen, as well as the great Biography of Climent Ohridski, written by Ohrid's Archbishop Theophylact.¹⁸ According to these source materials, there is no more detailed

¹⁴ In the area from Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, adherents of Bogomilism were known under a variety of names, from Fundagiagites and Kutugers, all the way to Bogomils, Patarenes and Albigensians. (Chulev, 2015: 11).

¹⁵ Namely, the social environment in which the Bogomilism of the XIV and XV centuries was shown and existed, expressed in Catharism and Albigensianism in the west of France, did not allow identification and overlapping in any case with the Bogomilism that existed in the X, XI and XII centuries in the Balkans. However, events that are similar in different historical settings end up producing completely different results!

¹⁶ In the beginning, teaching presented in written form which contained the basic principles of the apostasy and their interpretation in accordance with the Bogomil dogmatism and doctrine and the same was intended for the creed of the Bogomil elite, i.e., for the "perfect", because inside it were contained the most hidden dogmas of this teaching.

¹⁷ The original of the "speech" is not known to us today, but seven correspondences have reached us, of which the oldest dates from 1494, and the other six are from the XVI and XVII centuries (Kiselkov, 1942: XII), that is, the oldest transcript is from 1491- 1492 and is kept in the monastery of the Russian Orthodox Church from the XV century - the Solovetsky Monastery, located on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea. (Angelovska-Panova, 2004: 18).

¹⁸ In this context, such and similar attempts to fabricate history and its (mis)use for daily political or quasi-national interests or aspirations, especially today, are numerous. A glaring example is the Bogomilism, i.e., its sources! Namely, when the European historians of the medieval heretical movements start from the source materials, which are very few and are all reduced to counter-Bogomil sources and records, what is clearly seen is what is inadmissible in science and is considered as a sin - the failure to take into account that the Byzantine and Latin and Slavic authors in the Middle Ages, when marking countries and people, did not start from their actual ethnic composition, but from belonging to this or that state, a principle that derives from the universalism of the medieval kingdoms (Dragojlovich, 1982: 19-20). Moreover, it is a question of abuse of the "Sermon against the Bogomils" of Presbyter Cosmas, whose material is taken as explicit and unambiguous in origin, a source material, in terms of the reconstruction of most

information about who the priest Bogomil was and from what environment in the cultural and ethnic sense of the word he came, where he lived, acted, died, etc.¹⁹, but through them we indirectly try to find out. So, the information from Theophylact that after the death of St. Climent heresy appeared among his flocks²⁰, testifies that the priest Bogomil came from the Macedonian Slavs and did not come from the higher priestly ranks at that time, i.e., he was an ordinary priest who came from the plebeian part of the village and city priests who were outside the feudal church hierarchy, but with no less knowledge and skill than those who were in that hierarchy. This gives the right to claim that the priest Bogomil was part of that circle of Glagolitic priests and teachers that St. Climent created in his 30 years of work, numbering around 3,500 people. As Koneski says, "The Bogomils were the ones who, rejected by Preslav, embraced the Glagolitic written tradition" (Koneski, 1961: 27) and wrote their Bogomil books on it. Hence, "the hate that Climent and Naum instilled in the souls of three and a half thousand people against the Preslav government headed by the tsar which so brazenly treated the written heritage of Cyril and Methodius, priest Bogomil and his followers transferred it to the people with greater skill and force." (Tashkovski, 1970: 69-70).

Using the "thought material that was laid down in the psychology of the Slavic man in Macedonia as the fruit of many years of life experience, combined with the philosophy of a narrow circle of educated people of that time" (Ibid., 1970: 72-73), above all Gnosticism and teaching in the New Testament, priest Bogomil built a dualistic epistemological and ethical view of the world that was "a new stage in the development of Eastern dogmas, which were formed

aspects of this heresy, but above all in terms of the exegesis of evangelical principles - where Kozma decisively asserts that Bogomilism appeared in the "Bulgarian kingdom" (Velev, 2011: 6; as well as Dragojlovich, 1982: 47), while not following the principle of territorial identification! Things get more complicated later, in the period of the collapse of Samuil's kingdom, when Basil II calls Macedonia "Bulgaria", while he calls Bulgaria by the thematic name "Parastrion" or "Paradunavon".

¹⁹ the village of Bogomila ("as one of several places on Mount Bogomila, which, like the villages of Golem and Mal Slanik, Nezhilovo, Papradiste, Oreshe and others, existed in the form of dense Bogomil municipalities..." (Klincharov, 1927: 32; as well as Nurigiani, 2009: 67), is the birthplace of priest Bogomil. There he lived, preached and died, and his grave, according to legend, is located in the village itself in the so-called "tsrkvishte" (chapel), which the local Turks, following a tradition inherited from their fathers, called "Ali baba tekesi". After the name of the same mountain, the bogomils were probably called by that name, or even as baboons (Antoljak, 1982: 65; then Ангелов, 1961: 88.; and also, Velev, 2011: 18). We also find such data in Dushan's Code (Душанов законик, 2014: 64).

²⁰ "But more and more, to oversee your inheritance, because now you certainly have more and greater power than before, when you were in the body, and drive out the cunning heresy, which after your death, certainly in Christ, crept into your flocks like an infectious disease, which scatters and corrupts the sheep of your flock. Grow up, oh holy and excellent shepherd!" (Teofilakt, 2016: 635).

from the mixture of Syrian, Persian and Greek views of Christianity, expressed mainly in Paulicianism and Massilianism" (Irehek, 1978: 222), supplemented by the local pagan dualism of the old Slavic religion which was suppressed by the reception of Christianity by the Macedonian Slavs, and still imprinted deeply in them.

But what Bogomilism took from Paulicianism²¹ and Massilianism²² in its teaching, i.e., the dualistic interpretation of the world?²³ Namely, "Bogomilism adopted the theological dualism of Manichaeism and Paulicianism but rejected its sectarian character. It developed the "destructive" elements of dualism to their extreme, applied it to the social sphere and extracted unusually courageous principles which completely changed the character of earlier dualist teaching." (Racin, 1948: 28) Namely, Paulicianism, advocating an absolute dualism which implied that there are two contradictory forces, the force of good - the good god and the force of bad - the bad god or Satan and which are equal and indestructible, conveyed the same in church practice: the material is the work of the evil god, while the spiritual is the work of the good, and hence, Christ was taken as the word of God, who apparently came to earth as a man, and therefore all church regulations such as baptism in water, communion, confession, respect of icons, the cult of the Mother of God, etc., was considered as worshiping the Devil, just as the Old Testament was considered his work. Attacking the material, they also attacked wealth as the work of the devil, and the bearers of wealth as servants of the devil. Preaching apostolic poverty, the Paulicians everywhere began to organize Christian communities headed by an elder who was elected in a completely democratic way and who did not differ in any way from his members. With that, they were against wealth and against exploitation, and necessarily for that, the Byzantine emperors persecuted them, first from Armenia, to retreat to the Arab regions where they organized healthy municipal centres, and from there, united with the Arabs, they constantly

²¹ The same was created as a result of the mixing of Manichaeism and Marcionism in the then Byzantine province of Armenia at the end of the VII century, as an effort to restore the old Christianity based on the Apostle Paul's message. That is why they were called Paulicians.

²² Massilianism as a heresy appeared in the IV century in Asia through the figure and work of the preacher Adelphios, to be supplemented and intertwined with the teachings of Eustathius, who in the same century began to preach heresy as a variety of Massilianism.

²³ In the words of Ilya Velev, "(...) going back to pagan experiences, they felt that they should awaken the avant-garde world by building it on an anti-Christian basis, (...) to build its ideological tendencies on the basis of the critical attitude towards the forms of Christian ideology (...). The ideology of the Bogomil teaching was based on the experiences of the older dualist teachings: Mazdeism of old Iran, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Massilianism and Paulicianism. Bogomilism sought an ideological source in the older pagan forms of realization due to avoiding the condemnation of the continuity of the forbidden early Christian heresies - monothelitism and iconoclasm." (Velev, 2011: 18-19).

attacked the Byzantine areas in Asia, until the year 872 when the Byzantine emperor Basil I Macedonian managed to break their resistance and destroyed their capital, the city of Tefrik (Cappadocia). But they were defeated and moved to the Balkans, where there were already other Pavlicians.

As for Massilianism²⁴, the second significant source of Bogomilism, advocating a moderate dualism which implied that the good power or the good god will prevail over the bad, it represented an interweaving of the teaching of Adelphios and the teaching of Eustathius. It is about interweaving the contemplative moment from the first teaching, where it was considered that the human soul is burdened with sins from birth and that can only be driven out and bliss achieved through intense prayer, with which, prayer, not church rites, is what will cleanse the person. The same, combined with the social moment of the second teaching, i.e., the social elements that declared that the priesthood cannot be a mediator between man as a sinner and God, but only through constant prayer healing from sins should be obtained. With that, this teaching became especially attractive not only to monks, but also to ordinary believers - peasants and slaves, especially due to the fact that they preached that the rich should give up their wealth, especially encouraging the poor and oppressed not to work for money for the rich, that is the practical side of this learning!

This is how this authentic philosophical-theological system was built, which had an original articulation of learning expressed through several key postulates: "dualism, the specific theological-dogmatic determination, support of ethical principles within their social life and finally the political dimension of learning, whose determinants stem from the overall social-political processes in the Middle Ages" (Angelovska – Panova, 2007: 93), and which later became the theoretical basis of the powerful medieval conflicts that shook the dogmatic Christian building of medieval Europe to its foundations.

The social-ethical factor as one of the essential characteristics of Bogomilism

Although at the beginning it did not provide immediate, much less advanced solutions, but represented an attempt to preserve the current and return to the old gender ways of living in contrast to the new feudal ways of life that were imposed by violence, the Bogomilism somewhat later gave birth to the realization that patriarchal traditions and historical intervention are insufficient and thus initiated "a new ideological activity and tried to build a new ideological synthesis on the old humanist principles, contrary to the Christian ideology that blessed slavery and the new feudal race" (Tashkovski, 1970: 16-17). In fact, it is a new promoted humanist idea, which with its content not only opposed the element of civilizing violence carried out by Tsar Simeon,

²⁴ The name, in the Syrian language, comes from the prayer to which they gave primacy over all other rituals.

but was also an expression of the desire not to fall under foreign rule and to remain a master until the end over your own life and development!

The previous gives the right to claim that even though Bogomilism in Macedonia did not appear as a secular movement, but as a religious one²⁵, it seems that the religious covering which here had a deep social content is the reason why it was largely accepted by the people, and not only in these spaces. (Nurigiani, 2009: 63) Namely, the solution that was offered was not hidden by the fact that spoke about the inability of the Bogomils "to free themselves from the archaic-patriarchal ideological ballast in which all the juices of the life philosophy of the clan-tribal arrangement had gathered, (...) but of the disenfranchised Slavic poverty in Macedonia to be offered a defence of its freedom ... (which defence - remark D.D.) should rely on that old humanistic complex of free clan-tribal life" (Tashkovski, 1970: 72), because otherwise, i.e. forcing to feudal forms of existence by the Turano-Tatar external forces embodied in the image and work of the Bulgarian rulers Simeon and Peter, would have meant enslavement and merciless exploitation.

With that, once again, here, it should be specified that the Bogomilism that was born on Macedonian soil²⁶ "despite its religious form, was not a pure

²⁵ As Erika Lazarova underlines, "Developing as a supranational cultural and not only as religious phenomenon, Bogomil teaching is an example of a broad and continuous cultural continuity throughout the centuries. His real humanism and faithfulness to authentic Christianity as a religion of Love and not of Dogma, give importance to the Proto-Renaissance, which changed the main opinion of the epoch (X-XIV century) and acted in the direction of the emancipation of humanity as a philosophy and worldview." (Lazarova, 2013: 6).

²⁶ Several facts that history has bequeathed to us speak for the appearance of Bogomilism on Macedonian soil. One of the earliest preserved documents that points us to Macedonia, and not to Bulgaria, as the cradle of Bogomilism, is certainly the Biography of Climent of Ohrid, in which the author, Archbishop Theophylact of Ohrid, writes that after the death of the great teacher and saint, Bishop Climent (916 year), an evil heresy spread among his flock, which we know under the name of Bogomilism. (Teofilakt, 2016: 635). Reiner Sacconi, a heretic, and later the inquisitor and the cruelest fighter against heretics in the XIII century in Western Europe, leads us to this assumption (Thesaurus novus anecdoterum, vol. V). Namely, he, as Bozidar Petranović says, whose importance cannot be denied in relation to the emergence of Bogomilism – "Bogomilism in the East and Catharism in the West had one original homeland: Slavic Macedonia!" (Petranović, 1867: 70- 82). He considered the Dragovitian Church in Macedonia to be the oldest in all of Catharism in Europe, so enumerating all the heretical churches in the West, he literally says that they all originated from the Dragovitian Church, which was located in South Macedonia, and was named after the Slavic tribe Dragovits, settled in the vicinity of Thessaloniki. On the other hand, the significance of the Dragovitian Bogomil Church in relation to all Catharism in Europe is too great, which can be seen from the fact that at the great Congress of heretics, held in Saint-Felix de Caraman in France, in May 1167, and at which all the European heretical churches were represented, the Bogomil Nikita, who belonged to the Dragovitian Church, was elected as the President of the Congress, and he was appointed as a head of the Constantinople Bogomil Church, by the Dragovitian bishop Simeon. (Shanjek, 1975: 53; as well as Chulev, 2015: 23). To this should be added

conflict that was fought because of some church dogmas, but because of much deeper existential interests" (Tashkovski, 1982: 41). In other words, Bogomilism as an opposition, although it appeared as an open heresy, where the interests, needs and demands of the oppressed masses were hidden under a religious veil, it did not change anything, especially if it is known that "the entire spiritual life (in at that time – remark D.D.) was concentrated in the church, at a time when theology attached to itself all forms of social consciousness..., (...) and necessarily required all social political movements at that time to receive theological shape. This is further confirmed by the fact that the soul of the masses at that time was exclusively doped with religion, and in order to cause great storms, their own interests had to be displayed in a religious guise." (Engels, 1947: 54)

But on the contrary, the Bogomilism that was born on this soil as a reaction to the feudalization of the country carried out by the Bulgarian rulers at that time cannot and must not be taken and interpreted only as a purely political movement, a reaction, without religious veil. That rebellion against feudalization it cannot be explained, if we wanted, in this way "especially since the Preslav Church through spiritual protection strove not only to create some spiritual unity within the borders of the Bulgarian state, which extended beyond the Bulgarian ethnic borders, but and helped to speed up the feudalization of Macedonia, in which she herself participated." (Tashkovski, 1970: 18) This is exactly why the Bogomilism appeared, to encourage the people's dissatisfaction with the social reality, which the official church defended ideologically and founded it theologically!

As Racin wrote, "Christianity opposed the people here from the beginning. It was preached as a new faith the aim of which was to justify the new social system – feudalism. This system collided with all the juridical, social and moral customs of the people. They could hardly warm their hearts with the dry, abstract, lifeless dogmatism of Orthodox Christianity. Only the Bogomils, with their lively, popular interpretation of Christianity, were able to implant in the people the best human traditions on which they built their own teaching." (Racin, 1948: 10) That is why devotion to God through sermons about God, about the struggle between bad and good forces, through which the ideological orientation is presented and the basic moral form of devotion to God (Velev, 2011: 20), directed the masses towards the realization of earthly goals, which means that not religious fanaticism, but rather, real economic, political and social-ethical interests (Litavrin, 1982: 32) united the devotees of Bogomilism,

the statement of the medieval writer Bonacursus from Milan and his writing "Contra Catharos Sermones" from 1163, that the heretics in the West of Europe arranged their heretical church after Dragovitian. (Antoljak, 1982: 63) Also, Franjo Rachki, a good connoisseur of Western heretical literature, on the question of the homeland of the Bogomilism, says that: "Those few monuments that give us some kind of light about our past (the Bogomils) lead us to the country around Shar Mountain. The Dragovitian church on this side was a member of the Bogomil center and a point of unity." (Rachki, 1931: 370).

and not some abstract sermons about God. That is why this humanistic cultural model of, as Lazarova calls it, “the Church of love as fellowship with God without intermediaries” (Lazarova, 2013: 11), in relation to the Bogomil philosophy imposes the ideal of Homo Ethicus or the moral man as a convertor of the Universe, which acts with the Creator in the construction of a “new Earth” and a “new Heaven”, as promised in the Gospel, whereby “acts in the construction of a complete system of an ethical worldview which is one of the greatest theoretical and moral-practical learning achievements.” (Ibid.)

Moreover, the way of life, behaviour and attitude towards people had to be in line with the evangelical ethics. This is precisely why the same, supported by the ethical settings of the “perfect”²⁷, who led a strict ascetic moral life and devoted themselves to organizational apostolic and preaching activity, did not mean a mechanical transmission of the ethical principles from the Gospels. On the contrary! The same principles of evangelical ethics should have been put into practice through a clearly expressed condemnation of theft, avarice, murder, adultery, favouritism, lying and other vices. Even in the part of the understanding of the collective, for example, they cultivated the fields together, because labour was obligatory for everyone: everyone supported himself by the work of his hands (Beer, 1933: 160), which leads to the motto: “Who does not work, he should not eat”, and the money collected from the same work went to the general treasury, from which the poor and sick in the brotherhood were helped in the first place, but not the idle and beggars, and then with the rest of the funds, tools were purchased for processing the general/common property.

At the same time, in that “creation of new ideological syntheses” among the masses in a mass and individual form, the most vital human qualities were also developed, above all the persistence, endurance, courage and inventiveness of the spirit, as basic elements not to succumb to violence and exploitation. They were differentiated due to the clearly proclaimed principles of equality between people²⁸, i.e. equality as a norm for the civil world, and thus partial property equality, which as a conclusion was derived from the Christian principle of

²⁷ “The Bogomils were divided into two categories: “perfect”, who came from the ranks of the low peasant-plebeian priesthood and were at the core of the heresy, and who, in the highest flourishing of Bogomilism in the XIII century, numbered about 4,000, among hundreds of thousands of “listeners” , people who did not actively participate in spreading and preaching heresy, but theoretically elevated and good organizers” (Irechek, 1978: 235), that is, three: perfect, ordinary believers and listeners. (Kantardziev, 1996: 50).

²⁸ But also, in the form of a cosmopolitan idea such as “equality between peoples who would be free and then could unite in one family”, as well as that “all men are equal, brothers, sons of a common Father” (Nurigiani, 2009: 79), so there should be no differences between them. Analyzed more deeply, this philosophy represents the first theory of ethical globalism and the first model of a universal religion that can be identified as evangelical humanism. This further adds to the attractiveness of apostasy because anyone can rise above the social predestination of their birth and become a man of honor and a man of the book or authentically intellectually rich. (Lazarova, 2013: 231).

“equality of God’s children.”²⁹ That is why the Bogomils bravely said to the people that: “the world of the lords and boyars is “Satan’s world” and should be destroyed; only the world of freedom and equality among “children’s of God” is God’s world and must be won.” (Racin, 1948: 11)

Striving to teach their devotees and followers modesty, restraint and justice, to live without particular pretensions to acquire material goods, but also to form more realistic views and understandings of the world around them than those narrated by the Christian religion, at the same time, Bogomilism also tended to empower them to fight for their ideas against exploitation and inequality, for social justice and a better life. With that, this movement slowly acquired special social-ethical characteristics, by which it became recognizable and accepted especially, in relation to this element, among the Albigenian in Southern France, but no less among the rest.

The theological principles for the equality of all men as “children of God”, on the basis of which the Bogomils came to the conclusion that the Law of Moses is “inspired by Satan” because it recognized private property and social inequality - were both the most convenient and the most convincing form, which inevitably led to the overcoming of feudal privileges, great social differences and the creation of equality. This also includes the equalization of the nobility with the peasantry, the patricians and privileged citizens with the plebeians, the abolition of the kulak, land taxes, privileges and at least the most obvious differences in property, as demands that were, with greater or lesser certainty, an inevitable consequence of the pre-Christian doctrine of the Bogomils and thereby lay at the foundation of heresy.

Finally, in “applying the principle of equality among the peoples, of democracy and of the absolute freedom of man, Bogomils wished to restore the Christian communities which once existed.” (Nurigiani, 2009: 74-75), that is believing in the original apostolic Christianity which sees the institution of “religious communities” such as those described in the New Testament as places in which “equality among men, collective property, and consumptive communism” are realized.” (Angelov, 1951: 135) With that, in numerous Bogomils municipalities set up according to the type of pre-Christian ones, the differences would also disappear, and this social-ethical ideal, although it seems utopian, would be realized and there would be no more “mine” and “yours”, but everyone would be equal, i.e., ownership would be shared! So, the way that equality was expressed cannot testify for going back, because there was an opportunity to create a fraternal society based on the principles of social justice, equality, evangelical love and mutual respect between people. It is about a solid

²⁹ Especially respectable is their attitude towards the woman, who they not only considered an equal member of the brotherhood, but also the opportunity for her to occupy the highest duty in social life, which can be seen at the level of a basic social cell from their understanding of the family (although the “perfect” did not marry) which was based on equality between man and woman, on mutual respect and trust. (Vasilev, 1996: 71; then Angelovska-Panova, 2002: 221; also and Petrovich, 1998: 19).

foundation, great energy for establishing and realizing this ideal, which neither the fires, nor the mass murders that followed later, could destroy, neither it, nor the Bogomils heresy, even more because it represented the people's reaction, the class struggle against feudalism, through which the people's desperate need for justice and equality was expressed.

That is why Bogomilism, taken as an attempt for synthesis of the anthropomorphism of the apostles, the spiritualism of the Middle Ages and the mythology of the Slavs, according to its energy and strength, directed the solutions to the worldly processes of the general human problems of the current time. Hence, the evaluation of the socio-ethical factor would be that bogomilism arose not only as a result of the moral decadence of the church and secular authorities, but also more widely, as a result of the continuous evident antagonism between them and the subordinate classes and layers. With that, it was, still is and will continue to be understood "as an early folk anticipation of European humanism and reformation" (Angelovska-Panova, 2022: 112): „to say to the world of "the holy feudal system" that it was not created by God but by the Devil, that there is no holy truth in it but rather an eternal struggle; that the lords and boyars were not appointed by God and that what they do, have and rule comes from the Devil; that men should not obey them nor respect them and that those who serve or work for them are hateful to God; that the Church is founded on lies, the resort of the Devil, in which "blind Pharisees" smother the truth of God's word, which says that man should not believe but think, that the kingdom of God should not be sought in heaven but here on Earth; and finally that in this world of icy silence and darkness where there is no dawn, only a shadow over the conscience and the understanding – there is a reason for men's lives and their high and perfect ideals in the struggle with all that comes from Satan, not only within ourselves but also in our social life, within the social order – to say all this, albeit in cloudy language, at that time, in the Middle Ages – surely it is one of the noblest deeds in man's spiritual past? "(Racin, 1948: 12)

Their idea is more than clear, here and now: throughout this renaissance of Gnosticism to free reason from theological shackles³⁰, throughout reason striving to penetrate into the mysteries of faith, they played a very important and pioneering role in the field of opinion and contributed for the development of medieval philosophy, and with their enlightenment, with their gnostic philosophical concepts and rejection of church dogmas and authority - they actually contributed to the development of theological rationalism, which represents the first and quite bold step in the literary and philosophical revival of the early Middle Ages in relation to the old culture³¹. In this context, it is

³⁰ Because this Gnosticism was supposed to influence the official church and its understanding of itself.

³¹ In literature, for example, "they undoubtedly had an influence on Dante's *Inferno*, canto XII, pp.31-45, where Italy's greatest poet had made use of the Bogomil "Gospel of Nicodim..." (Nurigiani, 2009: 84).

completely justified when it is claimed that the bogomilism is “one of the most important and interesting cultural and social manifestations of the Middle Ages” (Nurigiani, 2009: 62), for which A.N. Veselovskij notes that “... the Slavic peoples, even with Bogomilism (...), brought their own intellectual contribution to general European life, which left lasting traces on the overall development of medieval culture.” (Veselovskij, 1872: 176)

In conclusion or for what followed...

The declaration of the heretic as the main opponent is especially supported by one of the most prominent church authorities Thomas Aquinas who says: “*Salus extra ekleziam non est*” or “There is no salvation outside the Church”, therefore heresy is a sin and for that reason “they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be severed from the world by death. For it is a much graver matter to corrupt the faith which quickens the soul, then to forge money, which supports temporal life. Wherefore if forgers of money and other evil-doers are forthwith condemned to death by the secular authority, much more reason is there for heretics, as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death” (Aquinas, 2023: 2755)

This is the place from where the justification for why the main task of the church from the XI to the XV century was to fight against various types of heresy, while creating a huge system of various spiritual-ecclesiastical orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits...) which received from the Pope of Rome direct orders, instructions and authorizations. Namely, they had the task of fighting against heretics with a variety of means, starting with the most brutal terror of individuals, and ending with organising of entire punitive crusade expeditions, while the handing over of heretics to trial by secular authorities took place according to the motto “mercifully, if possible, without shedding of blood”, which in translation would mean: burning at the stake! This is the beginning of the so-called *inguitionis hieraticae pravitatis*, i.e., creation of a special church court to fight against heretics according to the slogan with which the church acted against heretics: “Every sin is less than heresy!”. So, a large number of Bogomils and representatives of related sects, scattered throughout Europe, paid dearly for their “heretical” teaching. There was also a wide swing towards the end of the XII and the beginning of the XIII, especially in 1180, when the Pope undertook a great crusade against heretics in Southern France, and the faithful were called to join the ranks of the crusading horde under the slogan “Forgiveness of the sins of those who will participate in it”, as well as the devastation of Bosnia in 1234.

And in the Balkans, except in Samuil’s and Kulin-ban’s states, this kind of terror was carried out everywhere. In Bulgaria, not only Tsar Petar, but also after him, the tsars of the Second Bulgarian Empire, especially Tsar Boril, in 1211 convened a special Council for the Bogomils, at which he publicly

condemned them and “ordered their faces to be ironed and thus expelled from the country.” (Dujchev, 1944: 28-29) In Serbia, the church council led by Stevan Nemanja (1168-1196), as stated in the Biography of Stevan Nemanja, written by his son Stevan Prvovenčani, pronounced severe punishments: the Bogomil books should be burned, and the tongue of the head of the Bogomil church should be cut off and he should be driven into exile, while others should be put at the stake, exiled, and their property will be confiscated and divided among the faithful. (Rački, 1931: 377; Solovjev, 1953) Other sources testify to the fierce persecutions in Serbia, above all the Biography of Stevan Dechanski, who in 1329 sent a large army to Macedonia against the godless baboons, as well as Dushan’s code, where it is written that “whoever utters a baboon word, if he is a ruler, will must pay 100 perpers, and if he is not a ruler, he should pay 12 perpers and will be beaten with a stick.” (*Душанов законик*, 2014: 64)

However, bogomilism was not lost without a trace after the Crusades, although the Inquisition and the Crusades broke the main force of heresy in Europe. But on the other hand, in the end, after all this, bogomilism did not manage to strengthen and establish itself as before. It could not because history set new tasks before society that could not be performed by such movements. After the XIV century, feudalism, due to new storms and upheavals, had to give way to the new bourgeois class, and thus the peasantry, which was once the main force of feudalism, slowly had to give way to the bourgeoisie and go down! The young bourgeoisie was the bearer of the new civilization, the bearer of the new culture. But “in that new epoch that began with a new historical rise, under the name of Revival and Reformation, bogomilism, through its followers, a considerable part of which entered the ranks of the new social forces, introduced its modest civil element.” (Klincharov, 1927: 160) It is about the fact that in the Renaissance, and hence also into the Reformation³², the Bogomils introduced their civil, social-ethical element - the freedom of the individual and the right to freedom of worship also for local communities, and political equality between people. (Nurigiani, 2009: 84) Thus, Bogomil’s philosophy appears as a new anthropological turn in philosophical knowledge, after that of Socrates. Namely, man is once again the centre of creation and the vigilance of the Universe, as well as the existing social order, depends on his moral choice as a choice of a man-citizen, not an object or a nameless member of the respective church community.

After the XIV century, with the Ottoman invasion and Turkish rule, Bogomilism was not completely lost without a trace. According to some data, they remained until the XIX century, of course, significantly reborn. There are certain indications (Klincharov, 1927: 62) that the modern Torbeshi throughout Macedonia, who with the arrival of the Ottomans adopted Islam

³² In this sense, “bogomilism represents the first serious reformation in the East, which began the destruction of the stereotypes of official Christianity, and also of feudalism as a social system, which was largely based on patriarchal values.” (Angelovska-Panova, 2022: 120).

as their religion, are the last remnants of Bogomilism in Macedonia, and who, converting to Islam, kept the old Bogomil name Torbeshi, as they were mocked by their opponents - the orthodox Christians. (Solovjev, 1953: 74) Thus and that's how the last impulses of the Bogomilistic existence died out in the dawn of the new age.

From this present-day temporal distance, "for the continuation and critical assessment of the Bogomils movement and teaching, we will have to depart from the recent atheistic representations of the characterization of their peripheral role in the feudal development of human society, so Bogomilism itself should be gradually exposed as a kind of oppositional typologicalised civilizational determination for a kind of spiritual living and creative cultural experience." (Velev, 2011: 17; Angelovska-Panova, 2004) In this sense, regardless of previous evaluations of Bogomilism, through the investigation of the Bogomils materials³³, thought and action, especially the ethical elements, what should be emphasized, again and again, is that it signifies "a heterogeneous fund of positive and deviant peculiarities and contradictions of the relation progress-regression and rationalism-irrationalism and from the aspect of evident time distance. Bogomilism as a universal benefit affirms an alternative and reformatory thought process, which is partially implemented in some aspects of European humanism" (Angelovska-Panova, 2007: 99), and especially in the Macedonian national-political and cultural history!³⁴ As even Kosta Ratsin³⁵ stated, Bogomilism "entered deeply into the spiritual life of the Balkan Slavs to the extent that it is impossible that they did not influence national life deeply, that they did not leave deep traces on our customs and loyalties, on our national society." (Racin, 1948: 10) This is because it is about "manifestations of the spirit and intellect of man like that of the Bogomils, whose doctrine shook mediaeval social relations to their foundations, (and which – remark D.D.) are rare in the history of human progress and thought." (Nurigiani, 2009: 62)

³³ For the most comprehensive review of this material for the scientific public, it should be consulted Драгољуб Драгојловиќ & Вера Стојчевска-Антиќ, *БОГОМИЛСТВОТО ВО СРЕДНОВЕКОВНАТА ИЗВОРНА ГРАЃА*, МАНУ, Скопје, 1978.

³⁴ At this point, it is necessary to mention the following assessment by Blaze Konevski (he prepared the first edition of "Dragovitian Bogomils") about Racin's study: "The importance of Racin's "Bogomils" becomes especially visible when we know that it is actually our first scientifically based paper in the field of national history. Our historiography has its real beginning in him." It is about material that has pioneering significance for contemporary Macedonian national culture. (Spasov, 2003: 69-70).

³⁵ Author of a larger study "The Dragovitian Bogomils", which seems to have been written around 1938-1940. The time of its occurrence cannot yet be precisely determined. Until 1948, the "Dragovitian Bogomils" remained in manuscript, and then they were published in the editorship of Blaze Koneski. From the version published in 1948, only the text in Serbo-Croatian language is known for now. The Macedonian version is shorter and very different, duplicated on a shapirograph and somewhere around the time of the appearance of "Beli Mugri" it was secretly distributed. The integral text of this study was published only in 1948. (Spasov, 2003: 26).

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