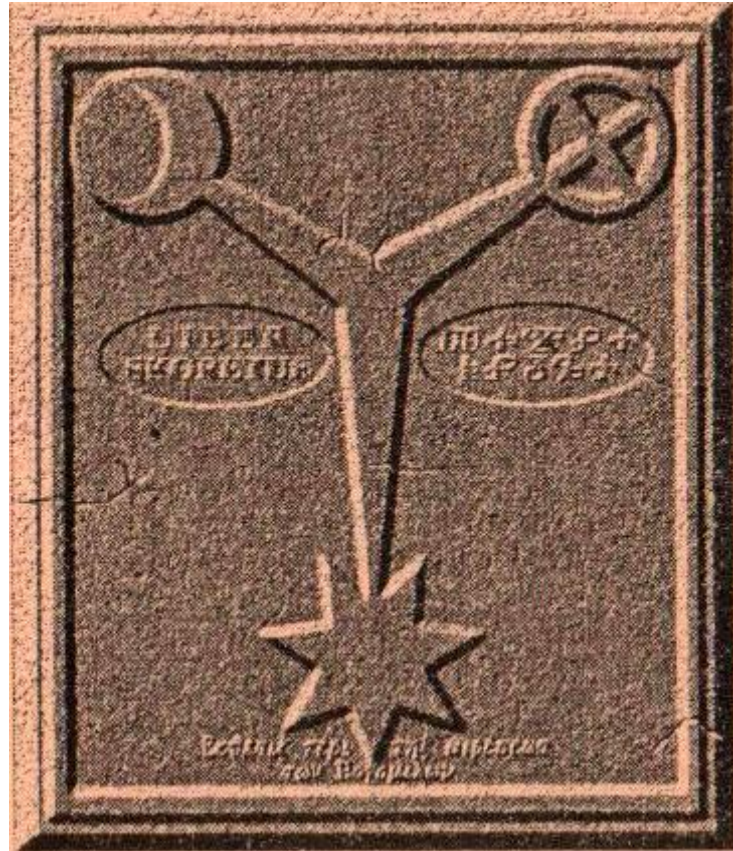


Basil Chulev

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**Macedonian Bogomilism - the Medieval Roots of  
Protestantism, Renaissance, and other  
Christianity Social Movements  
The Secret Book of Bogomils**



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# БОГОМИЛИ



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Abstract: Acts of Cathar Assembly, held in 1167 in San Felix de Carmen, near Toulous, France, represent an important historic source when the question of existence of heretic church organizations is considered. Pope Nikita of Constantinople, who belonged to heretic Bogomil church of *Dragovitia* (in Aegean Macedonia), known for its strict dualistic orientation, chaired the assembly. There he speaks of the existence of churches of *Romania* (i.e. Eastern Roman empire), *Dragometia* (i.e. *Dragovitia*), *Melingia*, *Bulgaria* and *Dalmatia*, and points out that they are separated from the churches of old Rome and Constantinopolitana Nova Roma, and that they are strong and live in peace.





## Introduction

The mediaeval heresies were convulsive reaction on the cruel feudal oppression and widespread corruption of the Christian church. When Constantin I the Great made the Christianity official religion of the Roman empire he couldn't predict that the Christian church will become one with the power of the government. At first it was meant to be in the service of the state and its supreme ruler, the emperor, but the things went utterly wrong, for the rulers and for the Christianity as well. Simply, human thought and overall social conditions were not raised at the sufficient level at the time. Greed and hunger, cruelty and incurable diseases decimated people and civilization achievements from the previous centuries. Further, following the division of the Roman empire in Eastern and Western parts, the church refined its political doctrine, and developed its structure in a way that could penetrate and absorb the function of the government to its purposefulness. Thus abandoning its own foundations based on the teachings as recorded in the Old and New Testaments.

In the 5th century the western Roman empire crawled and was sacked by the invading barbarian tribes. What happened after was that the new (religious) order emerged from the rubble - the Roman popes. Imperial Rome became Papal Rome. The church profited by the void of power created after the destruction of Rome and overthrowing of its emperors, and combined the previous authority of *Caesar*, who in the old empire was called *Pontifex Maximus* (the Pontiff) with the authority of Christ. Same as the emperor, who was considered a divine personage, priests became the head of both church and state. Using the title *Vicarius Christi* (the 'Vicar of Christ') meaning "*the substitute of Christ*," the church clergy took the role of emperors and entitled themselves as "*Christ substitutes*" on earth, seemingly enthroned by God himself. Soon they started to exert limitless power over their subjects. Through the Papacy, the claims of spiritual power over heaven and hell, combined with their earthly power as supreme ruling institution, rapidly grew and the church became an entity which enthrones and deposes rulers, castigates and condemns people, and exerts tyranny through religion in the name of god.

The situation was very similar in the Eastern Romeian part, with its holy see in the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (the City of Constantin 'New Rome'; Anglicized: *Constantinople*), where the church became the omnipotent executive body of the ruler's power. The only difference here was that the *Pontifex Maximus* remained the emperor, as the head of both church and state, and unlike the new *Holy Roman Empire* on the west, he remained the supreme bearer of the authority of Christ as well. The Eastern Romeian emperors had uninterrupted lineage of dynasties, since the old Roman empire, and like in the old times of late antiquity here the Romeian emperor was the pope and the holy king, supreme ruler with claims of spiritual power over heaven and hell, which legitimated his undisputed and limitless earthly power. Introduced by Constantine I the Great this dogma in some sources is designated as "Caesaropapism", which implicates that the emperor was the head of the church too. This is only partially true, as the eastern church had its own ecclesiastic authority, represented by the Patriarch.

East or west, with Romeian emperor or Roman pope, the church effectively silenced all those who opposed any of its corrupt doctrines or dirty practices, and truly became an

undisputed and exclusive religious enterprise of the Middle Ages. Together with the local feudal rulers, they gathered in ruthless exploitation around their helpless prey, impetuous of human suffering and misfortune. What followed was a heinous perversion of the faith that was a result of the general alienation of the Christian church from the human being and from the very reasons and beliefs of the original Christian faith. Priests and popes gloated in luxury, covered with silk, gold and jewels, while the ordinary people starved.

Various 'heretics' (*Arians*, *Semi-Arians* or '*Macedonians*', *Novatians*, *Pneumatomachi*, etc.)<sup>1</sup> rebelled against this despotic behavior, both of the feudal rulers and high religious offices that entered the political sphere. Of course, there were also heresies that dealt exclusively with the internal dogmas of the Christianity, like for example the *Arianism*.<sup>2</sup> But this heresy, of the Alexandrian priest Ariy (Lat. *Arius*; AD 250- 336), was only inflicting with the divinity of Christ, regardless of the believers life conditions. Nevertheless, other heresies stood in defense of the common citizens and peasantry, who became helpless victims of both the feudal rulers and Christian church. Above all, they organized themselves in religious movements by default, because essentially, the religion was the only mass-medium practiced by all the people in those times. So, in their antagonistic efforts to withstand against the cleric tyrants, on the whole, they were religious-fashioned movements too.



Of all heretic movements in Europe first such a massive popular movement that appeared was the movement of the Bogomils, i.e. Bogomilism, a mass anti-clerical, religious-socialist group. Born in Macedonia in the middle of 10th century this dualistic movement spread very quick across the Macedonian Peninsula and further in Europe. In an effort to steer their pure credo away from the corruption of the church, Bogomils were able to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-Arians>, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novatians>

<sup>2</sup> Arianism maintained that the Son of God was created by the Father and was therefore neither coeternal with the Father, nor consubstantial.

constitute their own religious doctrine, beliefs and practices. They had no special orders and priests, nor complex institutional hierarchy. Instead, they elected spiritual guides among one another. They even discouraged the matrimony and believed that man and woman should abandon the (church) institution of marriage in order to get closer to god. Bogomils rejected all material aspects of church service (e.g. church buildings), baptism, icons, wealth. They didn't build churches, as they revered their gifted form and considered their body to be the temple. Prayers and chanting hymns, the sacraments and ceremonies were not to be part of any public religious service or institution. Rather, the Bogomils felt that prayers were private matter and only to be said within the confines of private houses. The Bogomils rejected monasticism, and were iconoclasts. Finally, the Bogomils believed that God (not Jesus) would execute the final judgment.

Preaching in secret and hiding from the tyrannical power of both the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic authorities, Bogomils wholly absconded from the public display. But, because their spiritual rebellion endangered the wealth, luxury and power of their oppressors, they were condemned to death and incessantly persecuted by the Christian church and ruling monarchies. Severely chased and equally anathematized by both Eastern-Rightillustrious and Western-Catholic church, the Bogomils were hunted like dangerous animals. The centennial onslaught that followed culminated in western Europe, with the creation of *Inquisition*, a special court designed to punish the followers of the theories considered perilous for the powerful church institution. As such it was a threat to the catholic church and after numerous failed attempts to sway Cathar followers away by persuasion, Pope Innocent III sponsored a crusade to put down the heretic faith in 1209. The bloody campaign lasted for 50 years and was led by French warlord Simon de Montfor who also perished during this long massacre.

The Bogomil doctrine in the centuries to follow gave the birth of many other anti-clerical and social movements across whole Europe. The Bosnian *Patareni*, Croatian *Glagic Benedictans* and *Kutugeri*, Italian *Girovagi*, French *Cathars* and *Albigenses*, Russian *Starobryadtsy* ('*Old ritualists*') and many later varieties of folk-protestants in Russia, including many tribes of Spiritual Christians, like *Dukhobortsy*, etc. - are only some of the mediaeval 'heresies' that were a versions of or initiated by Bogomilism. They were only differently nominated manifestations of the same popular doctrine that rose from the 7th century "Macedonian Church". And much later they resulted in the *Protestant Reformation* of the 16th century – a religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered the Catholic Europe, setting in place the structures and beliefs that would define the continent in the modern era.

## **Bogomilism - The Origin of Protestantism and Socialist Movements in Europe**

No event in the mediaeval history of the Macedonian Peninsula has attracted more interest and investigation than the Bogomil spiritual movement. Originating in Macedonia about the middle of 10th century it spread to many other European countries and for five centuries shook the whole feudal order in Europe. The Bogomil movement, named after its founder, the priest Bogumil, is one of the most important and interesting cultural and social manifestations in the Middle Ages. As a socio-religious movement, Bogomilism was a real heresy in the eyes of the official church, which regarding it as its major adversary took severe measures to suppress it. These measures were aimed above all at destroying of all the most important sources for the ideas of the Bogomils, so that historians have been obliged to obtain information about them from indirect sources, namely from the polemical acts of their bitterest enemies.

Manifestations of the spirit and intellect of man like that of the Bogomils, whose doctrine shook the retarded mediaeval social relations to their foundations, are rare in the history of human progress and thought. The official church institution was seriously hit, because the church was the principal guardian of the feudal order, and found great difficulty in the fight against the Bogomil teaching which preached 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. The Bogomils repudiated all the mysticism and manipulative symbolism of the official church, and brought real faith to the feelings and understanding of the people. As all men were equal in their eyes, no one had the right to command others, his equals, his brothers. And therefore every power contrary to the teaching of Christ on equality and brotherhood must be abolished.

As the bottom line of Bogomil gnosticism was introduced the principle of unity in nature and the inviolability of laws; that is to say, at its basis there is the law regarding the correlation between the cause and effect-fact. This shows that priest Bogumil and his school did not remain outside the influence of classical philosophy: he follows in the footsteps of Pitagora (Lat. *Pythagoras*), who taught that there is a general order in the world, and also Aristotel, who showed that everything in nature has a beginning and an end, a cause and an effect. As a dualistic doctrine, Bogomilism is akin to the anthropomorphism of the apostles, the spiritualism of the Middle Ages, and the mythology of the ancient pantheons. All these premises of Bogomil teaching concerned the very basics of the mediaeval politico-social reality, so that the leaders of feudal society were directly hit and threatened by it as regards their material interests. These immediate allusions to the concrete injustice of the feudal reality also contained the fundamental principle of the dualistic teaching of the Bogomils on the existence of the two opposing forces: light and darkness, good and evil, the antagonism between the God and the Devil.

Since the whole cultural and social life of the Middle Ages was governed by the church and religion, the new teaching of the Bogomils was bound to assume a religious form too. The Bogomils knew that, with their adversary's weapons, they would unmask all its

greatest weakness more quickly and more easily. The adherents to the doctrine of the Bogomilism were divided into various categories: the *perfect* (Lat. *Perfectii*; i.e. the *Babuni* – ‘elder leaders’), the *Semi-Perfect*, and simple hearers. The “*Perfecti*”, also known as ‘*Isihasti*’ (hermits), couldn’t get spouse/married, nor have property or money, and they sacrificed themselves for the salvation of the world. They campaigned against universal violence, preaching perpetual peace and equality. To prevent this social and spiritual revolution the tyrannical Christian church launched crusades, inquisition, and everything it can against them.

Looked at in this way, Bogomilism was essentially a particular religious sect which the Christian church unconsciously proposed for its own improvement. With its crystal principles, its clear straightforward ideas, Bogomilism was a completely original social and cultural teaching, which arose out from the gruesome feudal and inhuman social conditions of the mediaeval life in Asia Minor and Macedonia. Macedonian people simply looked to find a way for salvation from the incessant tyranny and centennial oppression of the church institutions and feudal landlords. Then, from being a religious sect in opposition, Bogomilism became to a large extent a movement for social justice tendency, and it was quickly able to attract a mass of followers among the lowest classes, 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 oppression. Thus Bogomilism prepared the way for many peasants revolts not only in Macedonia and the whole Macedonian Peninsula, but also in the rest of Europe.

The Bogomils proposed to expropriate the lands and all the goods of the monasteries, the churches and the feudal landlords, and also to abolish the differences between the classes and distribute private property fairly. By thus safeguarding and defending the interests of the masses, Bogomilism appeared as one of the most advanced social and cultural movements in the Dark Ages, a light that gave the notice of the possible end of this obtuse and incredibly macabre period of the human history.

The very first germs of this progressive human thought and mindful awakening lay back in the past, in the 7th century heretic “Macedonian Church”, that first appeared in Cibossa near Coloneia (or Koloneia), in the homonymous Eastern Romeian province of Coloneia in the parts of ancient Cappadocia i.e. Phrygia. As from the most ancient times this was and remained a Hittite/Macedonian stronghold, reinforced in the times of Alexander the Great, and later it constituted a Romeian colony carved from the remnants of one of the last Macedonian kingdoms, the kingdom of Commagene (3rd c.BCE - 17 AD).<sup>3</sup> There was born the “Macedonian Church” by its founder Constantine-Silvan, from whom remained recorded religious call, in his words: “*You are Macedonians and I’m Silvan, sent by apostle Paul to you.*” Accordingly, for the official church institutions this heresy was then known as “Paulicianism”, because the followers believed that its founder is apostle’s Paul himself.

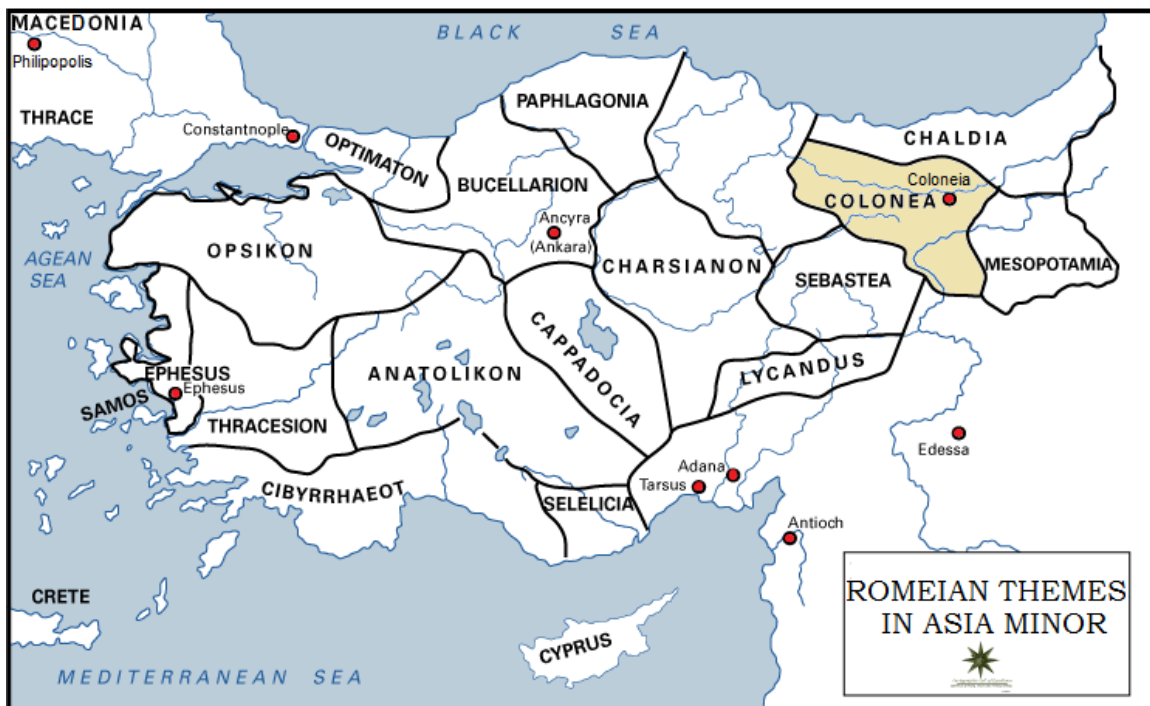
This “Macedonian Church” most probably arose on the foundations of the earlier sects and heresies, like the ‘*Pneumatomachi*’ (from Septuagint Koine: Πνευματομάχοι -

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<sup>3</sup> “The Cambridge History of Iran”, Volume 3, Issue 1 by Ehsan Yarshater, William Bayne Fisher, Ilya Gershevitch, p. 7.

Pneumatomákhoi)<sup>4</sup>, also known as ‘Macedonians’ or Semi-Arians in Constantinople and the ‘Tropici’ in Alexandria. They were an anti-Nikean Creed sect which flourished in the countries adjacent to the Hellespont during the latter half of the 4h, and the beginning of the 5th centuries. Same like the later Paulicians and Bogomils they were declared heretical because denying the Holy Trinity and godhood of the Holy Ghost, hence the name ‘*Pneumatomachi*’ or ‘*Troublemakers against the Spirit*’ [from πνεῦμα (pneuma) - spirit + μάχη (machi) - insult, trouble].<sup>5</sup>

When the Romeian emperor Justinian II (689-695) was informed about the existence of the Paulician Macedonian church heresy he sent his envoy-priest Simeon, but he too abandons the institution of the official church in Constantinople and enters the ranks of this “Macedonian Church”. After the death of its founder Silvan, the priest Simeon takes over the leadership of the “Macedonian church”. Thenafter, due to horrific persecutions,



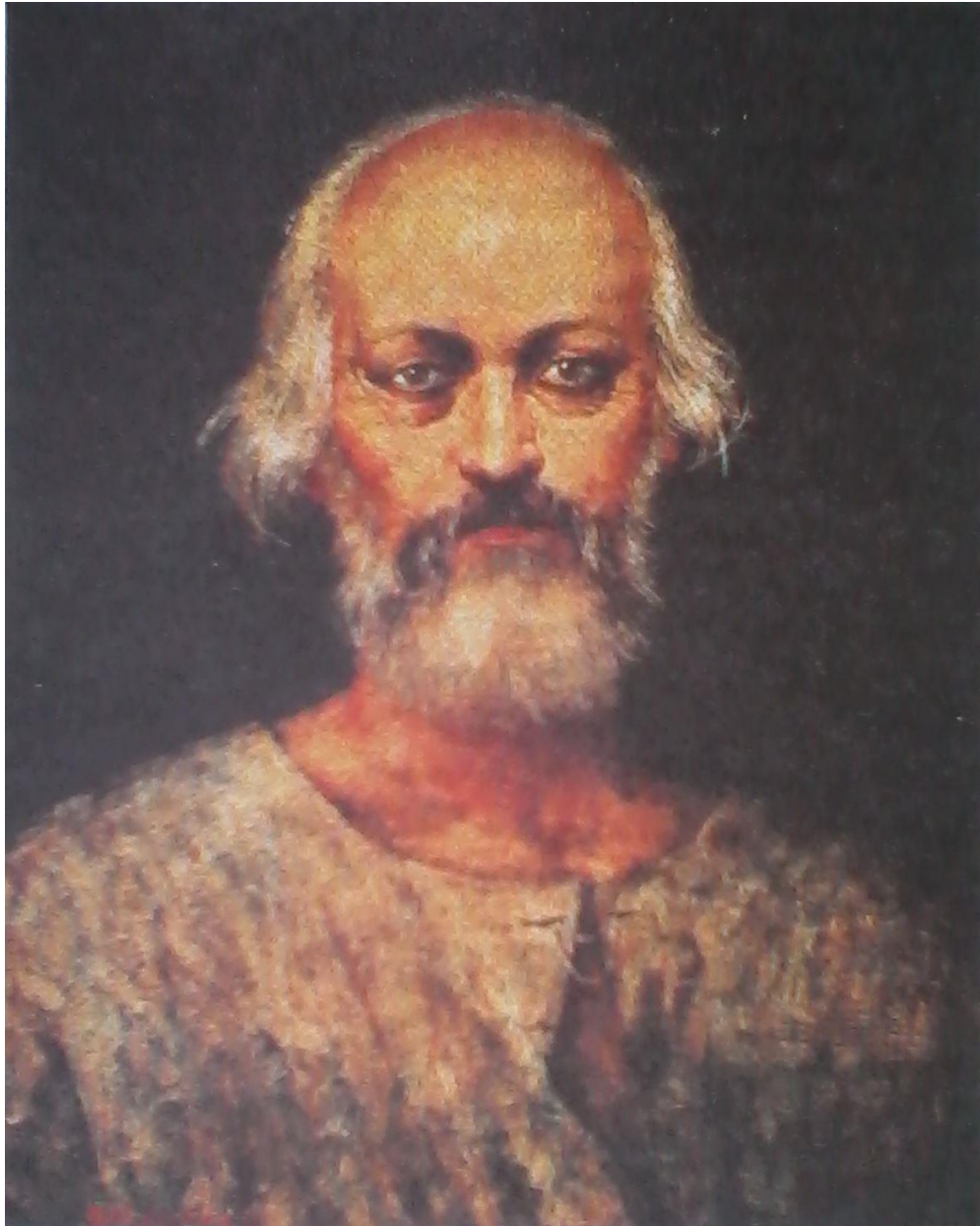
the followers of the “Macedonian Church” from Asia Minor escaped and transferred in the Lake Kostur region of Aegean Macedonia, where under the same name continued to exist and progress, until renamed as Bogomilism it spread fast in the 9-10 centuries.

On the basis of the scanty written sources of the Bogomils and particularly of their opponents, the prevailing opinion among scholars is that this movement began in Macedonia in AD 935. According to some historians, in order to establish the name of the founder of the Bogomil heresy, it is necessary to set out from the "Discourses" of the elder priest Kozma, who, right at the beginning of his book, says: "*It came to pass in the days of king Petar that a priest appeared in the ‘Bulgarian world’ called **Bogomil*** (i.e.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12174a.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.makedonski.info/search/maki>

“God-beloved”, ‘Gottlieb’; “bog” = god, “mil” = dear,loved)<sup>6</sup>, *but who should more correctly be called ‘Bogonemil’ (i.e.“God-not-beloved”), since he was the first to preach heresy on ‘Bulgarian soil’...*”.



Above: **1994 portrait of Pop Bogomil, made by famous Macedonian artist Dimitar Kondovski**

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<sup>6</sup> Etymologically the name *Bogomil* means "dear to God", and is a compound of the Macedonic words for "god" (in plain Macedonian: \*bogo-) and "dear/beloved" (in plain Macedonian: \*milъ-). From there the common Macedonic personal names: *Bogomil* (i.e. ‘God-beloved’), *Bogoslav* (i.e. ‘God-worshiper’), *Bogoya* (i.e. ‘Godly’), *Božidar* (i.e. ‘God’s-gift’), *Bogdan* (i.e. ‘God-given’), *Božin* (i.e. ‘God’s’); and common Macedonic surnames as: *Bogoevski*, *Bogevski* and *Božinovski* (i.e. “God’s”), *Bogomilski*, etc.

For the sake of the facts, we know that king Peter reigned from 927 to 969, when the newly established Bulgar kingdom started to decay fast under the combined attacks of Constantinople and Kievan Russ prince Swyatoslav. Regarding the presbyter's Kozma's statement that Bogomilism began "on Bulgarian soil" – it has been definitely established that the occupied Macedonian regions formed part of the kingdom of Petar (freshly-Christianized Turkic-Bulgar intruders that carved a big portion from the Romeian empire enclaves in the lower Danube region)<sup>7</sup>, and therefore Macedonia in that time was a



<sup>7</sup> "Proto-Bulgars who were still Turcophone between the VIIth and IXth centuries" – E. Esin: 'Conjectural links of Bogomilism with central Asian Manicheism', proceedings from the symposium held in Skopje, 1978.



subject state under the savage Bulgars occupation, as it had been under Romans before. It was finally freed again as of 969, by Tsar Samoil, and the new Bulgar kingdom was finally destroyed by the Russian military campaign of prince Swyatoslav in AD 971. The heir of the perished Bulgar king Peter, Boris, instead of being killed by the Russians escaped and surrendered to the Romeians, and as prisoner of war taken to Constantinople, where he was equally killed later, and his brother Roman was castrated in order to extirpate once for all the lineage of Bulgar dynasty. That was it about the end of Turkic-Bulgar kingdom.



Above: **Manasses Chronicle** miniature, showing how prince Swyatoslav defeats the Bulgars

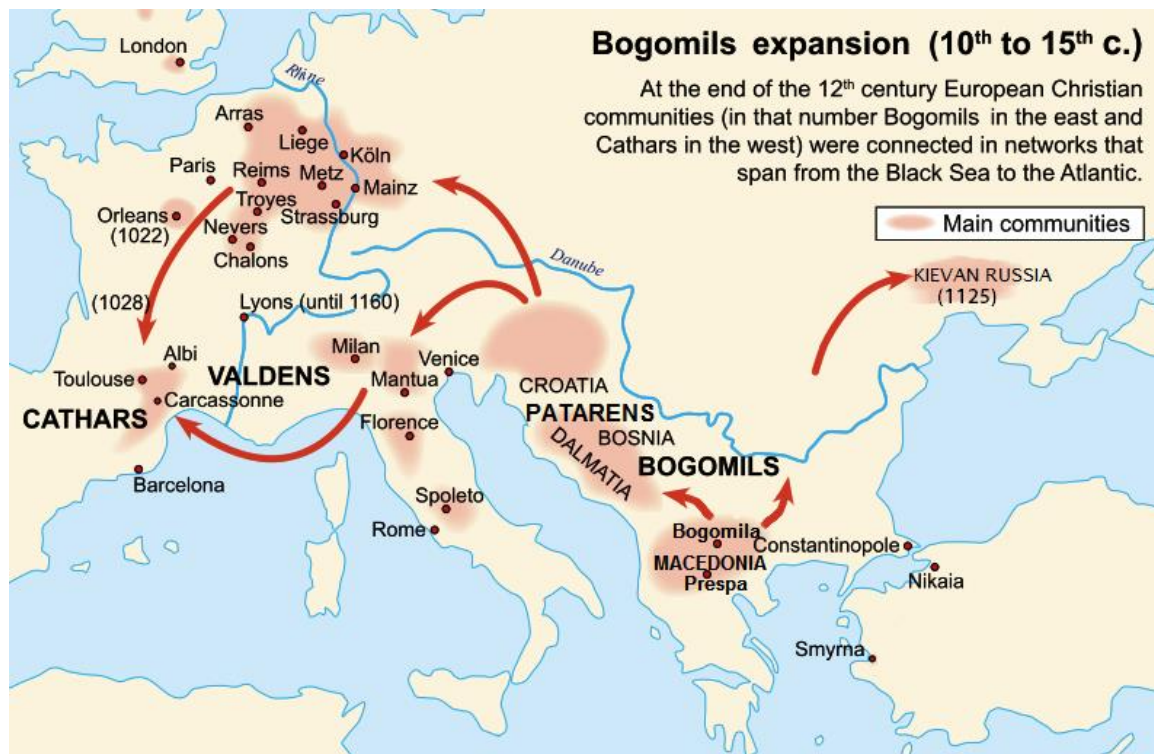
Hopefully, the Bogomils and Bogomilism survived all these wars and brutal persecutions. But who really was this priest Bogomil? Was he a myth or an historical person?

The founder of the 'heresy' that bears his name *Bogomil*, was a Macedonian priest, who created a strong form of unorthodox and more human Christianity. He was born in one of the towns or villages of South-west Macedonia of a noble Macedonian family. According to intransigent church institution sources he was from around the Mt. Babuna and homonymous river region. Priest Bogomil was a very cultured person for that period; he knew all the arts and sciences that the schools of Romeian empire could give such a student in the Middle Ages. According to Anna Comnena, the Bogomils had a plain, austere outward appearance: they had long hair, wore the toga and also the religious hat, drawn down over their eyes. Bogomil himself was of a severe countenance and very simply dressed. His sermons created a tremendous impression among people. Very soon he was surrounded by a great number of devoted followers, who traveled throughout the Macedonian Peninsula preaching the new doctrines. He believed that the world was not created by a good God but, on the opposite, by an evil being that was opposed to God since the beginning of time. Christ came to tell the people of the heavenly world of God beyond, and to liberate people from the evil. According to him the rich priests and nobles were the Devil's servants. He pointed the difference of lifestyle between the rich priests and Jesus Christ, as told in the Gospels.

The teaching of the Bogomils appeared first in Macedonia, because there the feudal oppression was most severe, and the noble Macedonian people were determined more than ever to free themselves from their humiliating sufferings as soon as possible. Frugality was Bogomil's way of life, and their message was well received by the poor of Macedonia and from the Constantinople-controlled Thracian region. Hence the Bogomil movement found the most favorable soil for its growth here, in Macedonia, which in that moment was under cruel Bulgar occupation. Bogomilism took advantage of the internal differences in the feudal order introduced by the Bulgar state, and supported by the official Christian church with Holy See in Constantinople. From Macedonia proper the word of freedom and hope it soon spread like forest fire throughout the whole Macedonian Peninsula, to Servia, Matia and Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and further to Kievan Russia, Italy, etc. Some variants of Bogomilism became the state religions in Bosnia and Hungary, and it is believed to be at the origin of the *Cathars* in Southern France. There is no doubt that the *Cathars* copied the Bogomils organizational structure. Until the early 13th century there was a network of Bogomils and followers of similar philosophies, including *Paulicians* and *Cathars*, that stretched from the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Bogomil leaders were mainly priests and monks who had abandoned the Orthodox Christian Church; they were known as the "*Perfecti*". They abstained from manual work, sex, and meat-eating, because these activities were linked to the earth, the devil's creation. The "*Perfecti*" often travelled on missionary work and taught the members of their faith. As proof of their rank, the "*Perfecti*" had to go through a ceremony called "*Consolamentum*". Most Bogomils did not live like the "*Perfecti*" but married, lived an ordinary life, and provided for the material needs of the "*Perfecti*". Very often an ordinary Bogomil would receive the "*Consolamentum*" before dying. Due to its

simplicity and its anti-establishment attitude, Bogomilism spread rapidly and was seen as a major threat to the Orthodox Church that persecuted them, but without much success.



Left: A Cathar coin found in Montségur, France

Moreover, some Macedonian place-names show that Macedonia really was the centre of Bogomilism. We may cite for example, the village of *Bogomila*, the mountain *Babuna*, (the name by which the elder leaders of the movement were called in the earliest time). Also the names of the villages *Bogdanci*, *Bogoslov*, *Kalughertsi*, *Pobožye* and *Negilovo* were in one or another way connected with the work of the Bogomils in those parts. According to the common tradition, priest Bogomil's place of birth was in the village of *Bogomila* (south of Veles), which was called after him, and his grave and a small church in its vicinity, near the so called 'church-yard' (Mkd. *Tsrkvishte*), served as a house of

prayer of Bogomils. It is believed that during the persecutions priest Bogomil's tomb was used as a shelter for followers. The village is located in the area of Azot on the river *Babuna* (the right tributary of Vardar), west of Veles. On the other hand, the name has been derived from the same anthroponym, the name of the founder of the doctrine, priest Bogomil; while from the semantic point of view *Bogomila* it has the colloquial meaning – ‘village of God’.<sup>8</sup>



*A medieval Macedonian shepherd, from the social class from which a substantial part of the Bogomil supporters was drawn. From a fourteenth-century icon in the Rila Monastery.*

Thus, the politico-social and economic conditions of the Macedonian people about the middle of the 10th century, namely the feudal-ecclesiastical exploitation in the medieval Bulgar kingdom, were the main cause, as well as the precondition, why this religious and social teaching appeared first in Macedonia, from where it spread throughout Europe. The distance of the Macedonian regions from the Bulgar capital further aggravated the abuses of the ecclesiastical and feudal overlords, so that the socio-economic state of the Macedonian people under their occupation became steadily worse. Macedonian historian Dragan Tashkovski wrote: "*In the internal structure of Macedonia a sharp class distinction was applied. The state, a prey to the most tremendous corruption, intensified the class differences to an extreme degree. The people, deprived of land and without means of subsistence, were ripe for rebellion. It needed only spark for the great conflagration to break out. It was not long in coming and the fire spread in Macedonia in*

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<sup>8</sup> Beside the *Bogomili* and *Babuni* in Macedonia there were several other names for the members of this religious movement – *Patareni*, *Kutugeri* (in BiH) and *Cathars*, *Valdenses*, *Albigenses* and *Perfecti* (in Italy and France).

The meaning of the term *babun* basically is – ‘a man with a wrinkled face’, i.e. elder Bogomil. It is basically acceptable to assume that the term *babun* was used for old, spiritual fathers. This appellation is evident in many toponym-markers in Macedonia: the Mt. Babuna (a mountain between Prilep and Veles), the river Babuna, the area called Babuna in the western part of Klepa mountain, which is situated along the basin of the river Babuna, the village of Babuna, at the mouth of the river Babuna in Vardar, etc.

*the regions where the exploitation was harshest. Then the protest and revolt of the people appeared under the name of Bogomilism."*

Regarding the appearance of Bogomilism in Macedonia, we learn much from the book on the life of St. Clement Ohridski<sup>9</sup> written by archbishop Theophylact, who relates how Clement, not long before his death *"was called upon by the people of Ohrid to drive out of Macedonia the wicked heresy"* which had spread so quickly among the people. Theophylact was an ex-deacon and the tutor of Constantine Doukas, son of the Emperor Michael VII in Constantinople, before he was transferred to Macedonia. His sick frustration of him being removed from the Holy See was openly regurgitated in a most venomous form of hate toward all Macedonian people. He is remembered as the most hated foreign bishop in Macedonian ecclesiastic ranks, and was equally hated by the Macedonians. However, St. Clement was considered by the people of Ohrid as a holy man, protector of the city and its surroundings; so it is not surprising that Theophylact wrote in this book that *"the people called upon their own saints to help them."* The official church, intentionally toked advantage of this excessive devotion of the people from Ohrid toward St. Clement, and actually used him and his name against the Bogomils, whose teaching had been so well received by the peasant masses outside of the big urban centers. Their denial of the value of oaths, and the rejection, at least in theory, of capital punishment, rendered impotent the basis of the Christian state in the eyes of many devoted Christians.

Spreading rapidly across the Macedonian Peninsula and Eastern-Roman empire, Bogomilism soon became a serious problem and a real danger to the church institutions and local monarchies. Among other things, it threatened to raise the Macedonic population in full-blown revolt against the centennial foreign oppression. For this reason, Bulgar kingdom and the Eastern-Roman empire, although mortal enemies and in perpetual war, took joint action to suppress the Bogomil movement, as is clearly shown by the letter which Theophylact, the patriarch of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (anglicized *Constantinople*) send to king Peter of Bulgaria, instigating him to take a decisive action against the Bogomils and eliminate them as quick as possible. The acts of cruelty and monstrosities that were inflicted on the Bogomils by Bulgar invaders and Romeian church are clearly illustrated by many documents:

*"But those who persist in this evil and feel no need to repent Holy Church ... the civil law provides death penalty for them."*

The fact that the death penalty was actually applied in an inquisitional ways is proved by written documents, including the book "Naratio de Bogomils" by Evthymius Zygavenus, an ecclesiastical writer who gives the clearest evidence of these lamentable facts. Presbyter Kozma rightly stressed that the Bogomils *"had suffered in thousands,"* and this proves that their numbers were really impressive. This horrific Christianimosity of one church against another was on the order of the day, and any attempt for gaining freedom and a bit of dignity among the oppressed masses was suppressed in bloodshed and burned to the ground. The official church and landlords defended their wealth and privileged positions by all means, even by using pagan mercenaries as the Turkic-Bulgar hordes against their own Christian kin.

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<sup>9</sup> Ohridski - *'of Ohrid'* in plain Macedonian.



*Fig. 23 Bulgarian pagans slaying Christians. Such scenes occurred throughout the ninth century. Pagan opposition to the Orthodox Church contributed later to the spread of Bogomilism. Miniature from the Menologium of Byzantine Emperor Basil II, in the Vatican Library. (After Naslednikova)*

The spiritual revolt instigated by the Bogomils reached its peak during the *Komitopuli* rebellion (969-971), which marked the rise of the second Macedonic Empire, after the one of Alexander the Great some 1300 years before. That Bogomilism had distinct features of a liberation movement is supported by the fact that the *komitopuli* (Lat. *comites*) David, Moysey, Aron and Samoil, sons of the *komitai* Nikola, accepted Bogomilism and began a rebellion in 965(?), resulting in breaking Macedonia free from the foreign occupation, establishing the second great Macedonian state. After the victory of the *komitopuli* and the establishment of a Macedonian kingdom, the Bogomils ceased to verbally attack the upper Macedonian classes - the king, royal officials and high clergy, and allied with them, although Samoil's state was as feudal as those before him. There is a simple explanation for the sympathy of Tsar Samoil toward the Bogomils and their participation in his rebellion - the Bogomils were the only organized anti-Byzantine party in Macedonia with a clear Macedonic orientation. It is interesting that the rebellion of the Macedonians broke out in the region where Bogomilism was strongest, in the territory defined by the triangle of the Vardar River, Lake Ohrid and Mt. Shar.

Bogomils performed real patriotic deeds and gave their assistance to Tsar Samoil when he and his brothers started the revolt against the combined feudal yoke of Bulgars and Romeians from Consantinopolitana Nova Roma. During his forty-years reign in Macedonia he incorporated Bogomil movement in the reformed Macedonian church, with the Holy Sees in Ohrid and Prespa, and allowed them to live freely in his empire that

stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea and from Thessaly to Danube. The power of his Macedonian state was largely owed to the mass support of Bogomils, and the Bogomil movement clear anti-Bulgar and anti-Romeian orientation. But, the acceptance of this popular alternative form of Christian religion by Samoil is also one of the reasons why his empire was finally defeated – at the end Eastern Romeian and Western Roman Church made desperate effort to crush his state that officialized the Bogomilism. The measures taken by them and their Bulgar, Hungar, and other foreign vassals against this "evil heresy" were very severe.

However, the patriotic role of the Macedonian Bogomils continued even after Tsar Samoil's state fell in 1018 and was re-occupied by Eastern Romeian empire once again. But, during the century and a half since their foundation, the Bogomils had organized themselves into a respectful church similar to the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, and they even had a supreme bishop there - Basil the Bogomil. Basil was an important leader of the Bogomil movement in the early 12th century. The Romeian emperor, Alexius, first invited him to explain his doctrine. While Basil was talking to the emperor a scribe took note of everything that was said. The emperor confronted Basil with what he had said and asked him to renounce his heretic faith, but he refused, and he was sent to jail. After visiting Basil many times, but to no avail, emperor Alexius ordered that Basil should be burned at the stake.



The Bogomil movement was particularly strong from the 12th to the 13th century, when it spread to many countries across Europe. It is noted from the Eastern Romeian chronicles that the Bogomilism movement reached its peak during the reign of Romeian dynasty of Komneni. It is definitely known that in the 12th century one babun (monk-bishop) of the Bogomils, Nasaria, took the Secret Book of the Bogomils to Lombardy and gave it to the followers there. In the politically unstable Macedonian Peninsula tormented

by continuous Crusades and wars of the XII and XIII centuries, the Bogomil missionaries pointed out the evil of the world and compared it to the divine heaven. But with time the Bogomil doctrine became less radical than in the X century.

Acts of Cathar Assembly, held in 1167 in San Felix de Carmen, near Toulous, France, represent an important historic source when the question of existence of heretic church organizations is considered. Pope Nikita of Constantinople, who belonged to heretic Bogomil church of Dragovitia (in Aegean Macedonia), known for its strict dualistic orientation, chaired the assembly. There he speaks of the existence of churches of Romania (i.e. Eastern Roman empire), Dragometia, Melingia, Bulgaria and Dalmatia, and points out that they are separated from the churches of old Rome and Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, and that they are strong and live in peace.

Thus, by the end of the 12th century, Bogomil movement first reached Bosnia, and its followers there, known as *Patareni* and *Kutugeri*, appeared publicly during the reign of Ban Kulin (1180-1204). There are controversial opinions concerning the rite orientation of Bosnian Bogomil church of that time, but in the official science the opinion which prevails is that it was a dualistic institution, which had similar tendencies to Bogomilism movement in questions of theology and dogmatism. Central and South-West Bosnia with their specific features represent transitive territory for the Bogomilism. The records of Pope John XXII in his writings to prince Stephen of Bosnia, testify warning of gathering "heretics", who were migrating throughout the province of Herzegovina. In Bosnia they produced the cultural phenomenon of grave stones, so called *stečci*, which apparent connection with the esoteric doctrine of Bogomilism and Patareni/Cathars movement is more than obvious. There were two stone-carving art schools on the territory of Bosnia: in East-Herzegovina and East-Bosnia (sarcophaguses with floral and sun motives, etc.). According to the statistics the most numerous necropolises with *stečci* (2000-3000 pieces) are in the territories of Nevesinje, Konjic, Rogatica, Trebinje, Stolac, Ludmer, Livno, and almost half of the inscriptions come from those areas.





The vicinity of Dubrovnik to Trebinje might have dictated the development of the region, the character of population, its culture and religious inclination, in accordance with the social and political situation. These circumstances directed the line of movement of the Secret Book, as an area which offered favorable conditions for its dispersion and transition. Thus Bogomilism spread further through the foundation of Dalmatian heretic church – due to the vicinity of extremely strong Bosnian Bogomil centers, and also because strong trading connections between Macedonia, Bosnia and Dalmatia, where the route of movement of Bogomils and dualists can be followed in the period of the year 1250. Although the influence of the Split archbishopric, which gained its primacy during the time of king Tomislav (the beginning of 10th century) on basis of historic right, was also very strong, it narrows its jurisdiction during the 11th and 12th century, when the influence of Hungarian church rises, as well as that of catholic archbishoprics in Zagreb, Zadar and Dubrovnik.

Nevertheless, Split as an important political, trading, diplomatic and communicational



churches known to him. Concrete information about a dissident Latin church in Constantinople is extremely scarce in the historical sources. Apart from the abovementioned Sacconi, only his colleague inquisitor Anselm of Alessandria refers to it. The only further remark that Rainerius Sacconi made about the Bogomil church of Constantinople was that (around 1250) it counted “*hardly fifty members*”. This should be interpreted in the sense that it had 50 Bogomil priest or *perfecti*. At first sight, this is not an impressive number, but in the research about Catharism this is usually multiplied by a factor of hundred to be able to approximate the size of the entire community of followers: therefore, 5000 followers, but probably more.



In the second book of Inquisition Gerard mentions ‘*ductores hereticorum*’ (‘*heretic leaders*’), as well as names of people whom those leaders transferred from Octicania through the Mediterranean Alps, Nice and Col de Tend to Roccavionea, and from there to the valley of Cuneo, known as *Introitis Lombardiae*. This is the evidence of living and dynamic connections of Cathars in the region of Octicania and Lombardia. On the eve of the *Albigensian Crusade*, there were six bishoprics: Agen, Lombers, St. Paul, Cabaret, Servian et Montsegur. Among the seats of the deacons were Moissac, Cordes, Toulouse, Puylaurens, Avignonet, Fanjeaux, Montréal, Carcassonne, Mirepoix, Le Bézu, Puilaurens, Peyrepertuse, Quéribus, Tarascon-sur-Ariège.

Recently Borst found out that in the radically dualistic Octicania by the end of the 13th century, the doctrines of ancient-bogomil-moderate dualism often appeared, and that Italian Cathars envoys often visited their ancestral bishoprics in Macedonia, which also

proves their frequent relations in the later periods. This on the other hand supports the relevance of the idea of continuous transfer of ideas in the medieval period.

And finally the testimonies of “Ahrians” presence confirm the descent of Bogomilism in Macedonian Peninsula until 15-16 centuries. Namely, as ethnonym and personal name the noun **Αγριανος/Αχρειος/Αχριδος** (Agriano/Ahreio/Ahrido) i.e. the Agrianes (ancient Macedonian tribe) was actually yet another synonym used for the 15th century heretics. In today Modern Macedonian this is the root word of the city of **Ohrid** (due to /A/ → [O] umlaut); also of the homonymous medieval fortress and region of **Ahridos** on Rhodope Mountains recorded by Stefan the Byzantine and in other sources. Registered also in ‘Tahrir Defterleri’ (‘Census Notes’ in Turkish) as a common personal name **Ahrian**<sup>10</sup> until the XV-XVI centuries, denotes the converted ‘Christians’ with both Muslim and Christian first or second names and nicknames. These “Ahrian” heretics are found to be present from the Rhodope Mountains until Dalmatia region (in today Croatia). And this ‘ethnonym’ used during the Turkish rule is considered of being adopted as yet another ‘heretic’ term for the successors of Medieval Bogomils.<sup>11</sup> Thus confirming the city of Ohrid in Macedonia as another holy center and stronghold of the Bogomilism throughout the centuries.

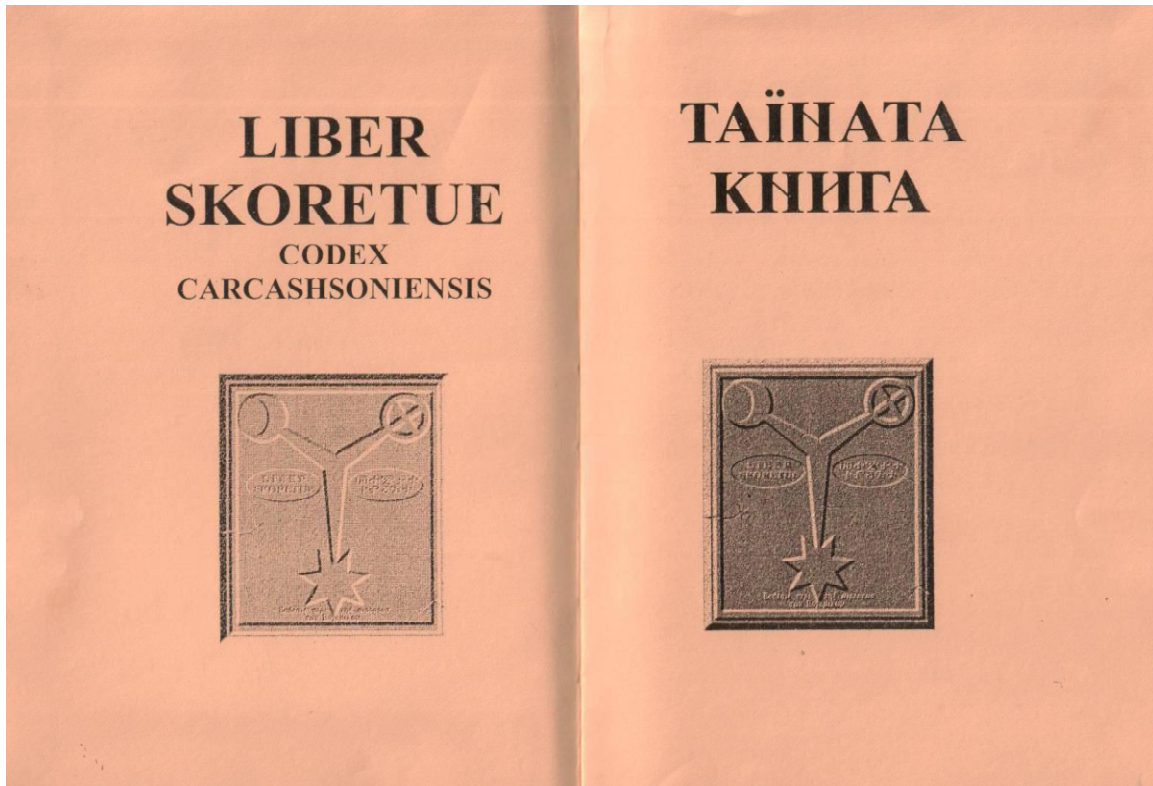
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<sup>10</sup> “Dictionnaire Turc-Arabe-Persan” by Jules Theodore Zenker.

<sup>11</sup> “One possible trace of the Bogomilism in the XV c. Census Registers” by Aleksandar Stojanovski.

## The Secret Book of Bogomils

Many rulers and enlightened nobles had embraced the Bogomil teachings and were sympathetic toward the humanism and progressive ideas spread by Bogomilism. Starting with its acceptance aside the official religion during the rule of Tsar Samoil in Macedonia, the progressive thoughts of Bogomils were written and transmitted to followers in other places and countries. It has been discovered that the famous *Novgorod Pages* are the remains of the Macedonian Imperial Gospel from the 10th century, sent by Macedonian Tsar Samoil together with other books. The unquestionable relationship between the 11th century Russian manuscripts with the 10th century Ohrid Glagolitic version, and the Preslav manuscripts as well, provides the basic information about the formation of the Old Russian orthography on the foundations of the Macedonian Bogomil and apocryphal sources of the official church tradition.



*The Secret Book* of the Bogomils, a product of the medieval theosophy, also known in the literature as *Gospel of John*, belongs to apocryphal literature with apocalyptic and visionary orientation. This is only one exemplar of the harshly forbidden non-canonical literature known under the term “Secret Books” and considered heresy. These “Secret Books” were actually all the books considered non-canonical by the official church as of the 2nd century, and which were not enlisted as canonical and in line with the holy books of the New Testament until the end of 4th century. The “Secret Books” were nonetheless written across the centuries by brave Macedonians and other Christians, despite the mortal danger they risked by writing them. Other examples of these non-canonical forbidden “Secret Books” from Macedonia, that survived the church pogroms, are the

Tikvesh Glossary and Pop-Dragol Glossary from the 13th century. Again these two manuscripts are literature with apocalyptic and visionary orientation. Usually the authors of this forbidden apocryphal literature remain anonymous and/or signed with false or borrowed identities from famous saints, apostles or martyrs.

The content of the above *Secret Book* of Bogomils recovered from Carcashson implies heretical elements, mainly typical for dualistic doctrines and especially for the doctrine of Bogomilism. In its content it describes the prehistory of creation of the world, the creation itself, and also uncovers the future history of the mankind, in which, in cosmogony sense, it mixes christian believes with non-christian ones, based on religious-philosophical concept of moderate dualism and gnosticism. This text, today, is known only through two transcriptions in Latin, *Parisian* and *Viennese* versions, known by the names *Carcashsonien Codex* and *Vienna Version*. The translation in Latin is directly connected with the missionary work of the Bogomil babun *Nasaria* in 1170, whose goal was to spread the ideas of Bogomils among devotees of Catharism.

The presumable ubiquity of the path of the Secret Book begins in Macedonia. Based on certain Latin sources we could deduce the area, where the Secret Book came from, in the heretic stronghold in Macedonia, the region of Lake Prespa. Such data are given in documented Latin sources, such as "The History of Crusade to Jerusalem" by Petar Tudebod, which refers to the First Crusade, whose participants traveled along the important communication route *Via Egnatia*, passing through south-west part of Macedonia. The author writes that in the period of 1096-1099 there was a fortified settlement of the heretics (lat. *castrum hæreticorum*) in Pelagonia, situated in some lake (lat. *in quodam lacus*). The imprecision of this date allows more different opinions concerning its precise ubiquity. The process of dispersion of the Secret Book still represents a not-completely solved puzzle, as the sources are not entirely precise, and a great many of them are destroyed because of their heretic character. But most scholars agree that it is the area around the Lake Prespa, as it is the only big lake in the Pelagonian plane.

Macedonic-Glagolitic Script:	ⱸⱿⱸⱿⱿⱿ	ⱿⱿⱿⱿⱿⱿⱿ
Macedonian-Latin transcript:	T A Y N A	K N I G A
English:	( SECRET	BOOK )

Above: **The ‘Secret Book’ as written in its original Old Church-Macedonic Script or the so called *Glagolitic* alphabet, its transcription below in modern Macedonian-latin script, and the translation in modern English language**

Next page: **Standardized version of the Glagolitic alphabet (Old Church-Macedonic script)<sup>12</sup>, antecedent of the Cyrillic**

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Standardized’ because different transcription schools had their slightly different letters and syllables, according to the different styles of handwriting; generally the version shown above is the most standard form of Glagolitic.

ተተ	ሁሁ	ሀሀ	ኸኸ	ዕዕ	ዓዓ	ሄሄ	ሀሀ	ሄሄ	ሄሄ	ሄሄ	ሄሄ
A	B	V	G	D	E	Zh	Dz	Z	Y	I	J
ኸኸ	ዕዕ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ
K	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	F	X
ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ
OO	Ts	Tsh	Sh	Sht	bi	Yi		ፊ	IA	IO	IU
ዓዓ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ	ዓዓ	ዓዓ	ሀሀ	ሀሀ					
ON	ES	ION	IEN	Teta	Izh						

S. Antoljak connects the modern day village of Asamati on Lake Prespa, according to a written name in Septuagint Koine script - *ασωματος*, to the sect of Bogomils as ‘*extracorporeal*’, i.e. ‘*foreign body*’ to the Christianity, and assumes that the very place of Asamati was near the mentioned town of heretics which was situated by a lake or near a lake. T. Tomovski, in his study “Prespa in the Middle Ages” points the island of *Golem Grad* as a possible location of the heretic *castrum*. E. Bosoki, in his book about the ‘Secret Book’ gives his opinion that its voyage began exactly in 1096, when the Bogomil holy city on the island *Golem Grad* in the Lake Prespa was burnt down by the crusaders.



Previous page: **The island of Golem Grad in the Lake Prespa, Republic of Macedonia**

Thus practically he was a refugee from this noted Bogomils 'Holy See'. The Secret Book from Macedonia through Bosnia arrived in Croatia, and thenafter was transferred to Lombardia, a strong center of Cathars. The described itinerary of its trip allows us to determine the total of some 12 toponym-markers on its movement through time and space, starting from the island of *Golem Grad* (i.e. 'Big City') in the Lake Prespa in Macedonia, through South-East Europe, then across Italy to *Carcassone* in South France. Thus, the Secret Book passed from **Lake Prespa** through **Mt. Babuna** and **Bogomila** (in Macedonia), to **Trebinje** and **Mostar** (BiH), then through Makarska and Dalmatian coast to **Imotski**, **Split** and island of **Krk** (in today *Croatia*), **Lombardy** and **Concorezzo** (in Italia), **Carcasson** and **Monsegur** (in France).

Mythical and real stories interweave here, and J. Plevneš found one of them in his researches in the library of Vatican, where he discovered a written note about a monk-crusader, who with his tongue cut off, carried the book from the island, across the Macedonian Peninsula, to Italy and France. The story was first found somewhere near Venice and written down by the Croatian publicist Antonio Jerkovic in a magazine *Relacion Macedonia*, published in Rome in the 1960's.

Before the translation of the book appeared in Latin, the original linguistic and language features of the Secret Book and its original Glagolitic alphabet found a fertile soil on the island of Krk, where the centuries long tradition of Glagolitic alphabet schools is most evident. The well known incscription on the Bašča slab (Baščanska Ploča, around AD 1100) from the island of Krk proves it. It is written in 13 lines in Glagolitic alphabet.



The irrefutable evidence that the Secret Book of Bogomils passed through Carcasson is the *Carcashsonian Codex* transcription in Latin itself. As said above, the translation in



Latin is connected with the missionary work of the Bogomilian babun Nasaria in 1170. He brought apocryphal scriptures of the first and second centuries, attributed to St. John the Apostle, in 1190's from Macedonia to northern Italy. The appearance of *Carcashsonien Codex* translation in Latin is connected with the missionary activities of the Bogomil monk Nasaria (lat. *Nasarius*), which had a goal of spreading the ideas of Bogomils among the Cathar devotees. Nasaria in 1170 already presented a part of its content to the audience, but it is believed that it had been completely translated around the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century. The works in question were titled "*Interrogatio Iohannis*," "*Apparelhamentum Confession of Sins*," and the "*Traditio: Immersion into the Community of Parfaits* (i.e. *Perfecti*)." The latter two tracts were taken from the Lyons Ritual, also various archaic tracts ascribed to the Essenes and Johannite sects traveled by the hands of Cathars and Bogomils from Macedonia via Mediterranean shipping routes into southern France and Italy.

In the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century we find an allusion on the Secret Book made by Reiner Saconi, who, in 1230, when writing about Cathars and the Poors of Lion - points out that he learnt that illusion from the elder son of Bogomils church, Nasaria, about 60 years earlier. The Italian theologian and inquisitor Anselmo of Alexandria in his "Treatise on Heretics", written from 1260 to 1270, who at the end of Carcashsonien transcript underlines: "*This is a secret of the heretics of Concorezzo, full of illusions, brought from Macedonia by their bishop Nasaria.*"



It is apparent that Cathar's sects (called *Albigenses* in southern France also at Castle of Monteforte near Asti, Piedmont and Florence in Italy) possessed a very comprehensive religious literature, nevertheless with some few exceptions systematically destroyed, partly by the Catholic church, and partly by the *Perfecti* themselves during the persecutions initiated in the *Albigensian Crusades*.

In 1347 the famous Czech king Karlo IV of Luxemburg built a Glagolitic Convent 'Emaus' in Prague, where eighty Croatian Benedictines from the island of *Pashman* and *Senj* were invited to teach and alphabetize there. It is remarkable that the convent is not far from the famous 'Karlov' University, built the next year, in 1348 (Karlo IV also founded the University of Vienna in 1365).

One of these Glagolitic books from this convent (Emaus) in Prague came to Reims in 1574, where the French kings (Charles IX, Henri II, Louis XIII, Louis XIV) for centuries were sworn by putting their hand on this holy book, known under the name 'Texte du Sacre' or 'L Evangile de Reims'.<sup>13</sup> This Glagolitic book was written in 1395, and represents a copy of an older holy book, written probably in the Illyrian Omišali, in today



Above: 'L Evangile de Reims' – the Holy Book of French kings written in Glagolitic and Cyrillic, from the Library of Reims, France

Croatia. In fact, the Glagolitic book was bound together with a Cyrillic book dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (the Cyrillic part has 16 leaves, and the Glagolitic part has 31 leaves). The book was ornamented with gold, precious stones and relics, and according to Dolbeau, probably calligraphed on the island of Krk or in a Czech monastery. And the

<sup>13</sup> Reims Gospel ('L Evangile de Reims') links: <http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/reims.html>; <http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/reims.html>; <http://www.bm-reims.fr/>

island of Krk was one of the strongholds of the Bogomilism. These Dolbeau's pages are available at '*Studia Croatica*'.

The French kings were, according to the contemporary testimonies and sources, sworn on this Glagolitic book with the following words: "*Ainsi le jurons, vouons et promettons sur la sainte et vraie Croix et le saint ...vangile touché.*"

Another issue that remained in the memory from the days of Bogomils, Patarens and Cathars is the Bogomil calendar. The year consisted of ten months, each month had 36 days, every week six days. Every sixth day was a public holiday, a celebration over 5 working days was forbidden. Naming the days by calendar year with human names was also prohibited. The months names were: Yar, Fiar, Mar, Rar, Yuar, Avrar, Sevar, Okar, Noar and Dekar. At the end of these ten months the Bogomil calendar adds 5 'dead days' without name, a festive period dedicated to the divine power of creation.

## The Persecutions Of The Bogomils

The inhuman repercussions and cruel crusades on Bogomilism was already mentioned above. Official Christian church institutions, both Eastern-Orthodox and Western-Catholic, responded with all available means against this threat for their dominance. Another result of the crusade against the Bogomils/Cathars/Albigenses was the establishment of the Inquisition. This institution remains one of the main reasons why the Middle Ages are also known as the 'Dark Ages', a period of human history when the progressive thought and ideas were seen as illness, and have been promptly suffocated by the official church and their vassals with unprecedented cruelty.

The first recorded execution of confessed "*perfecti*," which called themselves "*good Christians and Bogomili*" were burned at Orléans in AD 1022. The synods issued at Charroux in 1028 and Toulouse in 1056 publicly condemned the "*good Christians*" settling in the region from the Balkan and Pyrenees merchant routes. During a decade, spanning 1030-1040 a Cathar fraternity was discovered at the castle of Monte Forte, with the community there received everywhere, accessible to all strata of society. *Perfecti* at Monte Forte were seized by the bishop of Asti and chose to burn rather than become proselytes.

In the east, Theophylact, the cruel 'patriarch' of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy installed by Constantinopolitana Nova Roma (anglicized: Constantinople), as already mentioned above was waging his own crusade against Bogomils in Macedonia. From the preserved documents and letters of Theophylact to the suzerains and clerics from the local eparchies can be seen his frantic call upon arms, in order to destroy the heretics. The acts of the eastern Christian church cruelty and its radical anti-Bogomilism were nonetheless applied in an inquisitorial fashion. Many testimonies from the first half of the 12th century give us the clearest evidence of the horrible golgotha of the Bogomils in Macedonia proper and whole Macedonian Peninsula. Here's the "Alexiad" of the Princess Anna Komnena, sister of the Romeian emperor Alexius I Komnen, which recorded the event of the capture and torture of Bogomil priest Vasil (Lat. *Basil*):

*"After this in the course of the years of his reign, a very great cloud of heretics arose, and the nature of their heresy was new and hitherto unknown to the Church. For two very evil and worthless doctrines which had been known in former times, now coalesced; the impiety, as it might be called, of the Manichaeans, which we also call the Paulician heresy, and the shamelessness of the Massalians. This was the doctrine of the Bogomils--compounded of the Massalians and the Manichaeans. And probably it existed even before my father's time, but in secret; for the sect of the Bogomils is very clever in aping virtue. And you would not find any long-haired word ling belonging to the Bogomils, for their wickedness was hidden under the cloak and cowl. A Bogomil looks gloomy and is covered up to the nose and walks with a stoop and mutters, but within he is an uncontrollable wolf. And this most pernicious race, which was like a snake hiding in a hole, my father jured and brought out to the light by chanting mysterious spells. For now that he had rid himself of much of his anxiety about the East and the West he turned his attention to more spiritual matters. For in all things he was superior to other men; in teaching he surpassed those whose profession was teaching; in battles and strategy he excelled those admired for their exploits.*

*By this time the fame of the Bogomils had spread everywhere. (For Vasil, a monk, was very wily in handling the impiety of the Bogomils; he had twelve disciples whom he called "apostles," and also dragged about with him some female disciples, wretched women of loose habits and thoroughly bad, and he disseminated his wickedness everywhere.) This evil attacked many souls like fire, and the Emperor's soul could not brook it, so he began investigating the heresy. He had some of the Bogomils brought to the palace and all proclaimed a certain Vasil as the teacher and chief representative of the Bogomilian heresy. Of these, one Diblatius was kept in prison, and as he would not confess when questioned, he was subjected to torture and then informed against the man called Basil, and the disciples he had chosen. Accordingly the Emperor entrusted several men with the search for him. And Satanail's arch-satrap, Vasil, was brought to light, in monk's habit, with a withered countenance, clean shaved and tall of stature.*

*The Emperor, wishing to elicit his inmost thought by compulsion under the disguise of persuasion, at once invited the man on some righteous pretext. And he even rose from his chair to greet him, and made him sit by him and share his table, and threw out his whole fishing-line and fixed various baits on the hooks for this voracious whale to devour. And he made this monk, who was so many-sided in wickedness, swallow all the poison he offered him by pretending that he wished to become his disciple, and not he only, but probably his brother, the Sevastocrator Isaac, also; he pretended too to value all the words he spoke as if they came from a divine voice and to defer to him in all things, provided only that the villain Vasil would effect his soul's salvation. "Most reverend father," he would say (for the Emperor rubbed sweets on the rim of the cup so that this demoniac should vomit forth his black thoughts), "I admire you for your virtue, and beseech you to teach me the new doctrines your Reverence has introduced, as those of our Churches are practically worthless and do not bring anybody to virtue." But the monk at first put on airs and he, that was really an ass, dragged about the lion's skin with him everywhere and shied at the Emperor's words, and yet was puffed up with his praises, for the Emperor even had him at his table. And in all this the Emperor's brother, the Sevastocrator, aided and abetted him in the play; and finally Vasil spewed out the dogmas of his heresy. And how was this done? A curtain divided the women's apartments from the room where the two Emperors sat with the wretch who blurted out and openly declared all he had in his soul; whilst a secretary sitting on the inner side of the curtain committed his words to writing. And the nonsense-monger seemed to be the teacher while the emperor pretended to be the pupil, and the secretary wrote down his doctrines. And that man, stricken of God, spun together all that horrible stuff and did not shun any abominable dogma, but even despised our theology and misrepresented all our ecclesiastical administration. And as for the churches, woe is my - he called our sacred churches the temples of devils, and our consecration of the body and blood of our one and greatest High Priest and Victim he considered and condemned as worthless.*

*And what followed? The emperor threw off his disguise and drew the curtain aside; and the whole Senate was gathered together and the military contingent mustered, and the elders of the Church were present too. The episcopal throne of the Queen of Cities was at that time occupied by that most blessed of patriarchs, Lord Nicholas, the Grammarian. Then the execrable doctrines were read out, and proof was impossible to attack. And the defendant did not deny anything, but immediately bared his head and proceeded to counter-demonstrations and professed himself willing to undergo fire, scourging and a*

*thousand deaths. For these erring Bogomils believe that they can bear any suffering without feeling pain, as the angels forsooth will pluck them out of the fire. And although all reproached him for his impiety, even those whom he had involved in his own ruin, he remained the same Vasil, an inflexible and very brave Bogomil. And although he was threatened with burning and other tortures he clung fast to his demon and embraced his Satanail. After he was consigned to prison the emperor frequently sent for him and frequently exhorted him to forswear his impiety, but all the Emperor's exhortations left him unchanged.”<sup>14</sup>*



Here is also the excerpt from the Macedonian tsar Dushan Codex: “85. *O babunskoj reči i ko rekne babunsku rec, ako bude vlastelin, da plati sto perpera, ako li bude sebar da plati dvanaest perpera i da se bije štapovima,*” translated in English: “*About the babun’s sermons (i.e Bogomils) and who spreads the babun’s sermons, if its noble, to pay hundred perpers, if it’s peasant twelve perpers and to be beaten with sticks.*”<sup>15</sup>

The Council of Toulouse (France) convened in 1119 by pope Callistus III officially condemned the heretics who reject the sacraments of the Holy Roman Church.

A Council of Tours convened in 1163 condemned the Albigenses as a cancerous religious sect with papal anathema. Pope Innocent III was the first vicar to invoke the forces of the world to destroy christians who allegedly ceased to be “*Catholic.*”

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth A. S. Dawes translation of “The Alexiad” of the princess Anna Komnena, 1918, pp. 412-415.

<sup>15</sup> “*Perper*” - a coin in Tsar Stefan Dušan’ medieval Macedonian kingdom.



Cathar Cross on the wall of the Krak de Chevaliers, Syria.  
A Crusader Castle previously given to the Knights Hospitalier  
in 1142 by Raymond II, Count of Tripoli.

The fall of Constantinople in 1204 (to Crusaders) no doubt utterly fueled the fetishes of fear in the Papacy already weakened by sectarian fighting across whole Europe.

In the town of Montségur<sup>16</sup>, in 1196, a hundred years after the presumed writing of the Secret Book, the biggest execution of Cathars was committed. Upon the order of Simon de Monfor 3260 Cathars were burnt alive. When Monfor was asked if all should be burnt as there might've been righteous ones among them from whole Europe who believed the true God, Monfor stated the known statement: *“Burn them all, and in Heaven God will recognize the righteous ones.”*

The epilogue of the Albigenses and Cathars took place at Montségur citadel in midsummer of 1243. High in the Pyrenees at Ariege, 2000 meters above sea level, surrounded by thick pine forests, rushing torrents and vertiginous cliffs, Montségur was sieged by troops of the seneschal of Carcassonne and the archbishop of Narbonne. It has been told that to Montségur were brought Albigensian riches, holy books, and, according to plebeian legend, the sacred Holy Grail. Like pagan Arkona from the far north, Montségur became a last sanctuary from the Inquisition for the Cathars (*perfecti*). There was food and grain for years to come stored in subterranean chambers. The siege lasted almost a year, until 16 March 1244, as under cover of night soldiers invaded the fortress. According to accounts of William of Puylaurens, ‘about 200’ perfecti marched to their deaths and into the bonfires singing praises.

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<sup>16</sup> *Mont-Segur* – ‘a secure mountain’ in plain French; denoting the Cathar’s refugee high in the mountains.



*“So red was the flame that rose toward the sky, so high and pillar like the smoke, that those Toulousains, Lauraguais and Albigeois, who raised their eyes toward Ariege, knew by this sign that their heroic brethren had been annihilated and that the last hope of the soul had died.”<sup>17</sup>*

In 1276, Toulousan Cathars were seized at Sirmione, and in 1278, others were captured at Verona. As before, the Cathars were burned. The last professed ministers admitting to the performance of Bogomilism were allegedly hanged or sentenced to life in prison at the village of Villerouge-Terménes and at Catalonia by 1325.

But, the terrifying misfortune of these martyrs couldn't stop the unstoppable. No torture, no killing, could've be effective in exterminating the human thought.

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<sup>17</sup> Maurice Magre “Magiciens et Illumines”



## The Legacy of Bogomils

The Bogomilism was the first real political danger and direct mortal threat for many feudal rulers and monarchs, as well for the ecclesiastical hierarchs in medieval Europe. It was actually the first Protestantism, many centuries before Luther, a distant herald of the Socialism and never achieved Communism. The progressive spirit of Bogomil teaching is to be found above all in the principle of the socio-economic equality of all men, whether noble or peasant, patrician or plebeian, and in the abolition of discriminatory privileges. Making themselves interpreters of the feelings and interests of the most oppressed classes of the feudal society of that time, the Bogomils soon gained an enormous number of adherents. Not even the international christian church coalition, which was particularly inhuman in the means it chose to suppress their movement, was able to put down the 'forest fire' instigated by the Bogomils and tear them away from the masses. Their social movement set the public life of Europe in ferment, and it soon became the first real political force, thinly disguised under a veil of religion.



Only a few written records remained to testify their progressive thought, deeds, cultural achievements, and the immense impact of the Bogomil movement in Europe. The macabre inquisitional machinery destroyed almost everything that opposed the official church, and reduced to dust and ashes the innumerable works of Bogomil writers, technically known as Apocryphal Literature.



Nevertheless, the Bogomilism survived the centennial persecutions and never disappeared from the politico-social stage the Bogomils set in Europe. Their descendants, the Patareni, Girovagi and Cathars, continued the cosmopolitan course set by Macedonian Bogomils and later gave the birth of the Protestant movement, Socialism, and other humanistic movements in modern Europe. The precise theology of this movement is still kept a closely guarded secret to this day, and the groups themselves will provide disinformation to further their secrecy. The Bogomil practices were preserved and deconstructed in such spiritual threads that became vulgarized in *Freemasonry*, while stretching to the Bavarian order of *Perfectibilists*, or the Illuminated Seers of Bavaria, the *Rosicrucian Fraternity*, and inhuman *Thule Society* of 1914. The term *Crypto-Cathar* is also used to describe descendants of Cathars who still (generally secretly) maintain some antique Bogomil traditions, often while adhering to other faiths. Their progressive thought also survives through many Bogomil movements founded in the 20th and 21st century.

Кочо Рацин

## ДРАГОВИТСКИТЕ БОГОМИЛИ

Богомилството е една од најсветлите, најзначајните и најинтересните појави на средновековното минато на Повардарјето. Наспроти официјалното христијанство, што е воведено одозгора, од страна на самите државни главари, и што е пренесено од Византија, со цел идејно да се зацврсти владавината на новата словенска феудална аристократија, богомилството никна од народот, ги зафати најшироките народни маси и во верско-опозициона форма го мобилизира народниот отпор против сè поголемото феудално поробување. По тој начин, отпрвин како верско-опозициона секта, богомилството подоцна се претвори во вистинско социјално-реформаторско народно движење со отворени стремежи за промени на општествениот поредок. Во таа повисока фаза од својот развој богомилството со своето високоморално сфаќање на средновековните културни проблеми, со својата народна, рационалистичка интерпретација на христијанството, како и со својата беспопштедна критика на сите негативни последици од феудалното устројство на општеството, што настана во време на првите симптоми од распаѓањето на феудализмот кај нас — пројави таков порој од необично смели и напредни мисли за својата епоха, што со право го поставуваат во редот на значајните социјално-реформаторски движења во историјата. Веќе со самото тоа богомилството би требало да се смета и како наше најсветло историско минато, што ги овозможило нашите најдрагоцени културни традиции и ни оставило едно богато културно наследство.



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