

## Esotericism and Visionary Mysticism in Medieval Byzantine and Slavonic Orthodox Pseudepigraphic and Heretical Literature

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The presence of characteristic elements of esotericism and visionary mysticism in medieval Byzantine and Slavonic Orthodox pseudepigraphic and heretical literature was not among the main subjects of early scholarly study of medieval pseudepigraphy and European dissent and heresy. Early scholarly investigations of medieval dualist heresy (specifically, Paulicianism, Bogomilism and related groups in the Eastern Christendom, as well as Catharism in Western Christendom) developed under the impact of the trajectories and themes of Catholic-Protestant polemical controversies over the character, teachings and ritual practices of medieval heretical, dissenting and reformist groups, a polemic whose first formative stages can be traced back to the sixteenth century. However, the publication of a series of major primary sources for the history and doctrines of medieval Eastern and Western Christian heresies, and Christian dualism in particular, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries transformed the study of medieval heresy, leading to far-reaching reappraisals, modifications and rebuttals of early modern Protestant and Catholic stances and postulates in the spheres of heresiology and heresiography.

The steady expansion of the historical-critical and source-based study of medieval dualist heresy from the mid-nineteenth century onwards increasingly demonstrated that the inherited polemical reconstructions of doctrinal, direct historical or sectarian continuities between medieval dualist communities (eastern or western) and the reformed churches, as inherited from the Catholic-Protestant confessional disputes linking, cannot be substantiated. The continuous attempts, still current in recent scholarship, to adopt or draw on medieval heresiological definitions of dualist heresy, whether Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, as directly stemming from late antique Gnostic traditions (Manichaean or other) or as a merger of earlier heresies, has also been shown as groundless, misleading and largely ahistorical.

In the course of the nineteenth century the study of Bogomil, Bogomil-related and Bogomil-labelled communities, groups and individuals in the medieval Byzantine and Balkan world also began to assimilate newly conceptualized and actively propagated Slavophile or Slavophile-inspired approaches which were eventually to have a lasting impact on Russian and Balkan scholarly and public discourses on the nature and role of heretical trends and movements in the religious history of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. Some of these discourses later appeared in varied combinations with more distinctly ethnocentric, socio-economic and Marxist reconstructions and theories. The Marxist approach eventually enjoyed its rather inflexible and doctrinaire manifestations in the institutionalized authorized Marxist historiographic models in the Eastern Bloc countries during the Cold War era. Again, the cumulative evidence of the external and internal sources for Eastern Christian heresies and communities clearly shows that neither their doctrinal characteristics nor historical fortunes can be assessed or understood on a social, regional or national basis alone, and they elude simplistic and ideological explanations in any such limited socio-economic or ethno-confessional frameworks.

As a rule, such socio-economic, socio-political and ethno-centric approaches to medieval Eastern Christian dualism display very minimal or no interest in the notions of esotericism and visionary mysticism in the relevant extant evidence. Indeed this problematic has not so far been subjected to a detailed analysis as an area of study of their own. Hence it is still impossible to provide a more systematic discussion of such traditions of esotericism and mysticism in medieval Christian dualism against the background of the analogous preceding traditions in Gnosticism, Manichaeism and early Christianity (or corresponding developments in medieval Christianity). Clearly what needs to be done in the current preliminary stages of research into this particular sphere of the study of medieval dualist heresy, is to identify to some of the characteristic reports and evidence regarding such ideas and practices among medieval dualist sectarians and look for some clues to their potential theological, historical and cultic provenance.

Given the current state of evidence, the application of the contact-diffusion model (perhaps still the most widely used in religious history) cannot solve the question of more or less securely identifying such provenance in the case of medieval Eastern Christian dualism. In the wake of the dissemination of diverse Gnostic dualist and related teachings during late antiquity, the residues and actual and possible carriers of such traditions in early medieval Christendom become very problematic to detect and define with any certainty. Early medieval

cases and reports of the survival of Gnostic dualist traditions and ‘Manichaeism’ should be treated critically and cautiously since in early medieval Byzantium the term ‘Manichaean’ was used again and again to label not only alleged heretics, but also political and religious adversaries of the imperial and clerical authorities advancing the charges.

Thus earlier scholarly theories that in the early medieval period the heterodox movement of the Messalians (also known as Euchites and Enthusiasts), served as a crucial link in a historical chain theorized to connect Gnostic dualism and Manichaeism, on one hand, and medieval dualist heresy or ‘neo-Manichaeism’, on the other, have not been corroborated by later and current research. An anti-clerical pietist sect which reportedly spread from north-east Mesopotamia to Syria and Asia Minor where they retained their presence at least until the seventh century, much about the actual teachings of the Messalians remains obscure. Their reported apparent principal belief postulated that from birth in every man dwells a demon, whose banishment cannot be achieved by baptism alone,, but through unceasing, zealous prayer and spiritual ‘baptism by fire’,<sup>1</sup> a teaching clearly underpinned by a specific anthropological dualism, accompanied by prescriptions for periods of strict asceticism, ecstatic practices and visionary mysticism. The potential importance of Messalianism lies not in the sphere of the transmission of Gnostic and theological dualist traditions, but as a sectarian and monastic carrier of ecstatic and mystical traditions which also found their manifestation in Byzantine mysticism and medieval Eastern Christian dualism.

Likewise the origins and early expansion of Paulicianism (which need to be cautiously and critically investigated against the backdrop of the distinctive currents and undercurrents in the complex early medieval religious development in Armenian-speaking areas in the Caucasus and eastern Asia Minor) remain still very obscure and even an approximate reconstruction of their general outlines continues to be plagued a number of religious and historical problems.<sup>2</sup> Byzantine polemicists and heresiologists largely regarded and

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<sup>1</sup> For analyses of the evidence concerning the teachings and the cultic traditions of the Massalians, see, for example, I. Hausherr *Études de spiritualité orientale* (Rome, 1969), 64-96, R. Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer* (Berlin 1968); A. Louth, “Messalianism and Pelagianism,” *Studia Patristica*, 17.1 (1982): 127-135; C. Stewart, *‘Working the Earth of the Heart’: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991); K. Fitschen, *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus. Ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzer-geschichte* (Göttingen, 1998); B. Bitton-Ashkelony, “Neither Beginning nor End”: The Messalian Imaginaire and the Formation of Syriac Asceticism, *Adamantius* 19 (2013): 222-239.

<sup>2</sup> See the recent discussions of evidence and main areas of scholarly debate and controversies in J. Hamilton and B. Hamilton, ‘Historical Introduction. The Origins of Christian Dualism’, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 650–c.1450*, eds. J. Hamilton and B. Hamilton, assist. ed. Y. Stoyanov (Manchester 1998), 5-

denounced Paulicianism as a revival of Manichaeism, attributing to its adherents belief in the radical dualist doctrine of two gods or principles, as well as Docetic Christology, emphatic iconoclasm and rejection of the normative church sacraments and hierarchy. However, a direct Manichaean impact on early Paulicianism's teachings and organizational hierarchy is unlikely, as the latter lacked the crucial Manichaean division between the elect and the listeners which is also associated with traditions of doctrinal and cultic secrecy (though there are certain indications of teachings or 'mysteries' preserved for the few 'perfect in impiety' Paulicians).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, while much of early Paulician organization and cultic life remain unknown, it is certain that no Paulician groups advocated and followed the ascetic practices of the Manichaean elect, including rigorous abstinence from meat, wine and marriage.

The insufficient evidence of notions and practices of esotericism and visionary mysticism among communities such as the Paulicians, whose beginnings and role in medieval Christian dualism preceded that of Bogomilism in Eastern and Catharism in Western Christendom, clearly indicates that the exploration of the background of these notions and practices in the two later dualist movements needs to be explained and diversified also in other directions. As already emphasized, indiscriminate charges of 'Manichaeism' in early medieval Byzantium further obstructs and complicates the detection of potential authentic survivals of Manichaeism beyond the reign of Justinian I (527 to 565) when church and state effectively joined forces to apparently extinguish the activities and presence of the Manichaean Church of Light in the empire. Certainly no verifiable evidence has been unearthed so far to testify to any historic continuities of Manichaeism or any form of Gnosticism in Byzantium and the Balkans into the period immediately preceding the (re) Christianization of the non-Byzantine-ruled regions of South-East Europe which started in the last decades of the ninth century.

At the same time, proto-Gnostic, Gnosticizing and dualist-leaning ideas and narratives were retained in the medieval versions of early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic works which notwithstanding their official prohibition, continued to be circulated (mostly in Eastern

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25; Y. Stoyanov, The Interchange between Religious Heterodoxies in the Balkans and Caucasus – the Case of the Paulicians, in *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea*, ed. I. Bilyarski, et al., Cambridge 2012, 106-116.

<sup>3</sup> Petrus Siculus, *Historia Manichaeorum qui et Paulicani dicuntur*, eds. C. Astruc et al., "Les Sources grecques pour l'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure," *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970): 19.

Christendom) in a variety of milieux. In a process which has earlier precedents, such notions and narratives preserved in pseudepigraphic literature could from time to time be ‘re-discovered’ and become influential in dissident, heterodox, , monastic or learned circles. This process could lead to medieval reassertions of the doctrinal and theological attitudes and stances (including those involving various kinds of doctrinal and cultic esotericism) originally developed in such surviving and inherited pseudepigraphic literary works as well as their re-interpretations and re-formulations in novel medieval settings. Such a medieval sectarian and ‘heretical’ after-life of early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic literature is certainly attested in the case of Bogomilism with whose emergence and spread in the early phases of the re-Christianization processes in the Balkans newly Christianized tenth-century Bulgarian kingdom, medieval Christian dualism embarked a new and more expansive stage of its history.

The growing amount and availability of diverse source material for medieval Eastern Christian dualism has also led to a greater understanding of the importance of various traditions of earlier pseudepigraphic and parabiblical literature in the formation and elaboration of some of its principal cosmological, diabolical, Christological and eschatological themes and narratives. It is certainly significant that some of the pseudepigraphic affinities of these dualist narratives and notions are especially evident in such a crucial internal source for Eastern Christian dualism as the Bogomil apocryphon, *Interrogatio Iohannis*,<sup>4</sup> affinities which became the focus of scholarly attention in the early phases of its study.

The extant records of Paulician dualist teachings does not allow as yet an assessment of the potential role pseudepigraphical literature in Armenia and Byzantium may have played in the formative or later stages of Paulician doctrinal traditions. In the diverse evidence of the accounts of and allusions to Bogomil dualism, however, one may detect notions and narratives variously related, for instance, to parabiblical embellishments of the *Genesis* creation and flood stories, apocryphal and heretical satanologies and Christologies, etc. Significantly, such parabiblical elaborations cannot be discerned in the teachings of anti-clerical, heterodox and heretical groups and movements preceding the emergence of

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<sup>4</sup> The apocryphon is extant only in Latin and divides into two main versions; the first version derives from a manuscript once in the archives of the Inquisition at Carcassonne but subsequently destroyed: it survives in two late manuscripts and one printed text Published for the first time by J. Benoist, *Histoire des Albigeois et des Vaudois ou Barbets*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1691), I, 283–96; see the most recent critical edition of text, E. Bozóky, *Le Livre secret des cathares* (Paris, 1980), 41–94.

Bogomilism. At the same time, these parabiblical notions and narratives find immediate and close parallels in the various pseudepigraphic literary works that came to be translated and circulated in diverse Slavo-Byzantine contexts and milieux in the period of the formation of Slavo-Byzantine Orthodox theology and learning in the wake of the missions of St Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher and St Methodius (the Apostles of the Slavs) and their legacy: the Slavonic versions of the Scriptures, liturgy and alphabet.

These parallels (largely the outcome of selective Christian dualist appropriations) clearly highlight the extent to which the formation and elaboration of Bogomil dualist theology (and its accompanying parabiblical amplifications) was indebted to some of the principal dynamic processes in the formation of Slavo-Byzantine Orthodox and culture and learning during which the Scriptures were translated into a language not too remote from the existing Slavonic vernaculars. Another important and symptomatic facet of these processes is that in the Slavonic indexes of forbidden apocryphal books<sup>5</sup> local priests were sometimes denounced for being in possession of and disseminating such banned texts. This situation almost certainly applies also to the initial phases of the reception of Byzantine canonical and extra-canonical literature in Slavonic Orthodox literary circles and schools and accounts for the various indications of a wide-ranging translation and diffusion of extra-canonical apocryphal literature in these early stages.

The interrelations between Slavo-Byzantine pseudepigraphical literature and Bogomilism became the subject of scholarly scrutiny with the initiation and progress of the study and publications of the so-called Old Church Slavonic pseudepigrapha, some of which like *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (2 Enoch)<sup>6</sup> and *The Apocalypse of Abraham*,<sup>7</sup> are extant

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<sup>5</sup> The texts and the history of the Slavonic Indexes of Forbidden Books have attracted the attention of scholars working in the field of medieval Slavonic studies; see, for example, A. Pypin, 'Dlia obiasneniia stat'i o lozhnykh knigakh', *Letopis' zaniatii Arkheograficheskoi kommisii*, 1, 1861 (St Petersburg, 1862), 1–55; I. Ia. Porfir'ev, *Apokrificheskie skazaniia o vetkhozavetnykh litsakh i sobytiiah* (Kazan, 1872), 142–68; O. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1883–85); I. Ia. Iatsimirskii, *Bibliograficheskii obzor apokrifov v iuzhnoslavianskoi i russkoi pis'mennosti*, 1, *Apokrifvy vetkhozavetnye* (Petrograd, 1921), 1–75; B. St. Angelov, 'Spisüküt na zabranenite knigi v starobülgarskata knizhnina', *Izvestiia na instituta za bülgarska literatura* 1 (1952): 107–59.

<sup>6</sup> The first edition of the apocalypse as a whole was prepared by A. I. Popov (based on a late seventeenth-century Russian manuscript of the long recension): A. I. Popov, *Bibliograficheskie materialy sobrannye A. N. Popovym, Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnosti Rossiiskikh*, 3.9 (Moscow, 1880), 66–139, soon after which was published for the first time a manuscript of the short recension: S. Novaković, 'Apokrif o Enohu', *Starine* 16 (1884), 67–81. For a bibliography of the subsequent editions, translations and studies of 2 Enoch, see A. Orlov, 'Selected Bibliography on the Transmission of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha in the Slavic Milieux', in A. Orlov, *Selected Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden, 2009), 203–435 (222–43). On 2 Enoch and Bogomil doctrinal and narrative traditions, see Y. Stoyanov, "Apocryphal Themes and Apocalyptic Traditions in Bogomil Dualist Theology and their Implications for the Study of Catharism" (PhD diss., University of London, 2000), 73–90.

only in Slavonic, whereas others such as the Slavonic versions of *The Vision of Isaiah*<sup>8</sup> and *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 Baruch),<sup>9</sup> preserve early and valuable textual traditions which often are earlier than those represented in the other redactions. The identification and exploration of the various redactional layers and earliest strata of these pseudepigrapha have assumed wider significance and implications in several areas of Jewish and Christian religious history after recent research has indicated their importance for the investigation of early Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, Gnosticism and the development of the Jewish Merkabah ('Divine Chariot') tradition. Since their texts have been edited at various stages of the process of their transmission in various cultural and religious milieux (including medieval Byzantine and Slavonic circles), the separation and dating of the original material and the various secondary interpolations have become the most urgent task in the study of these pseudepigrapha.

The main debates surrounding the relationship between Bogomilism and the development of the pseudepigraphical literature and its principal genres in the Orthodox Slavonic world concern the problem of possible Bogomil editorial interventions in the extant

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<sup>7</sup> Like 2 Enoch and *The Ladder of Jacob*, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* is extant only in Slavonic manuscripts. The Slavonic version of *The Apocalypse of Abraham* has been preserved in a more or less full form in nine Russian manuscripts, the earliest of which date from the fourteenth century and was published separately by N. S. Tikhonravov, *Pamiatniki otrechennoi russkoi literatury*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1863), 32–53, and by I. I. Sreznevskii, *Drevnie pamyatniki russkogo pis'ma i iazyka: obshchee povremennoe obozrenie* (St Petersburg, 1861–63), cols 648–6. The recent important textual critical study of the apocalypse includes an English translation of the text, A. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Atlanta, 2004), 9–37. For a bibliography of the editions, translations and studies of *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, see Orlov, "Selected Bibliography", 246–56. On *The Apocalypse of Abraham* and Bogomil doctrinal and narrative traditions, see Stoyanov, "Apocryphal Themes", 99–104.

<sup>8</sup> *The Vision of Isaiah* forms the second section (chapters 6–11) of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, a pseudepigraphon which weaves together important Jewish and early Christian traditions about Isaiah - the latest critical edition of the text is prepared by L. Perrone and E. Norelli, 'Ascensione di Isaia profeta. Versione etiopica' in P. Bettiolo *et al.* (eds.), *Ascensio Isaiae: Textus* (Turnhout, 1995), 3–129. The original Slavonic version of the *Vision of Isaiah* is preserved in 6 Slavonic manuscripts, the earliest of which is included in the twelfth-century Russian manuscript, the so-called 'Uspenskii sbornik', first published by A. Popov, *Bibliograficheskie materialy*, I, 13–20. For a bibliography of the editions, translations and studies of the Slavonic version of the *The Vision of Isaiah*, see Orlov, "Selected Bibliography", 276–278. On the *Vision of Isaiah* and Bogomil doctrinal and narrative traditions, see Stoyanov, "Apocryphal Themes", 104–114.

<sup>9</sup> *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 Baruch) has been a subject of academic study for more than a century. The text of a Slavonic version of the apocalypse was originally published (from a fifteenth-century Serbian manuscript) for the first time by S. Novaković, "Otkrivenje Varuhovo", *Starine* 18 (1886): 203–9; an edition of the Greek text was prepared by M. R. James, "The Apocalypse of Baruch" in *Apocrypha Anecdota II* (TS 5/1), ed. J. A. Robinson (Cambridge, 1897), li–lxxi; 83–94. For recent major studies of the apocalypse, see D. C. Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden, 1996), and most recently, A. Kulik, *3 Baruch: Greek-Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch* (Berlin and New York, 2010), which includes a very valuable new English translation of, and commentary on, the apocalypse, 89–386. For a bibliography of the editions, translations and studies of 3 Baruch, see Orlov, "Selected Bibliography", 278–84. On 3 Baruch and Bogomil doctrinal and narrative traditions, see Stoyanov, "Apocryphal Themes", 90–99.

versions of various pseudepigraphical works. The principal line of divergence in these debates on the exact nature of the interrelations between medieval dualist heresy and pseudepigraphical and parabiblical literature translated, edited or compiled in the medieval Eastern Orthodox world still concerns contrasting approaches to the ‘wider’ or ‘narrower’ definition of the term ‘Bogomil apocryphon’.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the analogies between Bogomil teachings and apocryphal and popular cosmogonic traditions which circulated in the medieval Orthodox Slavonic-Byzantine world has attracted the attention of both investigators of Bogomilism and the pseudepigraphical genre as well as folklorists, anthropologists and medievalists in general.

The early availability of pseudepigraphic and extracanonical literature in clerical, monastic and lay learned circles taking part in the formation of Slavo-Byzantine literary culture thus made it possible for potential heterodoxies to emerge and in the case of Bogomilism, to be embellished by literal borrowings of apocrypha-derived narratives, themes and notions, combined with creative and allegorical exegesis of the scriptures, especially the New Testament, which in addition could be preached and spread in the vernacular.

This strand is evident in some of the reports concerning the practices or training of the Bogomil *perfecti* such as Euthymius of the Periblepton's *Epistula contra Phundagiagitas sive Bogomilos*<sup>11</sup> and Euthymius Zigabenus' *Kata Bogomilon*, a section in his *Panoplia Dogmatica*.<sup>12</sup> Both accounts

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<sup>10</sup> For the wider definition, see, for example, I. Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi i legendi* (Sofia, 1925); P. Dimitrov, “Bogomil” and “Bogomilski skazaniia i legendi”, in P. Dimitrov, *Petŭr Chernorizets* (Shumen, 1995), resp. 116–67 and 140–67; D. Dimitrova, “Tainata kniga na bogomilite v sistemata na starobŭlgarskata literatura”, *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 1 (1995): 59–69. For the narrow definition, see É. Turdeanu, “Apocryphes bogomiles et apocryphes pseudo-bogomiles”, *Revue d'histoire des religions* 138 (1950): 22–52, 176–218; M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Prague, 1974), 84, 85, 88, 134, 143–44, 340; D. Dragojlović, *Bogomilstvo na Balkanu i u Maloj Aziji* (Belgrade, 1974), 186–95; D. Dragojlović and V. Antić, *Bogomilstvo vo srednovekovnata izvorna graga* (Skopje, 1978), 31–45. Cf. Minissi, N., “La tradizione apocryfa e la origini del bogomilismo”, *Ricerche slavistiche* 3 (1954): 97–113.

<sup>11</sup> The text of *Epistula contra Phundagiagitas sive Bogomilos* of Euthymius of the Periblepton is preserved in five manuscripts but only two contain the whole text. The letter is contained in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 131, cols. 47–58, but is erroneously attributed to the later theologian, Euthymius Zigabenus. Another edition is to be found in G. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten: Ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters* (Leipzig 1908), 3–86; English translation in Hamiton, Hamilton and Stoyanov, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 142–64.

<sup>12</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia Dogmatica*, PG, vol. 130; the Bogomil section, “Kata Bogomilon”, comprises cols. 1289–1331; another version of this Bogomil section, *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio*, is also edited by Ficker in *Die Phundagiagiten*, 89–111. English translation of the relevant section in Hamiton, Hamilton and Stoyanov, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 180–207.

assert that initiation into Bogomil teachings proceeded gradually, indicating that prior to the *teleiosis* ordinary believers were not introduced to what was considered the inner doctrines, preserved for the heretical elite. According to Euthymius Zigabenus, as a mark of their initiation and status, the *perfecti* bore the title of the Virgin Mary, *Theotokos* (God-Bearer), as they were seen as receptacles of the Holy Spirit and as giving birth of the Word; the parable in Matthew 7:6 ('Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs') was interpreted as alluding to the vital need of doctrinal secrecy, the pearls being the 'mysterious and precious' tenets of Bogomilism, the preserve of the *teleoi* ('perfect').<sup>13</sup> Euthymius of the Periblepton asserts that in such elite Bogomil milieux, Mark 4:11 ('The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables') was quoted and used for their claims of exclusive knowledge of the mystery of the Kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup> Like the ancient Gnostic pneumatic elite the medieval Bogomil *teleoi* (and subsequently the Cathar *perfecti*) were thus seen by their followers and sympathizers as guardians and repositories of the authentic teaching of Christ secretly revealed to his true apostles and transmitted in secrecy thereafter, untainted by the corrupting interferences and doctoring of the official Church.

The records of the Bogomil course of initiation provided by Euthymius of the Periblepton and Euthymius Zigabenus suggest that the believers were initially introduced to teachings and ethics close to evangelical Christianity followed by gradual introduction to more heretical precepts, until the general nature of the dualist doctrine was outlined to the neophyte. In addition, Euthymius of the Periblepton furnishes a distorted polemical account of the rite that marked the neophyte's acceptance into the Bogomil community, apparently intended to raise the novice from the rank of the 'listener' to the rank of the 'believer'. According to his description, during this rite of second baptism the book of the gospels was placed on the head of the novice and heretical teachers recited over his head gospel verses as well as a certain 'Revelation of St. Peter'.<sup>15</sup> Euthymius of the Periblepton briefly describes the process of the further gradual initiation of the neophyte into the heretical 'mysteries' which culminates in his rise from disciple into one of the heretical teachers, but apart from few vague allusions does not describe the actual rite of *teleiosis*.

According to Euthymius Zigabenus' account, the Bogomil second baptism or rite of acceptance into the sect first required a probationary period for confession, purification and prayer after which the

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<sup>13</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, "Kata Bogomilon", col. 1317C; *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio*, ed. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*, 100-101.

<sup>14</sup> Euthymius of the Periblepton, *Epistula*, ed. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*, 37.15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Euthymius of the Periblepton, *Epistula*, ed. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*, 50-57.

novice was re-baptized in a ceremony during which the Gospel of John was placed on his head and the Holy Spirit was invoked along with a recitation of 'Our Father'. Those believers who chose to progress further into the heretical teachings and initiation had to undergo another, stricter probationary period of instruction, prayer and purification (which could be variously described as lasting one to two or three years) before they could be elevated to the highest dualist grade of the *teleoi* and receive the *teleiosis*, which comprised laying the gospel on the head of the proselyte followed by the hands of the *teleoi*, amid liturgical chants and hymns of thanksgiving.<sup>16</sup>

In the sphere of doctrinal secrecy the extant evidence suggests that both in the Bogomilism and Catharism (at least at the high point of the development of the latter) the elite class of the *teleoi/perfecti* were seen both by their opponents and adherents as fully introduced to a corpus of advanced theological teachings and a kind of a dualist *historia arcana*, reportedly mastering in addition a system of allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures which was widely used during missionary tours and the occasional theological debates pursued by the 'teachers of the heresy'.<sup>17</sup> There are also indications that like some of the ancient 'pneumatic' Gnostics and Manichaean elect, the Bogomil *teleoi* engaged in and possibly cultivated certain practices of visionary mysticism and heavenly ascent<sup>18</sup> which also could have been adopted in Cathar circles.<sup>19</sup> The extant evidence pointing to such practices needs close examination in view of recent arguments that in medieval Balkan and Byzantine heterodox and learned milieux new dualist theologies could have developed from

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<sup>16</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, "Kata Bogomilon", col. 1312 C-D; *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio*, ed. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*, 100-101. The texts of the Bogomil rites of the *teleiosis*, described by Euthymius Zigabenus and alluded to by Euthymius of the Periblepton, have not been preserved but their descriptions find immediate parallels in the two extant texts. Latin and Provençal, of the Cathar *Ritual*. The two texts of the Cathar *Ritual* have been published in C. Thouzelier, *Rituel cathare. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (Paris 1976). Part of a later Slavonic Bosnian *Ritual* written by Radoslav the Christian parallels closely the Cathar *Ritual* of Lyons and was almost certainly used by fifteenth-century Christian dualists in Bosnia. The text was originally published by F. Rački, "Dva nova priloga za poviest bosanskih Patarena", *Starine*, 14 (1882): 21-29. On the question of the links between the Cathar *Ritual* and the extant evidence of Bogomil literature, see M. Tsibranska-Kostova, "Katarskiiat trebnik i bogomilskata knzhnina," *Palaeobulgarica* 28/1 (2004): 42-68. See the English translation of its text: Y. Stoyanov, "The *Ritual* of Radoslav the Christian", in Hamilton, Hamilton and Stoyanov, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 289-292

<sup>17</sup> L. Paolini, "Italian Catharism and Written Culture", in *Heresy and Literacy 1000-1530*, eds. P. Biller and A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), 87-103

<sup>18</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, "Kata Bogomilon", col. 1312 C-D; *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio*, ed. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*, 101.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the report of Cathar ecstatic and visionary practices based on the heavenly ascent narrative in *The Vision of Isaiah* published in J. J. I. von DÖLLINGER, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, 2, Darmstadt 1968 [1890], 208-10.

some versions of Byzantine Neo-Platonism<sup>20</sup> or radical forms of monastic mysticism. Such assertions and reconstructions of doctrinal development draw on some telling analogies between the terminology and practices in the Byzantine mystical tradition, dualist Paulicianism and Bogomilism. In the case of Bogomilism and the practices and teachings described by medieval polemicists as ‘Bogomil-Messalian’,<sup>21</sup> these analogies concern asceticism, contemplation and divine vision and notions like man’s ability to ascend directly to God. Both the parallels and the substantial contrasts illustrate the points of convergence and divergence between Byzantine mysticism and Eastern Christian dualist heresies (or between Christian mysticism and dualism, in general), and yield some important clues about way in which the considerable differences and doctrinal borders between the two respective currents of religiosity could on occasions be blurred in the quest for spiritual Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

Another promising area which can yield clues to the provenance of doctrinal and cultic esotericism in Bogomilism/Eastern Christian dualism is the insufficiently-explored field of Byzantine alternative demonology, especially in its popular forms in Anatolia and the Balkans and with all their pre-Christian survivals. Byzantine alternative demonologies formed another current in Byzantine and Balkan Christian culture and religiosity which sometimes could approximate to modes of diabolology in Christian dualism. Both its elite and popular variations often attributed to demons powers greater than normative Christianity could tolerate, and recent research has highlighted the areas in which Bogomilism evolved and exercised an appeal as a ‘particularly well structured and clearly thought out version’ of this alternative demonological tradition.<sup>23</sup> This appeal also included a perceived expertise of demon-control, with all its implication in the sphere of popular magic and superstition. Bogomil

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, N. Garsoïan, “Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation”, *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 25 (1971): 87–114.

<sup>21</sup> On the development of the equation between Bogomilism and Massalianism, see A. Rigo, ‘Messalianismo=Bogomilismo: un’equazione dell’eresiologia medievale bizantina’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 56 (1990): 53–82; for a discussion of the ‘cases’ and accusations of ‘Massalianism’ in the framework of developments in the Byzantine mystical tradition and its equation with Bogomilism, see J. Gouillard, “L’Hérésie dans l’empire byzantin jusqu’au xii<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Travaux et mémoires* 1 (1965): 299–324 (319–23).

<sup>22</sup> On the ‘narrowing’ or ‘thinning’ of the borders between Christian asceticism/mysticism and dualist heresy, see, for example, D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils. A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), 21; Garsoïan, ‘Byzantine Heresy’, 109–13; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni 1081–1261* (Cambridge, 1995), 472–73, 478. For the parallels and differences between the teachings of Symeon the New Theologian and Bogomilism, see H. J. M. Turner, “St. Symeon the New Theologian and Dualist Heresies – Comparisons and Contrasts”, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 32 (1988): 359–66; H. J. M. Turner, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (Leiden, 1990), 66–68.

<sup>23</sup> R. P. H. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam, 1988), 175, with a general discussion of Bogomil demonology on 166–176; see Angold, *Church and Society*, 470; Hamilton, ‘Historical Introduction’, 42–43.

preoccupation with the need to defend and purify oneself from the domination and aggression of the demonic powers in the world and the claims of the Bogomil adepts to have gained salvation from the diabolical dimension of reality through their spiritual baptism could be popularly seen as an expertise in controlling and banishing demons and further increase the appeal of Bogomil missionaries.<sup>24</sup>

On the one hand, therefore, the evidence and arguments are growing that the anti-somatic and anti-cosmic aspects of Paulician and Bogomil dualism (and analogous dualist-leaning developments in lay and monastic mysticism) need to be investigated in this wider context of the undercurrents of heresy, heterodoxy and alternative demonology in the Byzantine and Eastern Christian world in general. On the other hand, despite the important differences between ancient Gnosticism and the medieval dualism of Bogomilism and Catharism (both in the fields of theology and ritual),<sup>25</sup> there exist some curious parallels between the traditions of doctrinal and cultic esotericism developed in the respective ancient and medieval currents of religious dualism. These parallels include that of earlier Gnostic borrowings and transformation of some of the central themes of the intertestamental Jewish pseudepigraphic (especially apocalyptic) literature (frequently subjected to inverse – usually presented as secret – scriptural exegesis), accounts of Gnostic and Manichaean practices of apocalyptic and visionary techniques of heavenly ascent, as well as Gnostic initiatory and baptismal traditions. At least some of these notions seem to have entered Bogomilism (and subsequently Catharism) through the assimilation of the medieval redactions of early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic literature. However, not all extant notions of doctrinal and cultic esotericism of Bogomil/Eastern Christian dualism highlight can be traced to such absorption of pseudepigraphic literary texts which again highlights the need to integrate more fully medieval Christian dualism into the comparative scholarly study of western esotericism<sup>26</sup> and mysticism, focusing in particular on the evolving and shifting interrelations between medieval pseudepigraphy, heavenly ascent apocalypticism, visionary mysticism and religious secrecy in dualist as well as non-dualist heterodox settings.

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<sup>24</sup> Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief*, 169; cf. Angold, *Church and Society*, 470; Hamilton, ‘Historical Introduction’, pp. 42–43.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, J. van den Broek, “The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?,” in J. van den Broek, *Studies in Alexandrian Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden 1996), 157-78

<sup>26</sup> On this as a desideratum for future scholarship, see A. Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, New York, 1992, p. 299, see also p. 53.

