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DISCOURSES ON BOGOMILISM IN EARLY MODERN WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract. This article traces some largely unknown western discourses on Bogomilism starting out from the second half of the 16th century and reaching to the beginning of the 19th century. After a look at the identification of Bogomilism with Protestantism by Catholic writers of the 16th and 17th centuries and Protestant apologists who rejected this equation, the second part deals with inner-Protestant controversies between Pietists and so called "Orthodox" Lutherans. The article concludes with a look at Bogomilism in Friedrich Schelling's idealist philosophy.

Keywords: Bogomilism; Pietism; Lutheranism; Counterreformation; Enlightenment; Gottfried Arnold; Johann Christoph Wolf; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz; Johann Gottfried Herder; Friedrich Schelling

Among the numerous discourses on Bogomilism from the post-Reformation period, until the present day only a number of Roman-Catholic sources has found attention among researchers: Nadia Miladinova's dissertation on the edition of the Panoplia Dogmatikē made in Târgoviște in 1710 places these sources in relation to Eastern-Orthodox discourses of that same period.[1] Due to Miladinova's focus on Roman-Catholic and Orthodox discourses the Protestant voices of the 17th and 18th centuries are only selectively dealt with.[2] Thus they remain largely unexplored to this day.

In our contribution we hope to offer the first overview and a tentative interpretation and contextualization of these sources. We will try to outline their main phases, identify their authors and contextualize their works within the history of ideas from the age of the Counter-Reformation, through the epoch of Pietism and the age of Enlightenment until the beginning of the epoch of Idealism. We claim that a thorough look at the Protestant voices on Bogomilism between the 17th and the early 19th centuries can show how closely the interconfessional debates on Bogomilism were related to the intellectual history of the European West between the late 17th and the early 19th century. The fact that the discussion of dualism and the reference to Bogomilism played a decisive role in the debates has in our view not yet be fully realized.

"Unjust parallels" – Counterreformation and Reformers on Bogomilism

In order to understand the context of the earliest Protestant voices on the Bogomils, it is imperative to recall the use Roman-Catholic polemicists made of some anti-Bogomil sources in their writings against the churches of the Reformation. As Miladinova has convincingly shown, the theological key-motifs of the Counter-Reformation discourse on the Bogomils and on Bogomilism were made available by Francesco Zini's (1520 – 1570)[3] Latin translation of Euthymios Zigabenos' Panoplia Dogmatikē,[4] Zini had introduced his translation as a guide for all those who wanted to refute the heresies.[5] The Oratorian church historian Cesar Baronius (1538 – 1607) was among the many who had followed Zini's advice: In his "Annales Ecclesiastici" Baronius had constructed a parallel between the medieval heresy described in the Byzantine sources and Protestantism as the key-enemy of the Catholic Church of the Counter-Reformation. In the final sentence of his passage on the Bogomils Baronius had stated that the burning of the Bogomil leader Basil in Constantinople was a punishment all "innovators" would deserve.[6] Following Baronius, Domenico Gravina (1573 – 1634) in his "Catholic prescriptions against heretics old and new" had listed the supposed parallels between the reformers and the Bogomils merging Lutheran with Calvinist and even Antitrinitarian references.[7] Still missing on the list of Protestant parallels with Bogomilism was the key-characteristic of the Bogomils, i. e. dualism. Catholic theologians such as Robert Bellarmin (1542 – 1621), Franciscus Feuardentius (1539 – 1610), Lorenzo da Brindisi (1559 – 1619), Jacobus Gretserus (1562 – 1625), Leon Allatius (1586 – 1669), or Natalis Alexander (1639 – 1724) repeated Zini and Bellarmin by representing Bogomilism and Protestantism in a similar way.

Among the protestant writers who rejected this sort of polemics was the Huguenot pastor Jean Chassanion (1631-1598) in his "History of the Albigensians", which he published in 1595 in Genva and dedicated to the Navarrese Prince Regent Cathérine de Bourbon (1559 – 1604).[8] While Chassainion's work was still indebted to biblical typology and relied on the rhetorical strategy of accusing its Catholic accusers,[9] a reformed theologian from the reign of Poland-Lithuania would be the first to combine the rejection of the "unjust parallels" with a new method of historical analysis.

When the reformed Benjamin Vigilantius (+1729) presented his apology at Marburg University in 1688 against what he considered to be "unjust parallels", he deplored the undifferentiated mixing up of supposed parallels drawn by the Catholic writers and exclaimed: "Who from among the righteous ones can tolerate, that cardinal Baronius … commented, all innovators who think like Basil, should be punished in a similar way."[10] Vigilantius underlined how unfair it was in his view to draw those parallels: Defamation and unjust parallels were

to be rejected, and, in accordance with the new order of knowledge introduced by René Descartes (1596 – 1650) and imparted to Vigilantius by the Cartesian Marburg professor Samuel Andreae (1640 – 1699), all available data were to be compared, while those, which did not fit into the chronological framework, were to be excluded. Vigilantius even tried to localize the phenomena he was describing, and thus was among the few Western writers who explicitly associated the Bogomils with "the Mysians, who are also called Bulgarians."[11]

Together with this methodological innovation Vigilantius followed a particular apologetic strategy: By asking "who would tolerate" the identification of Protestants and Bogomils, he emphasized the close connection between public safety and the avoidance of quarrels among the citizens. In some respect, Vigilantius insinuated, societies in France and in Poland, where previous toleration now seemed to give way to denominational claims to absolute religious authority, ran the risk of getting into internal conflicts.

Vigilantius' apology was dedicated to the Landgrave of Hesse, Karl (1670 – 1730), who had generously offered hospitality to the Protestant refugees from France. Since the main enemies whose views Vigilantius explicitly tried to reject were those Roman-Catholic polemicists, who had identified Protestantism and Bogomilism, we cannot tell if Vigilantius gained the attention of an audience beyond the boundaries of the Catholic church. It must remain in the sphere of speculation, whether Vigilantius, who wrote in a period when after the death of Patriarch Cyril Lucaris (1572 – 1638) two orthodox Synods were dealing with Lucaris' legacy, reached also an audience among Orthodox theologians, who undoubtedly were aware of Reformed Protestantism and its influence among Eastern Orthodox Christians.

A Pietist and A Lutheran View on Bogomilism: Gottfried Arnold from Gießen and Johann Christoph Wolf from Wittenberg on the Bogomils

Apart from these interconfessional discourses Protestant discourses on Bogomilism also fulfilled an internal, i. e. innerconfessional function in the late 17th and early 18th century. Parallel to the use of the Panoplia Dogmatikē in the debates on Jansenism which Miladinova has described for the Roman Catholic sphere,[12] Pietism had its own, still largely unknown history of reception of Bogomilism.

The Halle Historian Günter Mühlpfordt (1921 – 2017) was the first to show the key role of Gottfried Arnold (1666 – 1714) in this. Arnold, who had taken up the idea of a decline of ancient Christianity in the age of Constantine, from the Leiden church historian Friedrich Spanheim (1632 – 1701),[13] described the Bogomils as "true Christians", similar to the pietists of his own time, whom "the Orthodox" persecuted out of envy and impiety. Arnold accused the accusers of the Bogomils of "Ketzermacherei", i. e. the shameful attempt to "produce"

heretics.[14] Arnold had previously dwelled on the motif of shamelessness of the "orthodox" enemies of the unjustly condemned "true Christians" in his "First Love" in 1696.[15] For the first time we can identify the motif of dualism in the early modern discourse on Bogomilism in Arnold's defence of the Bogomils and his condemnation of the established confessions.

By underlining the partisan standpoint of the Byzantine sources on Bogomilism Arnold was the first to cast doubt on the credibility of the historical sources on Bogomilism. This did not mean that Arnold aimed to be "neutral". Rather for Arnold "impartiality" meant not to be partisan in the *confessional* sense. Arnold claimed that like the pietists of his days the Bogomils had been "pure Christians", whose enemies had invented and circulated all sorts of slander in order to damage their pious reputation. In a way Arnold thus came to affirm partially what the Catholic polemicists had said before him: there was indeed, Arnold claimed, a parallel between Bogomilism and Protestantism, but in contrary to the Catholic polemicists Arnold believed that both Bogomils and Pietists were "true Christians", faithful to the Gospel.

The fiercest responses to Arnold's equation of Pietism, Bogomilism and "true Christianity" did not come from the Catholic polemicists, but from Lutherans, among whom the Wittenberg philosophy professor Johann Christoph Wolf (1683 – 1739) wrote the most extensive contribution, which can undoubtedly be called the first monograph of Bogomilism: No longer trying to simply refute the accusations of his enemies but rather attempting to completely cover the phenomenon of Bogomilism Wolf's "History of the Bogomils" (published at Wittenberg in 1712) was something new, and the question it dealt with was a hot topic of its days: Already in his preceding monumental work on Manichaeism, Wolf had tried to relate to the contemporary discussions on the issue of human freedom, raised by Pierre Bayle (1647 – 1704) in his "Encyclopedia"-article on the Paulicians.[16] As with Arnold, also for Wolf, the question of dualism was pressing, as not only the pietists but also the radical enlightenment challenged the tradition Lutheran views on good and evil.

In his "History of the Bogomils" Wolf returned to the Greek text of Euthymios and dwelled on their name, their history and their customs. As Arnold had done before him, Wolf identified Bogomils and Pietists. But in contrast to Arnold according to Wolf Euthymios' testimony deserved credibility. Wolf underlined that Euthymios' testimony was corroborated by both Photios and Anna Komnene. Gottfried Arnold had "expressed the opinion that the majority of the accusations against the Bogomils were not based on true facts, but on the impotence or rather the wickedness of a mind influenced by the passions, and were to be attributed to the endeavour to make heretics."[17] Asserting the credibility of Euthymios by citing the concordant testimonies from other writers and realizing that "the objection consisted chiefly in the claim that the Bogomils

could never have approved of such absurd and utterly implausible notions"[18] Wolf embarked on the project of refuting Arnold "by showing that there were already people in the Church who set an example for the Bogomils and those, who follow in their footsteps are not lacking even now."[19] This resulted in a portrait of both Bogomils and Pietists as dualists.

By the means of a detailed comparison of the testimony of the medieval sources with the teachings and the life of Pietism Wolf intended to affirm the credibility of Euthymios arguing that the very phenomenon described by the Byzantine heresiologists could now be observed among the pietists. As in the case of Vigilantius, not only the theological and philosophical context of Wolf`s work, but also the political context of his work deserves particular mention: Whereas Vigilantius had in mind the decreasing tolerance of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom and the France of Louis XIV, who had revoked the edict of Nantes, Wolf's work is connected to the appearance of a new power within the theatre of early modern politics: As Brandenburg reached out to the expanding Russian empire of Car Peter the Great (1672 – 1725), Russia became a potential political ally and "Orthodoxy" could be identified not only with Lutheran confessionalism but also with the Russian state-religion.[21] Thus, Wolf's History of the Bogomils is also closely connected with the broadening of horizons in terms of international relations and not least with the emergence of what nowadays would be called Eastern Europe studies.

Wolf's work, which we plan to publish in a separate volume, also testifies to an important methodological innovation: In his attempt to give a complete overview, Wolf commented the Byzantine sources paragraph by paragraph using a copy of a byzantine manuscript from the Bodleian Library.[22] It was not by chance that on the 5th of October 1711 Wolf sent a copy of his work on the history of the Bogomils to the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1665 – 1716), who had earlier discussed dualism in his Monadology and critized Bayle's position on the Paulicians. Although Leibniz in his response dated 11th of December 1711 did not comment on the theological and philosophical arguments of Wolf's work, at least the philosopher felt confirmed in his assumption about the Slavic background of the Bulgarians.[23]

Enlightened criticism after Leibniz would return to the question already raised by Gottfried Arnold: Is Euthymios a reliable source? Wolf had asserted this and had emphasized the concordances among the Byzantine sources and also by highlighting what he supposed to be parallels between pietism and Bogomilism. The Göttingen theologian Johann Ludwig Oeder (1722 – 1776) scrutinized Wolf's work and, relying on the judgement of the Leiden Orientalist Adrian Reeland (1676 – 1718), who on the basis of the account on Islam in the Panoplia Dogmatikē had dismissed Euthymios as a reliable source, came to reject Wolf's view altogether.[24] Oeder painted a dark picture of Euthymios

Zigabenos' credibility, emphasizing Euthymios' questionable statements on Islam and the Armenian Church, which led Oeder to doubt Euthymios' statements on the Bogomils as well.[25] Dismissing Euthymios, Oeder claimed that anyone who believed Euthymios Zigabenos' information about the Bogomils must also believe the Counter-Reformation's polemics against Martin Luther.[26] Thus Oeder returned to Arnold's position, albeit with greater caution, ultimately describing the Bogomils, like Arnold had done, as predecessors of the Reformation.[27] Oeder in his turn was criticized by the Swiss pastor Johann Konrad Füesslin (1704 – 1775), who condemned Oeder as prejudiced.[28] Instead of Oeder's apologia for the Bogomils, their dualistic views were once again exposed as unacceptable by the Swiss pastor.

Views on the Bogomils from enlightened Riga and pre-1848 Berlin: Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schelling

A new perspective in the history of the protestant image of Bogomilism in the West was opened up by the poet and pastor Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803). In his "Ideas on the Philosophy of mankind" (written 1770 – 1773) Herder emphasized how in his view the non-conformist movements were rooted in popular piety and related to the self-understanding of the "ordinary" people: Bogomilism, Herder explained, "emerged from Bulgaria…Their quiet teaching, which preached nothing but human virtues, especially diligence, chastity and consecration, and set itself a goal of perfection to which the congregation was to be led with strict distinction, was the loudest field cry against the domineering abominations of the church."[29]

The idea that the heretics were not only simple and ethically upright, i. e. in Herder's terms 'natural' people who took offence at the 'human statutes' of the state churches can already be found in Arnold. But the pedagogical profile Herder attributed to the Bogomils, was something new. Drawing on the resources of the pedagogical optimism of the enlightenment Herder had no place for dualism, and declared the Bogomils to have been the first educators and formators of the people in their national language.[30] The Bogomils thus corresponded to Herder's enlightened ideal of the people's soul or people's spirit, which had less of a doctrinal and more of a pedagogical dimension.

Herder's thoughts on the Bogomils, who in terms of morals he imagined to surpass their contemporaries, were broadly popularized by people like his Riga compatriot, the revolutionary journalist Carl Gustav Jochmann (1789 – 1830), in his "Reflections on Protestantism" (Heidelberg 1826). But they also resonated with conservative minds like the Austrian monarchist historian Johann Christian Engel (1770 – 1814), who basically shared Herder`s emphasis on the importance of popular piety and combined this perspective with the emphasis on his understanding of Bogomilism as a revolutionary movement

similar to the ideas disseminated by the French armies in Europe during the French revolution and the times of Napoleon. It is telling that in his view the ideas of Bogomilism came into being among the crusaders, who had come to the Balkans – from France. Engel criticises the 'mental aberration' and 'unreasonableness' of the Bogomils and, with the idea that the Bogomils were influenced by the 'enthusiasm' of the Crusaders, obviously incorporates the contemporary experience of the European states of the ancien régime into his depiction, in whose territories the French revolutionary troops spread their subversive ideas to the horror of the old elites.[31]

When the philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775 – 1854) had first reflected on dualism in his master thesis of 1792, the Tübingen student in many ways was still thinking within the confines of his pietist upbringing.[32] Forty years later Schelling incorporated his representation of Bogomilism in the system of his late, "positive" philosophy. Again, in Schelling's system, there was no room for dualism. Moreover Schelling now took into account the historization of all thought and added the idea of progress – motifs which had also paved the way for Ferdinand Christian Baur's (1792 – 1860) seminal work on the historical Jesus.[33] What remained as a continuum in Schelling's thought and what contributed to the neglect of dualism within the thought world of the Bogomils was Schelling's emphasis on the principle of freedom: "Christ and Satan are related in such a way", Schelling claimed in his lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation, "that the Bogomils even called Satan the *elder* brother of Christ."[34] Schelling concluded, that Satan was neither a creature nor an evil principle, but rather related to the freedom of human will. In his reflections on freedom Schelling used the phrase attributed to the Bogomils in order to simply illustrate his own philosophical view on good and evil. The way in which Schelling presented his vision was a narrative about the historical development of the idea of revelation. It is not by chance that his contemporaries thought his approach to be both the fulfilment and the end of the discipline of philosophy's claim to be the leading science of the century.[35] After Schelling Bogomilism was primarily considered to be a historical phenomenon. In accordance with the liberal-protestant world view of his upbringing and many his contemporaries Schelling's system did not leave any room for a second, "dualist" principle.

Results

These protestant discourses on the Bogomils and their dualism led to both methodological and hermeneutical revisions: Starting out from the Counter-Reformation-view that Protestantism was identical with Bogomilism the "unjust parallelisms" were rejected by protestant theologians. Writing as a champion of Protestantism against political persecution in France and the threat of religious discrimination in the multiconfessional republic of Poland-Lithuania, Benjamin

Vigilantius closely followed the new methodology of Descartes of critical distinction between all phenomena he described. The successive generations represented by Arnold, Wolf and Oeder, while debating the question of credibility of Euthymios, all contributed to the central "enlightened" question of how to distinguish between reality and fiction within the literary sources. But at the centre of all these discussions stood the question of dualism, challenging the optimistic world view Leibniz had voiced in his Monadology. The next debate on Bogomilism, i. e. the discussions in the early 1830s, were no longer purely theological but rather saw religious historians and philosophers struggling with the topic of identity in terms of culture, language and nation.

The early modern Western discourses on Bogomilism selectively represented here thus did not only deepen theological and philosophical questioning, but were also closely related to the emergence of new philological and historical methods and tools for textual and historical research.

NOTES

1. Miladinova 2014. On the contribution and the focus of the study see also the review by Tchentsova 2015, pp. 327 – 332.
2. Miladinova 2014, pp. 156 – 157.
3. Miladinova 2014, pp. 163 – 168.
4. Miladinova, 2014, pp. 144 – 155.
5. Miladinova 2014, pp. 163 – 168.
6. Baronius 1605, col. 132D.
7. Gravina 1619, p. 676.
8. Chassanion, 1595, p. 51.
9. Chassanion 1595, pp. 13 – 14.
10. Vigilantius 1688, p. 4. For the context of the situation of Protestantism in the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom see Klint 2017.
11. Vigilantius 1688, p. 8.
12. Miladinova 2014, pp. 158 – 162.
13. Mühlpfordt 1995, pp. 205 – 246.
14. Arnold 1699, pp. 353 and 356; on the life and work of Arnold see Vogel 2021, 137 – 146.
15. Arnold 1696, pp. 430 – 431 and 460.
16. Wolf 1707.
17. Wolf 1712, A IV.
18 Wolf 1712, A IV.
19. Wolf 1712, A IV.
20. Wolf 1712, A IV.
21. Podskalsky 2000, p. 130.
22. Wolf must have used a copy of MS Fell 19 Bodleian Library Nr. 8707 (16. Cent.).
23. Leibniz 2020, 86 and 103.

24. Oeder, 1743, pp.7 – 8.
25. Oeder 1743, pp. 7 – 8.
26. Oeder 1743, pp. 7 – 8.
27. Oeder 1743, pp. 49 – 50.
28. Füeßlin 1770, 395 – 411.
29. Herder, 1892, 468 – 469.
30. Herder 1892, 468 – 469.
31. Engel 1797, 388.
32. Arnold 2008, 64 – 68.
33. Danz 2012, p. 39.
34. Schelling, 1993, p. 245 (italics in the original).
35. Rosenkranz 1843, p. 338.

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