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## THE OCCULT-ESOTERIC NATURE OF SOME BRANCHES OF CONTEMPORARY BOGOMIL DOCTRINE

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**Abstract.** The article presents the influence of occult-esoteric teachings on contemporary Bogomil doctrine and the shift in its principles from dualistic to dual. The aim of the study is to explore and outline the process of change and development of the Neo-Bogomil teaching in comparison with its medieval version. The subject of the study in this article will be the presentation of the process of transformation of the principles of the Neo-Bogomil teaching and its formation as an occult-esoteric doctrine.

**Methodology.** The research will employ the methods of theological analysis, comparative analysis, and the historical-comparative method. The main scientific contribution of the study lies in revealing the lack of internal unity within the Bogomil teaching and its transformation and development in modern times into an occult-esoteric doctrine.

**Keywords:** Bogomilism; dualism; duality; Middle Ages; Kingdom of Bulgaria; heresy

### Introduction

The core Bogomil teachings are characterized by features that align them more closely with ancient dualistic doctrines, while their connection to Christianity is merely superficial. However, a comparative analysis reveals the absence of identity in their usage, which places them outside the meaning, context, and significance of Christianity. At their core, dualism and Christianity are entirely different. The reason why dualistic teachings present themselves as “true Christians” lies in the strong societal position Christianity held in the early centuries.

Since today the doctrinal principles of Christianity are losing their significance in modern society, Neo-Bogomils replace and prefer to seek the foundations of Bogomil teachings in occult-syncretic ideas and doctrines derived from diverse and even contradictory teachings and practices.

A key method for attracting followers and justifying their existence is emphasizing the ‘Bulgarian origin of Bogomilism,’ all presented under the guise of false

morality, masked by the image of “love”, which primarily serves to justify their overtly anti-human principles and teachings that still disturb people.

### **Hypothesis**

The ongoing process identifies the Neo-Bogomil teachings and modern Bogomils into the esoteric-occult movements of Theosophy and Anthroposophy, as seen in figures such as H.P. Blavatsky, the Roerichs, and Rudolf Steiner. Neo-Bogomils adopt Rosicrucianism, Neo-Paganism, even witchcraft and spiritualism as sources through which they justify the existence of Bogomilism as an independent teaching. Evidence of this can be found in the ideas, concepts, and notions that modern Bogomils incorporate into their doctrine.

### **The Christian Doctrine of God, the World, and Man**

According to Christian teaching, God reveals Himself to us as God the Father, the Creator of heaven, earth, as well as of man – both the soul and the body. Evil does not have its own genesis; it is not created by God but exists in the will of angels and humans. The Word of God became incarnate and became man, took on flesh from the Virgin Mary, was crucified, and rose from the dead. Jesus Christ has a divine-human nature. The material and matter are not evil but are God’s creation. Man, in his entirety – soul and body – is subject to sanctification. These principles and teachings are derived in the context of the Christological, cosmological, anthropological, and moral teachings of the Church.

#### **The Neo-Bogomil Deity – The Universal Mind**

Damyan Pophristov introduces a new principle: everything is “dual.” This principle, according to him, explains the nature of the Neo-Bogomil deity – the Universal Mind. In this way, he establishes the Neo-Bogomil doctrine on the esoteric foundations of “the hermetic principles of Hermes Trismegistus,” the first of which is “The All is Mind; the Universe is Mental” (Pophristov 2018, p. 44). Albert Pike designates this deity with the term “Creator” (Pike 2022, p. 534).

The principle that introduces: the world is dual, i.e. dual in the unity of good and evil, as one principle, from which follows the acceptance of the principle of monism, in contrast to the dualistic principle, which accepts the existence of two eternally existing, equal principles that exist completely independently and in relation to antagonism. In this case, it is uncharacteristic of dualistic heresies, but not for the Bogomil doctrine. By placing the Bogomil doctrine on occult and esoteric foundations, which have nothing commonality with the original Bogomil sources. Damyan Pophristov invents a new pseudo-Johannine gospel, drawing from it his new formulas to substantiate a Neo-Bogomil dogma: “In the beginning was the dead point, and the primordial forces were only the Force of Creation and the Force of Destruction” (Pophristov 2018).

This principle or dogma, according to him, expresses the principle of division, of the creation of multiplicity through Male and Female energy, and the principle of Unity – or Involution and Evolution. As a conclusion to his insights, he states that “the concepts of ,good‘ and ,evil‘ are relative,” or he outright declares: “there is no ,good‘ or ,evil‘; they are simply another pair of forces that, in their polarity, represent a single phenomenon (Pophristov 2018, p. 49), which Damyan Pophristov defines as “dualism” or “polarization.” Pophristov justifies these reflections and conclusions based on the principles of Hermeticism: “Everything is dual; everything has two poles” (Pophristov 2018, p. 49). That is to say, “Everything is dual” (The Hermetic Principles – The Source of All Spiritual Teachings).

This teaching of his fully aligns with the occult doctrine of H.P. Blavatsky, who claims the same: “Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter must nonetheless be regarded not as independent realities but as two symbols or aspects of the Absolute, of Parabrahman, representing the foundation of conditioned Being, whether subjective or objective... For this reason, the Manifested Universe is filled with duality, which is the essence of its Manifested Existence. Namely, as opposite poles – subject and object – Spirit and Matter are merely aspects of the unity in which they are synthesized. Thus, in the Manifested Universe, there is ,That‘ which connects Spirit with Matter, Subject with Object.” (Blavatskaya 1993, p. 25)

This likely provides the basis for Pophristov to appropriate the symbol of the Bogomil doctrine – a point and a circle – from the false teachings of Helena Blavatsky (Blavatskaya 1993, pp. 18, 20).

However, this fundamental closeness of Pophristov to Blavatsky distances him from the dualistic heresy of Bogomilism, as in Bogomilism, evil is rejected as unacceptable, not as “a phenomenon” – that is, something equal to and, in a sense, necessarily coexisting eternally alongside good.

### **The Occult-Esoteric Nature of Modern Bogomilism**

In approaching the essence of the analysis, I will illustrate the development of the Neo-Bogomil doctrine through the work of one of its main proponents – Damyan Pophristov. He seeks the roots of Bogomil identity in occult-esoteric teachings such as Rosicrucianism, Orphism, the teachings of Anthroposophy, the teachings of the Roerichs (also known as Agni Yoga), and the Theosophy of H.P. Blavatsky.

D. Pophristov develops his ideas in numerous public appearances and primarily in his main work, *“From Mouth to Ear.”* His central thesis is that the Bogomils are the direct descendants of Orphism and Rosicrucianism (Pophristov 2018, pp. 241 – 242).

This thesis is clear evidence of the unacceptable and unfounded claim of any closeness or identity between the Bogomil and Christian teachings. At its core, modern Bogomilism remains a syncretic dualism, closely resembling the ancient heresies of Manichaeism and Paulicianism, which also proclaimed the Old

Testament God of heaven, the Creator of heaven and earth, as the evil god or Satan. These teachings regarded matter and humanity as creations of Satan, with the soul portrayed as an angel imprisoned within the dungeon of the body.

Comparing Bogomil and Christian teachings leads to the conclusion that the Biblical God is not identical to the two deities preached by the Bogomils. The same applies to the doctrine of the Son of God, who, according to the revelation of the New Testament, became incarnate, became man, was crucified on the cross, and rose again – Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

In its characteristics, the Biblical Christ is entirely different from the esoteric-occult Christ preached by the Bogomils.

### **The Influence of Theosophy and Anthroposophy on Modern Bogomils**

In approaching the essence of the analysis, I will illustrate the development of the Neo-Bogomil doctrine through the work of one of its main proponents – Damyan Pophristov. He seeks the roots of Bogomil identity in occult-esoteric teachings such as Rosicrucianism and Orphism. He is directly influenced by the teachings of Theosophy and Anthroposophy. He develops his ideas in numerous public appearances and primarily in his book *“From Mouth to Ear.”* His central thesis is that the Bogomils are the direct descendants of Orphism and Rosicrucianism.

This thesis is sufficient evidence of the unacceptable and unfounded claim of any closeness or identity between the Bogomil and Christian teachings. But how is Neo-Bogomilism changing in its essence, and why is it transforming its image?

### **Akasha and the Two Jesus Children**

The influence of Anthroposophy and Theosophy on the Neo-Bogomil doctrine is evident through the introduction of ideas by D. Pophristov. Such ideas include the concept of two Jesus children, described in the “hidden” unwritten “Fifth Gospel” by Rudolf Steiner, and the teachings of Theosophy by H. P. Blavatsky (Dyulgerov & Tsonevski, p. 370.). By introducing teachings that are completely alien to both Christianity and Bogomilism, Pophristov ultimately destroys the essence of Bogomilism itself. The contradictory terms and teachings, which are incompatible with Bogomilism, undermine its very meaning. A similar case is the concept of the “Merkabah,” which, according to D. Pophristov, is none other than the Star of Bethlehem! According to him, the energy of Christ’s Merkabah was so powerful that initially, two Jesus children were required (Pophristov 2018, p. 58.).

The origin of the idea of two Jesus children completely contradicts both Christian and Bogomil teachings and stems from “Akasha”, a concept introduced to the West through Theosophy and Anthroposophy. According to modern occultists, Akasha is one of the five elements and is equivalent to ether. It is said to contain the entire knowledge of humanity (Blavatskaya 1993, p. 131.). Blavatsky claims that the first to emerge is the Mother of Birth, Space, Matter, and Spirit. From Spirit emanates Akasha.

When introducing such absurdities, an internal contradiction immediately arises within Bogomil teachings themselves: how could Jesus Christ, who according to Bogomil doctrine did not incarnate (i.e., He had an illusory body), require a second Jesus child because one body could not bear the grace bestowed upon it?

Many more contradictions arise. Pophristov's attempts to prove completely nonexistent and unrelated ideas lead to confusion. On the one hand, the Virgin Mary is presented as an angel who is supposed to accept the energy of Christ, supposedly passing on an illusory and non-material flesh. On the other hand, the introduction of two Jesus children brings Pophristov back into contradiction with his own claims, as it remains unclear whether Jesus had a physical body or not. How many Jesuses were there? Was His body illusory? Which of the two Jesuses was born of the Virgin Mary, and how was He born, given that Jesus had an illusory body while Mary was an angel?

Even more striking is the claim: how could the son of the Universal Mind – the Bogomil god – not bear the Merkabah of his father, requiring a helper with a material body to be sent to him?

Pophristov's insights leave unanswered questions about who the second Jesus is. According to Rudolf Steiner, this second Jesus is a reincarnation of Zoroaster. We will not delve into Steiner's analysis, where he claims that this Zoroaster, after the twelfth year of the boy's life, moved into the second Jesus. In the same vein, theosophy, as developed by H. P. Blavatsky (from whom Steiner himself derives), makes similar claims.

Pophristov, in his revelations, informs readers that Dan Brown made a mistake by claiming that Mary Magdalene did not have children with Jesus Christ, as Jesus' body was etheric – i.e., illusory – while Mary Magdalene's body was not that of an angel. In this case, D. Pophristov becomes even more confused, as it remains unclear whether Dan Brown had also not heard of the two Jesus children and whether he might have meant the other Jesus, which, according to Pophristov's theory, is entirely possible!

### **Reincarnation and Karma**

The contradictions of contemporary Bogomilism do not end here. By rejecting the crucifixion and resurrection of the Savior, Pophristov states that, according to the Bogomils, "salvation means awakening within oneself the knowledge of the unity of the world, created with Love, and loving one's neighbor." (Pophristov 2018, p. 58.).

However, this statement contradicts the Bogomil doctrine, as the latter preaches the exact opposite idea: the world was created by Satan, including the human body, which is a prison for the angel trapped within it. Therefore, seeking unity between the material and spiritual worlds is fundamentally incompatible with Bogomil teachings.

In this way, Neo-Bogomilism introduces doctrines and teachings that are entirely contrary to authentic Bogomil beliefs. And if there is a resurrection for souls but not for bodies, yet another question arises regarding the resurrection of souls: where and how will they resurrect, given that the ultimate goal of every soul is to free itself from the prison of the body, which is a creation of Satan?

The introduction of ideas about reincarnation and karma into the Neo-Bogomil doctrine, in turn, negates both the moderate and extreme streams of dualism in Bogomilism. On the one hand, reincarnation and karma deny moderate dualism and the concept of resurrection; on the other hand, they also reject the extreme dualistic Bogomil doctrine, which upholds the eternal struggle between good and evil, between the material and the spiritual.

As a result, Bogomilism is replaced with Buddhism, Hinduism, or Theosophy and Anthroposophy.

### **The Problem of Evil – Dualism or Duality**

In the chapter titled “The Problem of Evil,” Damyan Pophristov presents his own interpretation of the Church’s teaching on evil.

The first question he poses is: “Why, if God created everything in heaven and under heaven, is it possible for evil to exist? (Pophristov 2018, p. 50.).

How does God allow evil?” Unable to answer this question, he accuses the Church of having “invented the devil, subdued Lucifer, and fabricated eternal torment – justifying, according to him, the theory of the role of the Devil and the Fallen Angels.” However, in doing so, he once again contradicts the Bogomil doctrine.

To resolve this new problem, he turns to the teachings of karma and reincarnation, which, according to him, eliminate the need for the devil, hell, and evil (Pophristov 2018, p. 51.).

Yet this also eliminates the need for the dualistic doctrine of Bogomilism, as his reasoning about karma and reincarnation renders the Bogomil concept of dualism meaningless. This necessitates the introduction of a new concept and term: “duality.”

In this new framework, good and evil are seen as eternally existing poles of all things, but this perspective effectively negates the distinction between good and evil. His teaching contradicts even the doctrines of reincarnation and karma because, if there is no good or evil and everything, including humanity, has a dual nature, then the very foundations of these ideas collapse.

This raises additional questions: if the Church invented Lucifer, the devil, eternal torment, and evil, why does “The Secret Book of the Bogomils,” unlike D. Pophristov, accept these concepts as real and existing?

### **The Pre-existence of Bees**

The absurd ideas and the evidence presented lead to complete nonsense, with arguments such as: „the little bee exists before the creation of the earth,“ which by its nature is a new absurdity.

### **Odin, Boyan Magas, and Christian Rosenkreuz**

And most unexpectedly for the Bogomils, Pophristov introduces the mythical-occult hero Wotan, who is connected with the mythological and ancient Germanic deity Odin. And Christian Rosenkreuz believes that he is the reincarnation of Boyan Magas. I will just remind the readers that such a religion was attempted to be revived by Adolf Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg ().

In the end, he admits that according to Bogomil legends and beliefs, the material world and man – his body – were created by Satan, since according to the testimony of Euthymius of Akmonia, the Bogomils accept only the sun and the human soul as creations of God.

To support his contradictory claims, he refers to a New Testament text and quotes the Savior: “Now is the prince of this world come” and the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-9.

From the aforementioned free reflections, he concludes that for the Bogomils, hell and heaven do not exist, as they are a life without love or a life with love here on earth. But then the author contradicts “The Secret Book of the Bogomils,” as it precisely preaches the existence of hell and heaven.

He defends the Bogomil teaching as having nothing to do with the service of the devil or demons, due to their dualism, since according to him, the Bogomils worshiped only and exclusively Christ – the bearer of the energy of Love, and thus he finds an unknown quote from the Bogomils: “We serve in the name of our inspirer, the Power of Creation...” but forgets what he wrote just a page earlier, where he himself says that both God and Satan create. But again, he forgets that the Bogomil books say nothing about Christ as a creative force. It’s good that when writing nonsense, the author should reread what he himself has written.

### **God of the Old and New Testament and the Rosicrucian God**

Damyan Pophristov seeks the origin of Bogomilism and Rosicrucianism in the common ideas and principles shared by the two teachings, the main one being the teaching of the Rosicrucians. According to him, Lucifer is the good god – the antithesis of the God of the Old Testament. This concept contradicts the very essence of Bogomilism. What is specific here is that the biblical view of the world is turned upside down, and Lucifer is accepted as the good god, while the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of man and the world, is declared the evil god – Satan. This marker becomes a common principle for some ancient Gnostics, Manichaeans, and Valentinians. By identifying the evil god with Yahweh, the God of the Old



Testament, they accept that the Creator of the World is the evil god – Satan. In this regard, contemporary Bogomils completely overlap their teachings with those of E. Blavatsky (Blavatskaya 1993), the Roerich family, Albert Pike, Anton LaVey, and others.

Evidence for the above can be found in the writings of Damyan Pophristov. In the chapter “Sacred Scriptures” of his book *From Mouth to Ear*, he praises the Bogomil teaching, which denies “the god of the Old Testament – Jehovah. For them, He is not the ‘Father’ of Christ, but the Demiurge of the Material World.”

The teaching on the existence of demiurges and eons directly links the new Bogomil teaching with ancient Gnosticism and modern occult teachings. For the Bogomils, Jehovah and the Father of Christ oppose each other, as “the matter of the spirit and the unclean – against the pure,” i.e., the God of the New Testament is the “Good God,” and the God of the Old Testament is the “Bad.” Damyan Pophristov accepts the Neoplatonist Marcion (Pophristov 2018, p. 78), as well as ancient ontological dualistic teachings (Pophristov 2018, pp. 238 – 239.), as sources of this doctrine, but upon careful analysis, the direct influence of contemporary teachings of Theosophists and Anthroposophists is evident.

Interestingly, Pophristov confirms the above by arguing that Jehovah is the evil God – the “bad” Demiurge of the material world. And thus, his accepted teaching that the world was created by Satan – the son of the Bogomil God – unifies his teaching with modern occult-esoteric and ancient Gnostic teachings. In this sense, contemporary Bogomilism imposes contradictory teachings, on the one hand, advocating extreme dualism, and on the other, introducing the doctrine of “duality,” a principle that negates it and is unacceptable to Christianity.

### **Who is Christ?**

Damyan Pophristov does not limit himself to pseudo-interpretations of biblical texts but constantly imposes the Bogomil doctrine, according to which Jesus Christ is the younger brother of Satan-Lucifer. However, he once again contradicts his own teachings by claiming that the Bogomil god – the world mind – learned from Satan that only the Son of God could break their cooperation agreement, between the Bogomil god and Satan, and that this son would be born of a virgin, who, according to the Bogomils, is an angel (Pophristov 2018, p. 56).

From Pophristov’s statements, it follows that Satan knows more than the universal mind, the very Bogomil god, i.e., his father, and therefore the father obeys the commands of his son—Satan, and thus another son is born, from a virgin?! Why a virgin, is Mary an angel, why does the universal mind – Bogomil god – need a woman to have a son, is unclear. All of Damyan Pophristov’s hermeneutic attempts are in a similar vein.

The aforementioned free reflections do not exhaust Pophristov’s attempts to engage with Christianity. He also delves into explaining some doctrinal issues. He



presents the beliefs of the Bogomils regarding the apparent incarnation of the Word, “similar to the Monophysites and Docetists,” but by writing such nonsense, he proves that he is unfamiliar with the Monophysite, Christian, or Docetic teachings, or even the teachings of the Bogomils, and instead invents his own doctrine, which he likely received “whispered” from some hidden Bogomil.

He continues in the same vein, declaring the apparent incarnation of Christ and states that His body was “Light.” The problem is that he does not clarify which of the two children of Jesus had the light body, as supposedly the merkaba was too strong and could not incarnate in one body?!

He presents some new Bogomil insight on the “accidental mistake,” according to which the Bible translation originally read: “And God created man in the image and likeness – of His nature, not in His image and likeness.” (Pophristov 2018, p. 57) But if this is true, it follows that the body of man was created in the likeness of God’s nature, but from this follows that the body is not evil by nature, as God’s nature should not be evil! This claim is complete nonsense and shows his complete incompetence. He then concludes: therefore, Christ is the manifested Divine Essence. It is unclear how the conclusion that man was created “in the image and likeness of his nature” leads to the conclusion that Christ is the manifested Divine Essence. And if Lucifer is the brother of Christ, then he is also an emanation of God. From this follows that Satan is also a deity, and good and evil are emanations of the new Bogomil deity – the universal mind.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the subject of this study – the transformation process of the Neo-Bogomil doctrine and its development into an occult-esoteric tradition – as well as on the resolved tasks and achieved objectives, the main hypothesis is confirmed: there exists a process that reinterprets and separates the Neo-Bogomil doctrine and contemporary Bogomils from the principle of dualism, steering them towards the esoteric-occult doctrines of Theosophy and Anthroposophy.

The main findings of the study are as follows:

By comparing the Bogomil and Christian teachings, it becomes evident that the Biblical God is not identical to the Universal Mind – the new deity propagated by the Neo-Bogomils. This distinction is particularly pronounced in the doctrine of the Son of God: according to the New Testament, the Word incarnates, becomes human, is crucified, and resurrects (1 Cor. 8:5-6). In contrast, the Neo-Bogomil doctrine introduces the concept of two children named Jesus – an esoteric-occult interpretation that has no equivalent in traditional Bogomilism and Christianity.

The Neo-Bogomils introduce a number of concepts foreign to both authentic Bogomil and Christian teachings, such as reincarnation, karma, dualism, Akashic records, and the veneration of pagan deities like Odin. They also rehabilitate practices such as witchcraft (e.g., the ability of a person to take on the form of a wolf) and

draw ideas from occult-esoteric currents such as Anthroposophy and Theosophy. This reveals a lack of originality and internal coherence in Neo-Bogomil beliefs.

The most radical aspect of the Neo-Bogomil doctrine is the introduction of the Neo-Bogomil deity – the Universal Intelligence/Mind – from which both Lucifer and Christ originate as two opposing yet interconnected principles. This transforms Neo-Bogomilism into a form of covert Satanism, which seeks to replace the Biblical God – the Creator of heaven and earth – with a new false concept of divinity.

Equating good and evil and presenting them not as opposing forces in constant conflict but as two equal “poles” of existence undermines the ontological and moral foundations of both Christianity and classical Bogomilism. This leads to the erasure of the boundaries between good and evil and ultimately nullifies the essence of the Bogomil doctrine – addressing the problem of the existence of evil.

In conclusion, the Neo-Bogomil teachings are characterized by numerous internal contradictions, conceptual inconsistency, and the mechanical amalgamation of various doctrines without clear structure or coherence.

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