

AN INTRODUCTION TO A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS ZIGABENUS' ACCOUNT ON BOGOMILISM^{1,2}

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Abstract

The emergence of new dualistic movements in Europe, which claim continuity from the medieval Bogomilism, gives rise to the actual problem of the doctrinal specifics and the commonalities with related dualistic heresies in the Balkans. This, in turn, poses the problem of the analysis and systematization of the corpus of data on the Bogomils and other dualistic heresies, as well as the comparative dogmatic analysis of the diverse evidences contained in this corpus. In an isolated corpus of data, an attempt will be made to apply and verify some methodological presuppositions of comparative dogmatic analysis aimed at establishing criteria of similarity and a comparative methodological prototype for differentiating commonalities and specifics between Bogomilism, Paulicianism, and Massalianism. The sources are limited to the emblematic author systemizing the three main dualistic heresies in the Balkans in his *Panoplia Dogmatica*—Euthymius Zigabenus.

KEYWORDS: dualistic heresies, Bogomilism, comparative studies, Euthymius Zigabenus

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Introduction

It is a well-known fact that today, in the XXI century, there are renewed attempts and claims for the revival of the Bogomil doctrine in a contemporary context that retains the name of the medieval heresy—the “Neo-Bogomils”. The emergence of the Neo-Bogomilism in Bulgaria and Europe, which claims continuity from the medieval Bogomilism, sets a new perspective to the study of the dualistic heresies, a new context and motive for their research, bringing forward the actual problem of the identity of the heretical movement and teaching, its boundaries and specifics, as well as its relations with the established notions of the medieval dualistic heresies on the Balkans.

The present text is an introduction to future attempts of demonstrating comparative methodology—in broad strokes and on the basis of very limited texts—to derive a common comparative methodological prototype for distinguishing between the various dualistic heresies in the Balkans, whose distinction is often blurred and problematized in the analyses of their respective specifics and internal logics. The research methodology involves the delineation of stable dogmatic nuclei in several axes or categories, which are grouped, combined, mutated, or contrasted with analogous elements of another system (another dualistic heresy, a variation in a different context, etc.). Such an approach allows for the systematization and prospective analysis of future implementation of computer technologies and eventually contributes to bridging Comparative Theology and Digital Humanities. Indeed, interdisciplinary research in the field of spiritual heritage has been enriched in recent years by new methods and tools, setting extremely promising work directions, such as big data, neural networks, AI, etc. Such approaches have been successfully applied in history research, Slavic studies, classical philology, philosophy, and theology³.

A comparative study of doctrinal or “dogmatic” cores and structures in medieval dualistic heresies should, at a later stage, establish valid criteria of similarity between Bogomilism and other dualistic heresies, based on persistent perceptions and variations of these core structures. Establishing a classification and a research system by following these criteria and methodology should ensure a more complex understanding of the relationships and

3 Two eloquent illustrations of this phenomenon are currently being observed—the large multi-year European project RESILIENCE, building a modern informational infrastructure (<https://www.resilience-ri.eu/>), and the following compendium, which shows examples of the integration of information and communication technologies, even in the conservative scientific field of theology: Nunn, Christopher Alexander, and Frederike van Oorschot, eds. *Compendium Computational Theology*. Vol. 1: *Introducing Digital Humanities to Theology*. Heidelberg 2024. <https://doi.org/10.11588/heibooks.1521>.

oppositions within dualistic heresy systems. One major thesis that could be criticized or verified is the idea of Bogomilism as an original Bulgarian medieval dualistic synthesis incorporating elements of Paulicianism⁴ and Massalianism. This, in turn, poses the problem of the analysis and systematization of the corpus of data on the Bogomils and other dualistic heresies⁵, as well as the comparative dogmatic analysis of the diverse evidences contained in this corpus.

This text, which is a preliminary part of a larger study on Bogomilism and its sources, is an attempt to define methodological guidelines which should unveil an alternative perspective on the exploration of the doctrinal identity of the three main medieval dualistic heresies in the Balkans—the Bogomils, the Paulicians, and the Massalians. The problem concerns the doctrinal identity of dualistic teachings in comparative terms, insofar as the name refers to a specific content: what is the perspective and the methodology through which one could attempt to describe the doctrinal identity of medieval Bogomilism? The research field of the comparative study will be centered around an isolated corpus of data, including a set of topoi from homonymous sources (*Panoplia Dogmatica*), to which we will try to apply some of the methodological premises of comparative dogmatic analysis, explicated here, and aimed at establishing the criteria of similarity between Bogomilism and the other two heresies mentioned, based on a content analysis of their doctrine—insofar as these sources are reflections on Bogomilism, and not original Bogomil texts themselves.

The text proposes an attempt to formulate methodological premises on which a comparative methodology will be built through a structural–relational approach, quantitative methods, content analysis, and a classification of ideas in the system of dualistic doctrines. This involves the identification of stable dogmatic kernels in multiple axes or directions that ultimately interact with each other—grouping, combining, mutating, or opposing analogous elements of another system—another dualistic heresy, a variation in a different context, etc. Such an approach would allow for the systematization and ability to analyze large data structures, and ultimately deploy big data processing tools or Artificial Intelligence pertaining to various topoi from diverse sources, such as Holy Scripture, historical sources, research,

4 The following study focuses on the Paulician establishment and presence in the Balkans and their subsequent influence over Bogomilism: D. Penkov, I. Yovchev, *Essence and Ways of Infiltration of the Paulician Heresy in the Medieval Bulgarian Lands*. *Studia Ceranea*, 14, 2024, p. 71–84. <https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.14.20>.

5 The following edition contributes to the corpus of Slavonic and Greek sources on medieval dualistic heresies in the Balkans: G. Minczew, M. Skowronek, and J. Wolski. *Średniowieczne herezje dualistyczne na Bałkanach: źródła słowiańskie*. Series Ceranea I, Łódź: Ceraneum 2015; G. Minczew, A. Maciejewska, J. Wolski. *Średniowieczne herezje dualistyczne na Bałkanach: źródła greckie*. Series Ceranea II, Łódź: Ceraneum 2023.

polemical and critical literature, multimedia, etc. In our case, we will attempt to demonstrate this approach by analyzing portions of perhaps the most systematic medieval treatise on heresies belonging to a single author, Euthymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia Dogmatica*, but also *Narratio*, which is the prototype of the later text on the Bogomils in *Panoplia Dogmatica*, tit. XXVIII. This engenders convenience insofar as the systematizing mind of the author is one, and the juxtapositions become more clearly delineated. Such an approach would enable us to extract new, additional data from the known corpus, with the possibility of developing the methodology in the direction of incorporating secondary literature (other groups of sources, critical literature, etc.) and reconciling the data into a unified system. The advantage of such an approach, which rests on a big data analysis, would be the discovery of contradictions and inhomogeneities that can further illuminate for us the question of the doctrinal identity of Bogomilism and other dualistic heresies. The scant secondary critical literature presented here makes no claim to exhaustiveness—it is merely illustrative in view of the methodology employed.

Axes and Criteria of Identification

The experimental methodological prototype proposes a division of content into four main categories or axes that contain a hierarchy of dogmatic types (dogma–types). The core dogma types are defined by a dogmatic content analysis that follows themes from the sources and reflects the mindset of an author such as Euthymius Zigabenus, but also the valid dogmatic discourse for today’s theological and historical scholarship. The self–problematization of this dogmatic approach and language and its validity in analysis and dialogue with a non–dogmatic paradigm⁶ will be hinted at in the course of the future study.

The extensive topic of the origins of Bogomilism and its polemical image is not discussed here, as it is a separate subject of research. The present text employs a polemical source—*Panoplia Dogmatica*—rather than an original one, insofar as Bogomil sources do not “speak” the language of dogmatic theology, being formed more like a parable. Concurrently, the present experiment must acknowledge the limitations of the method’s applicability to the historical reality of medieval heresies, considering the polemical image constructed for them in Byzantine and Old Bulgarian literature. Consequently, the criteria of Orthodox dogmatic theology persist in serving as a taxonomic instrument, operating as a coordinate system for the differentiation and

6 Cf. Екзарх Стефан, *Богомилите и презвитер Козма*, София 2012, p. 68–9.

analysis of doctrine, as well as for the establishment of similarities. The concepts of dogmatic theology and the utilization of categorization persist as a valid common “language” that facilitates an analytical, interpretative, and epistemological bridge between contemporary theology and medieval systematic thought. This is how dogmatic theology facilitates comprehension of Euthymius Zigabenus’ comparative perspective on dualistic heresies, reflected in the structure of his text.

A delimited corpus of data, such as selected portions of Zigabenus’ *Panoplia Dogmatica*, should comprise an experimental corpus. An attempt should be made to apply a research methodology to the three main dualistic heresies in the Balkans—the Bogomils, the Paulicians, and the Massalians. This methodology involves the delineation of stable dogmatic cores in several axes or strands, followed by their grouping, combination, mutation, or contrast with analogous elements. Small structures of relevant neural dogmatic cores should serve as intermediate, being small and stable enough to be universally found, yet partial and insufficient without structure and context. This model could define homogeneous prototypes of theological constructions that participate in different existing models and are subject to comparative analysis. We could evaluate the levels of comprehensive structures containing dogmatic atomic cores within a context of relations defined by language, culture, etc. This could be demonstrated through an analysis of dualistic heretical teachings that follows the dogmatic criteria of Orthodox Theology as an axis of categorization of dualistic heretical teachings in the Balkans.

The four main axes we would like to define here are related to four main strands of dualistic ideas. The first has to do with creation—cosmogony, cosmology, and eschatology (A). The second (B) has to do with the particular view of triadology, Christology, and ecclesiology. The third (C) focuses on rational creatures and their fall—angelology, anthropology, and hamartiology. The fourth (D) is concerned with praxis—socio-ethical views, the structure or hierarchy of the community, and its functional features. As will become apparent from the discussion below, these axes are conditional and illustrative, serving the more general categorization of ideas following classical dogmatic models. Changing the configuration of these axes would lead to an alternative presentation of the results—something that could be the subject of future experiments. Ultimately, it is the lower-level structural cores—the dogmatic cores or types—that are decisive to our research. The next step should be the identification of the nuclei of the “dogmatic types”. A single source, for instance, the *Panoplia Dogmatica*⁷, may contain various core or

7 Euthymius Zigabenus, *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio*, [in:] G. G. Ficker, *Die Phundagiiten: ein Beitrag zur Ketzengeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1909; Eu-

foundational dogma–types that function as the “common ground” or “node” of a dualistic system that are contained in the class (or set) of guiding axes. For example, class A (the axis of creation) may contain types of dogma such as the basic dualistic premise of the existence of two deities (A1) who create two worlds (or aeons) for their domains (A2): this world–aeon (earth) is the creation of an evil demiurge (A3) and heaven is the creation of a good god (A4), etc.

The narrative of dualistic systems could be represented in a generic synopsis that links the set of persistent dogmatic types⁸ and refers to the set of topoi⁹ and relations¹⁰. The cross–sections between the relations of the dogmatic types can indicate to us persistent patterns of identification that explicate the commonality and specificity between the dualistic synopses¹¹ and synapses¹² of the system. Thus, dogmatic types can be grouped and referenced to specific topoi and build networks and structures¹³ that can be analyzed and visualized, including advanced data processing tools, for example, AI data visualization tools. Of course, such an analysis and representation are too big a task in perspective, so in the future research, we will attempt and demonstrate the proposed methodology, without claiming completeness and depth of results.

A Brief Synopsis of the Main Dualistic Doctrines

Here we shall attempt a preliminary analysis of the main prefixes and types which make up the general synoptic picture of the three related teachings in Zigabenus. First, we should make some initial qualifications about the

thymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia dogmatica*, [in:] *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, vol. CXXX, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1865.

- 8 Persistent basic doctrinal cores that support for certain propositions or form logical connections and structures with other similar kernels in a doctrinal (dualistic) system, e.g., the idea of an evil creation, matter as evil, denial of material forms of worship and veneration, etc.
- 9 E.g., primary (sources) and secondary (critical literature) topoi in which reference or reflection on a given dogmatic type–core occurs.
- 10 Relationships within the doctrinal system or with elements of another system (sources), relationships with topoi from Holy Scripture, and relation to statements of various authors (secondary literature).
- 11 More general narratives or “plots” of a homogeneous dualistic system that unfolds the characteristic internal relations between the stable nuclei of the system.
- 12 Connections, intersecting nodes of the system, representing important nuclei (dogmatic types) that carry out relations with other synapses–nuclei of the “neural network” of one’s own or another dualistic system.
- 13 Complex structures – databases – of connected graphs that form elements of a neural network, cf. *Compendium of Computational Theology*, Glossary, “Graph Database”, p. 467.

language in which we express the dogmatic types. How should we refine the dogmatic language and treat the dualistic system, since very often different systems represent various languages for expressing an idea or doctrine? In this present attempt, it is posited that the fundamental language employed is rooted in dogmatic theology and history, as evidenced by its establishment within the confines of the scholarly literature. In this sense, we use terms such as triadology, Christology, etc. On the other hand, the dualistic system of the Bogomils often uses irrelevant concepts and relations, which we will try to name here by means of dogmatic neologisms that try to name the essence of the idea correctly—in this sense, we use the term generative economic ontology, etc.¹⁴

A – COSMOLOGY

1. There are two deities—a good and evil one¹⁵.
2. There are two worlds (two aeons):
3. This world is the creation of the evil demiurge¹⁶:
 - a. the earth was born of darkness and fire¹⁷;
 - b. Time (this aeon) belongs to the evil deity¹⁸;
 - c. earth is the topos of the renegades from heaven¹⁹.
4. Heaven is the creation of the good deity²⁰:
 - a. the future belongs to the good deity²¹;
 - b. heaven is controversial (or even belongs to the evil one?)²².

The first part of the reconstructed general dualistic system includes the axis of cosmogony (A), which is almost entirely developed in the Paulician sources. In it, we observe a fundamental divide, a dualistic hiatus between good deity's creation—heaven—which even in some versions of dualism is

14 When naming the ideas of dualistic systems, we will take the liberty of disregarding the orthography of capitalization when referring to divine names in order to distinguish between the Orthodox perception and the dualistic system, e.g., “the good god”, “the evil deity”, “the word of the spirit”, etc.

15 PlcZPD.2, cf. BgmZNR.n16 – Zigabenus' comment on the influence of Paulician cosmology over the Bogomil one.

16 PlcZPD.24; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 91.

17 PlcZPD.25,27.

18 PlcZPD.27.

19 BgmZNR.n8.

20 PlcZPD.27.

21 PlcZPD.27.

22 PlcZPD.28.

contested (as good belonging to the good deity, see A4b), and on the other hand the earth, which belongs to the evil principle (A3), sometimes understood as the topos of the angels who fell from heaven (A3c). The two levels of creation correspond cosmologically to the two aeons (A2), respectively to the present which refers to the evil aeon (A3)—the earth created in darkness and fire (A3a)—and the future one which refers to heaven (A4a).

B – TRIADOLGY, CHRISTOLOGY

1. The non-omnipotence of the good deity: power is limited by the being of evil²³:
 - a. Limiting the power of the first hypostasis only to heaven²⁴.
2. A generative economic “ontology” (triadology–christology–economics)²⁵;
 - a. Seamless variability of hypostases and nature²⁶;
 - b. Quasi–Sabellian understanding in triadology²⁷;
 - c. Doctrine of the word–birth: the son, the word of the father, and the spirit, the word of the son²⁸;
 - d. The three–face transfiguration—a doctrine of the image²⁹.
3. The variability of the divine nature and union by nature of the deity and creatures (souls):
 - a. Docetic Incarnation³⁰;
 - b. Instrumentalization of the virgin³¹;
 - c. Proverbial clarification: the word is seed (parable of Sower)³² ; outpouring of the word (cf. Ps. 44)³³;
 - d. The genealogy of the word (Jesse Tree) continues in the souls of the righteous³⁴; cf. rejection in the Paulicians³⁵;

23 BgmZNr.15.

24 PlcZPD.4; cf. A.4b.

25 BgmZNr.1,2,3,31.

26 MasZPD.3.

27 MasZPD.2; BgmZNr.33; cf. Д. Ангелов, *Богомилството в България*, София 1961, p. 111–12.

28 BgmZNr.n23.

29 BgmZNr.n24.

30 BgmZNr.9,10,n20; PlcZPD.5,6,7; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилиите...*, p. 94.

31 PlcZPD.5,6,7; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилиите...*, p. 87.

32 MasZPD.4.

33 BgmZNr.n18.

34 BgmZNr.20,21.

35 PlcZPD.11.

- e. “The Word” equated with Arch. Michael; the different names³⁶;
- f. Economy as sacred drama (Docetism)³⁷; the son taking the place of the fallen angel (the right side of the throne³⁸ – cf. C2ci);

We could observe some of the basic premises of the second B axis derived here. The omnipotence of the divine good being is limited to heaven (B1a) and earth remains the domain of evil. The trinitarian being itself is conceived economically as a ‘generative’ ontology (B2) that allows for mutability (B2a) and at the hypostatic level, the persons merge quasi–Sabellian (B2b) into an ‘economical’ triadology that conceives of the word as a generative principle—the son is the word of the father, and the spirit is the word of the son (B2c). Generative mutability is also inherent at the natural level: divine nature itself is capable of fusion with the human soul, of various economical incarnations (B3). The latter suggests a convergence between divine nature and word and hence an interfusion of the divine nature–word with human nature and soul. The generative economical ontology is interesting in its proposal for a period of generation that goes far beyond mere divine action and links triadology to christology, and divine being itself to incarnation, which is thought docetically (B3a). The “generative” economy continues in the generation of the just and the saints through the very birth of the incarnated word, the genealogy according to the flesh (the tree of Jesse), to continue in the saved elect born after the spirit (B3d).

The docetic incarnation (B3a) is logically linked to the instrumentalization of the virgin mother (B3b), and on the other hand is explained through the parable of the Sower as the seed of the word that has settled on good soil, the virgin womb–heart that listens to the word (B3c). Insofar as the economy itself in the dualistic system has to do with liberation and the return to divine substance, this Docetism is intelligible both at the level of Christology–incarnation and at the level of anthropology.

C – ANGELOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, HAMARTIOLOGY

1. Dualistic angelology:
 - a) The evil demiurge is the son of the good god (parable of the Prodigal Son)³⁹:
 - i. the disinherited one⁴⁰;

36 BgmZNR.n19; cf. Д. Ангелов, *Богомилството...*, p. 110; G. Minczew, *John Chrysostom's Tale on How Michael Vanquished Satanael – a Bogomil text?* *Studia Ceranea*, 1, 2011, p. 40–43. <https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.01.03>.

37 BgmZNR.n21.

38 BgmZNR.n22.

39 Cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 77,92.

40 BgmZNR.4,5.

- b. Rebellion and the Fall of the Angels⁴¹;
 - c. The evil deity is the Unjust Steward, clothed with the image of god⁴²;
 - d. Darkening after the Fall (= union with Eve): devoid of divine image but retaining power by the good god's will⁴³.
2. A dualistic anthropology:
- a. man as a common creation of the good and evil deity⁴⁴:
 - i. The Fall due to envy of the divine creation (Eve)⁴⁵; the abduction of the divine creation⁴⁶; the murder and persecution of Adam's seed by the "children of the devil"—Cain⁴⁷ (cf. Proto-Gospel of Gen. 3:15);
 - b. The innate evil of man by nature (by creation)⁴⁸:
 - i. Adam's nature (the body as evil)⁴⁹;
 - ii. An innate demon dwells in every person by birth (inhabits and inspires man)⁵⁰;
 - iii. Baptism does not cleanse from evil⁵¹;
 - iv. Prayer alone cleanses from evil⁵²;
 - v. After the purification comes the residence of the holy spirit⁵³;
 - vi. No need for sacraments after the purification⁵⁴;
 - c. Man and angel—likeness and substitution:
 - i. Men's vocation is to assume the place of the fallen angels (through the agency of soul's divinity)⁵⁵, but only few succeed due to the tyranny of the evil deity⁵⁶;

41 BgmZNr.n5,n6.

42 BgmZNr.n5,n7; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 94.

43 BgmZNr.n15.

44 BgmZNr.6,7,8,n10,n11; cf. Ангелов, *Богомилството...*, p. 106; Ангелов et al., *Богомилството в България, Византия и Западна Европа в извори*, София 1967, p. 86.

45 BgmZNr.n12.

46 BgmZNr.n13; cf. Ангелов, *Богомилството...*, p. 108; Ангелов et al., *Богомилството...*, p. 101–2, 194–5.

47 BgmZNr.n14.

48 MasZPD.6; BgmZNr.n9.

49 BgmZNr.6,n9; PlcZPD.17.

50 BgmZNr.24, MasZPD.6.

51 MasZPD.5,6.

52 MasZPD.6.

53 MasZPD.7.

54 MasZPD.7.

55 BgmZNr.19; cf. Ангелов, *Богомилството...*, p. 105.

56 BgmZNr.n17.

- ii. The man–word–god relationship: the god–pleasers are “theotokoi” (“god–bearers”)⁵⁷—begotten the word of god in themselves (parable of Sower) and “children of God” (John 1:12), not “children of the devil” (cf. 1 John 3:10);
- iii. Death is the stripping of the clay body⁵⁸.

The dualistic anthropology (C2) itself is based on the thesis of man as the joint creation of a good and evil deity (C2a). Man is an encounter and contract point, a boundary between the two deities, a form of communion between them, occupying the cosmological place between heaven (through the soul—C2c) and earth (through the body—C2b).

The evil domain in man is the body (C2bi), which is defined as the creation of the fallen angel devoid of sonship (C1ai). Hence, inherent in every man is an original evil, an evil spirit that accompanies the Adamic inheritance by nature (C2bii). The *topoi* give no definition of a change in the status of the fallen nature.

The bright “angelic” side of man and his nature is, of course, the soul, which is associated with the word and god. It is through the soul that man is related to and is like the angels (C2c). Man is angel–like, and as such, a more special salvation is appointed for him—man is called to replace the fallen angels and to fill the number of angels fallen from heaven (C2ci). In such a sense, salvation can be interpreted as a “locus soteria” or substitutionary salvation filling the cosmological domain of angels—a very difficult task due to the tyranny of the evil deity on earth (C2ci).

This salvation is possible only as deliverance from the evil world and aeon, not externally, not in an external way through the sacraments and rites, that is, through the privation of matter, which is evil (D2, D3a, C2biii,vi), but only in an “inwardly spiritual” way (D1), usually through prayer and the expulsion of one’s inner demon from the body (C2biv). Only then would the dualistic ascetic become a god–pleaser who defines himself as “born of god” and “god–bearing”—that is why the Bogomils call themselves “theotokoi”, claiming they have conceived the word of god within themselves (C2cii). In this sense, prayer is the way. The Our Father (D1b), which is shown to us docetically by the incarnate word, who comes and seemingly incarnates in a body in order to liberate man from the tyranny of evil by rejecting the corporeal and the evil spirits that dwell in him. Only then may the soul return to god and reside angelically in heaven, taking the places of the fallen angels (C2ci), something that is fully accomplished in the stripping of the clay body in death (C2ciii).

57 BgmZNr.24,25.

58 BgmZNr.26.

D – PRAXIS

1. True “spiritual” worship and service:
 - a. Rejection of the Old Testament as a deed of the evil demiurge⁵⁹;
 - b. Prayer—only the “Our Father” (identity)⁶⁰;
 - c. Only it is good which is intelligible⁶¹.
2. “Spiritual” reinterpretation of the sacraments and practices, rejecting the “false” ones:
 - a. Communion is “spiritual”: the word, the last supper, the chalice⁶²;
 - b. Baptism is “spiritual”: word, heavenly fire, consolamentum⁶³;
 - c. Prayers are counsels, church is catholic⁶⁴;
 - d. Indistinguishability of priests⁶⁵.
3. A false and seeming ministry of the necessary evil:
 - a. Material temples and worship seen as idols⁶⁶;
 - b. Necessary worship of dark forces and miracles⁶⁷;
 - c. Crucifixion as evil: reverence is only for the body, which is evil⁶⁸;
 - d. Rejecting the worship of the Cross⁶⁹.
 - e. The seamless mutability of the dualistic ethos:
4. An ethos of justified deceit, hypocrisy and licentiousness, wicked living (cf. D3)⁷⁰; seamless swearing and denial⁷¹, but rejection of the renouncer ap. Peter⁷²;

59 BgmZNr.17,18; PlcZPD.11.

60 BgmZNr.27 and MasZPD.1. In relation to the issue of identity Bogomil foundations are referenced by Zigabenus as Massalianism (BgmZNr.n1), and their teaching designated as “ancient word” and “theology” (BgmZNr.n3), while Paulicians are identified through their history and churches (PlcZPD.1) and naming conventions: “Romans”(i.e., Orthodox) versus “Christian”(i.e., Paulician), cf. PlcZPD.3.

61 PlcZPD.26.

62 BgmZNr.13; PlcZPD.8; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 87,97.

63 BgmZNr.28; PlcZPD.10,14.

64 PlcZPD.13.

65 PlcZPD.20.

66 BgmZNr.11,12,14,17a; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 97.

67 BgmZNr.15a,22,24.

68 BgmZNr.15; PlcZPD.17.

69 PlcZPD.9,21.

70 PlcZPD.23; BgmZNr.16,29,32,36.

71 PlcZPD.12; MasZPD.9.

72 PlcZPD.11.

- a. Apparent orthodoxy to cover up and deceive (even mock)—reception of sacraments (baptism, eucharist)⁷³; false veneration of the cross⁷⁴, baptizing their children⁷⁵, while still not accepting the official priesthood⁷⁶; deceptional imitation of clergy⁷⁷;
 - b. Non-dogmatism and anti-dogmatism (even among themselves)⁷⁸;
 - c. Two levels of initiation – external (partial) and internal (full teaching)⁷⁹.
5. A method of allegorical apologia⁸⁰.

The way to salvation, then, comes through the “spiritual” and “true” worship and service to the good god (D1). This means rejecting evil, which includes rejection of the Old Testament as a deed of the evil one (D1a). This also involves reconsidering the sacraments and economy in a purely “spiritual” perspective (D2), especially communion (D2a) and baptism (D2b). There is, however, another parallel way, the path of false worship, which turns out to be a necessary(!) evil practiced in the dualistic system (D3). Hence, the way of behaving, the ethos can be dualistic, and a necessary dualistic one at that, allowing for wickedness, or else deception, crypto-confession of dualism, seeming acceptance of dogmas, sacraments, and rites; a kind of mirror image of the mirror world of evil, which legitimizes evil itself, as an evil reaction to that same evil. Therefore, we should not be surprised at the practice of the apparent veneration of the cross (D3c), worship and icons (D3b), even though the latter are denied as evil (D3d, D3a). The sacramental life is also imitated—baptism, communion, monasticism, etc. (D4b). Non-dogmatism and anti-dogmatism are valid reactions even among members of the dualistic community themselves (D4c). The apologetic method is an allegory, a parable, a fable, as paralogical tools for the appearance of otherness (D5).

73 BgmZNR.n2; PlcZPD.18.

74 PlcZPD.15; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 97.

75 PlcZPD.16.

76 PlcZPD.19.

77 MasZPD.8; cf. Оболенски, *Богомилите...*, p. 98.

78 PlcZPD.22; cf. Екзарх Стефан, *Богомилите...*, p. 68–9.

79 BgmZNR.n4,30.

80 BgmZNR.34–65.

Topics and a Brief Attempt at Analysis

In its final version, this methodological stage should link the identified dogma–types to specific topoi that contain references to them—primary sources or secondary literature (commentaries, research, criticism, etc.). This should ensure the integration of the references into an indexed system, which can provide further analysis and research details. To demonstrate the experimental methodological framework, we present here an attempt at a brief analysis from the limited sample of primary topoi—the sources of Euthymius Zigabenus:

1. Cross–reference accumulation to topoi from different systems.

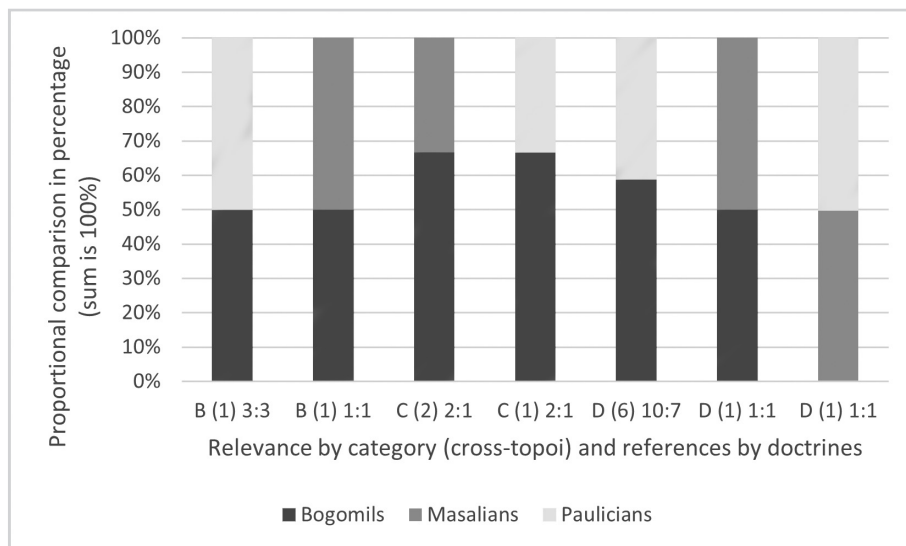
On the B–axis, a harmonic crossing of Bogomil (3) and Paulician (3) topoi is observable, as well as Bogomil (1) and Massalian (1). It is similar on the D–axis, where 6 topoi of intersection of Bogomil (10) and Paulician (7) references take place, and much less in the C–axis (2 Bogomil and 1 Paulician). Similarly, we find little crossover between Bogomil and Massalian topoi in the C–axis (2:1) and in the D–axis (1:1). A single overlap between Paulician and Massalian is noticeable in the D–axis (1:1). This analysis could indicate us the areas and cores of overlap and influences between the different systems:

- a. The greatest overlap between Bogomils and Paulician is found along the B– and D–axes;
- b. A weak overlap of Massalians is observed along the D–axis, both with Bogomils⁸¹, and with Paulicians⁸², exposing the category of praxis as a common place for all of the three systems (cf. fig. 1);
- c. The most definite overlap is to be observed along the B–axis, where the intersecting topoi between Bogomils and Paulicians (3:3) are concentrated in one dogmatic synapse core, the theme of the docetic incarnation (B3a)⁸³.

81 MasZPD.1, BgmZNr.27 – practicing only the Our Father prayer as a common place of identity.

82 PlcZPD.12, MasZPD.9 – the seamless denial of faith to outside members can be seen as a characteristic manifestation of the dualistic ethos.

83 BgmZNr.9,10, n20; PlcZPD.5,6,7.



2. Clusters (synapses) of homogeneous references to topoi.

Along the B-axis, an accumulation of Paulician (3 in B3a)⁸⁴ and Bogomil (4 in B2)⁸⁵ is found. On the C-axis, an accumulation of Bogomil (13 in 5 places, most in C2a—5 pcs.)⁸⁶ and Massalian (2 in C2biii)⁸⁷ was observed. On the D-axis, the highest number of Bogomil (7 in 3 places, most in D3a⁸⁸, 4) and Paulician (2 in D3d)⁸⁹ were encountered. This analysis has the potential to provide a framework for the accumulation of ideological charge in specific points (cores):

- a. The Bogomil topoi exhibit a high degree of concentration along the C-axis, predominantly centered on the concept of man as a dualistic creation;
- b. This observation aligns with the predominant focus observed among the Massalians on the notion of immanent evil in man, suggesting a convergence of beliefs between these two groups;
- c. Secondly, on the B- and D-axes, an analogous harmonization of the Paulician topoi is noticeable, concerning the themes of

84 The topic of docetic embodiment – PlcZPD.5,6,7.

85 The generative “economical” ontology – BgmZNR.1,2,3,31.

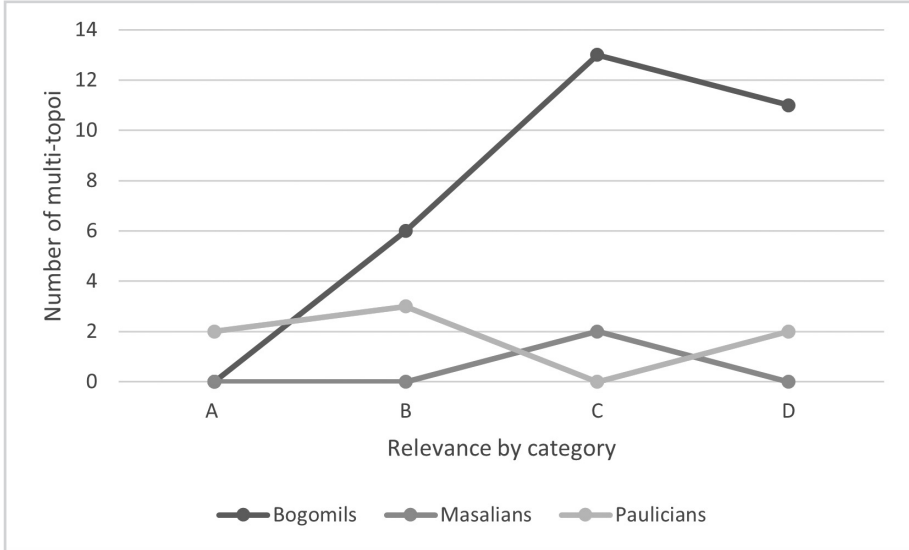
86 The theme of man as the common creation of good and evil deity – BgmZNR.6ii,7,8,n10,n11.

87 The notion that baptism does not cleanse from evil – MasZPD.5,6.

88 The perception of material temples and worship in the key of idolatry – BgmZNR.11,12,14,17a.

89 The refusal of reverence to the Cross – PlcZPD.9,21.

the docetic incarnation of the word and the refusal of reverence for material symbol–actions as a phenomenon of evil (cf. fig. 2).

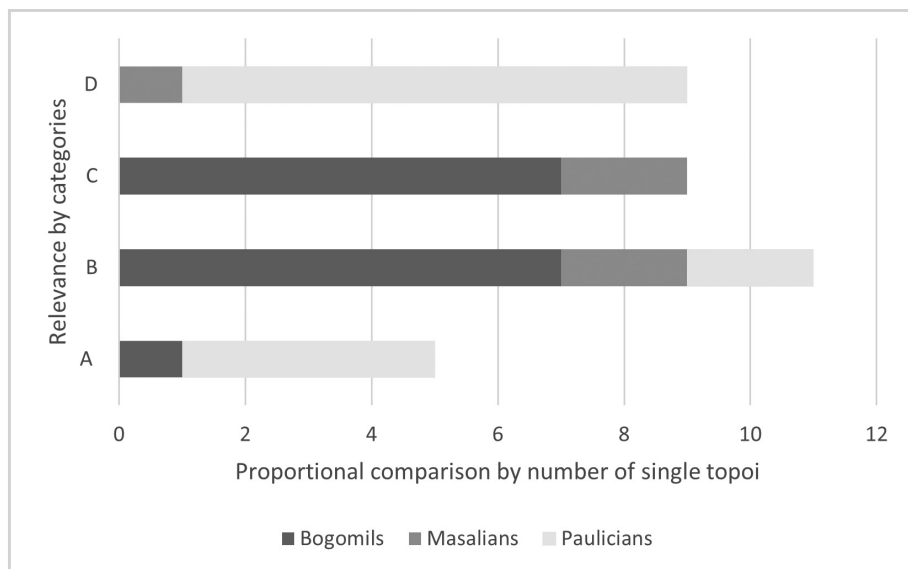


3. Single topoi that do not refer to others.

The cosmological axis (A) is dominated by single references to Paulician topoi (4), at the expense of only one Bogomil. An analogous recourse is observed in the axis of praxis (D), where 8 Paulician topoi stand against 1 Massalian. Conversely, in the B- and C-axes, a harmonious proportion is observed—a concentration of Bogomil (7 and 7) and a lower saturation of Massalians (2 and 2), at the expense of Paulician (2 and 0). This could express part of the unique (as unrelated topoi) specificity of the doctrines:

- a. Paulicianism is specific in cosmology (A) and praxis (D), while Bogomilism and Massalianism in economical (B) and anthropology–angelology (C) axes (cf. fig. 3);
- b. Paulicianism has no unique manifestation in axis C, in contrast to D, where it is mostly present;
- c. Bogomilism exposes highest degree of specificity among the three dualistic doctrines, exhibiting unique topoi in almost all axes;
- d. However, the most specific Bogomilism is found on axes B and C. The category that is richest in terms of specificity and diversity of dualistic conceptions is category B, which exhibits its unique topoi of all three dualistic doctrines;

- e. What is more, an opposition is observed along the same axis in B3d, concerning the possibility of righteousness and sanctity, especially in the Old Testament⁹⁰.



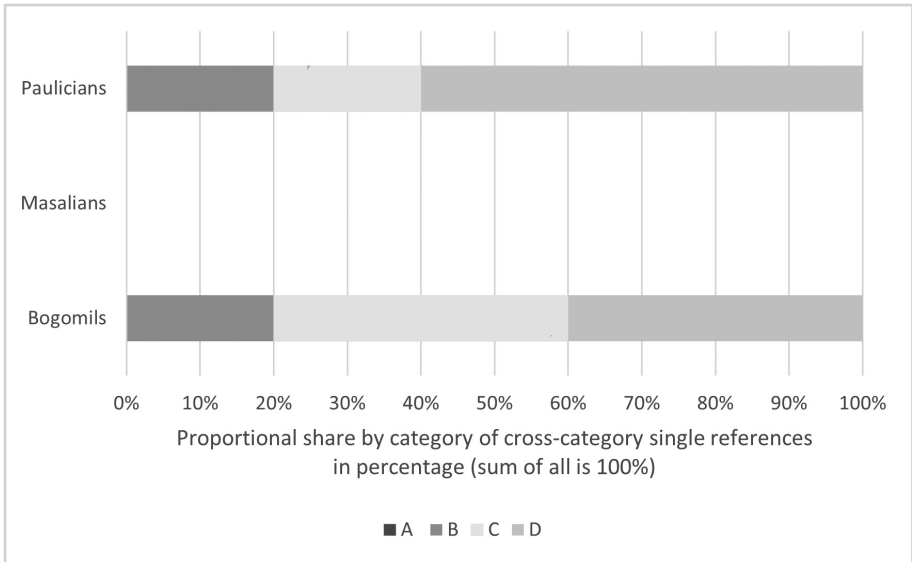
4. Single topoi that refer to different categories and dogma-types.

The Bogomil topos BgmZNr.15 links dogmatic kernels in a B1–D3c hybrid type, crossing with PlcZPD.17 (D3c–C2bi) in D3c⁹¹. The other Bogomil topos (BgmZNr.24) describes a D3b–Cbii–C2ii relationship, and the Paulician (PlcZPD.11) a B3d–D4a–D1a relationship. This analysis has the potential to identify characteristic threads that may link the diverse components of the teachings:

- a. There is an analogous distribution of cross-references: 2 Bogomil and 2 Paulician, connecting in a similar way the cores along the B→D and D→C axes, which also confirms a certain proximity and overlap with the center of the D-axis cores;
- b. The connecting node in both doctrines appears to be the dualistic praxis associated with mutability (D4a) and the apparent service of necessary evil (D3b) (cf. fig. 4).

90 While the Paulician idea rejects sanctity of Old Testament righteous ones (cf. PlcZPD.11), the Bogomil idea aspires sanctity to the forefathers of Christ, named in the Genealogy of Matthew (Mt.1:1–25) and Luke (Lc.3:23–38); cf. BgmZNr.20.

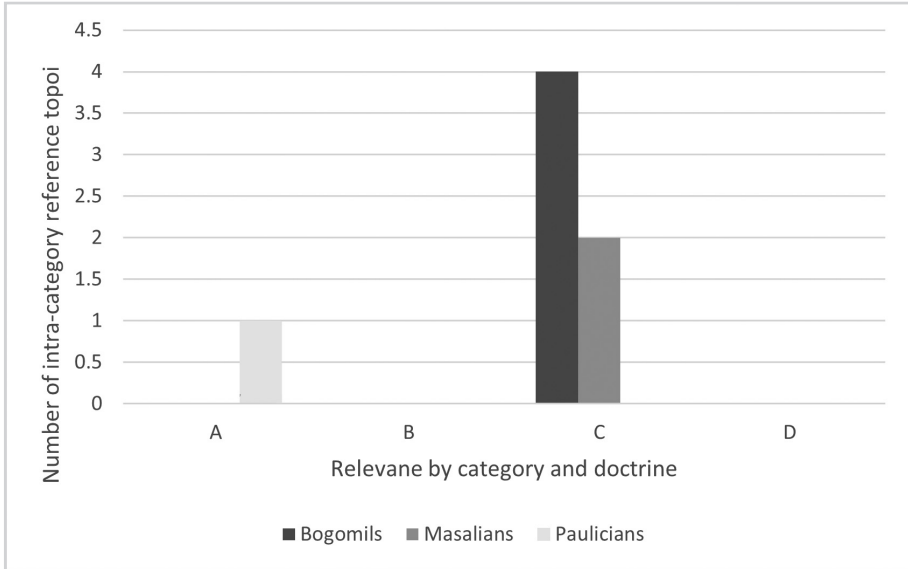
91 Both topoi concern the necessary veneration of evil material entities or cults, because of their allowed being by the good deity (BgmZnr.15) or their effective energy over the bodily realm (PlcZPD.15).



5. Single topoi that refer to other dogma–types of the same category, creating internal sequences.

The Paulician topos PlcZPD.27 links three cores of category A—A3b, A4, A4a. Four Bogomil topoi in category C create sequences: Cbii–C2cii (BgmZNr.24), C2a–C2bi (BgmZNr.6), C1b–C1c (BgmZNr. n5), C2b–C2bi (BgmZNr.n9), and two Massalians as follows: C2bi–C2bii–C2biii–C2biv (MasZPD.6) and C2bv–C2bvi (MasZPD.7). This analysis has the potential to reveal fundamental kernels for the various dualistic heresies that establish a dominant character within the respective axis category:

- a. The Paulician topos of the good creator god in heaven alone (PlcZPD.27) consolidates the cosmological structure along the A–axis;
- b. The four Bogomil topoi consolidate the dualistic angelology (BgmZNr.n5, n9) and anthropology (BgmZNr.6,24) centered around the idea of the creation of man by the fallen angel (C2a), and the dual indwelling of man by god or demons (C2b) (cf. fig. 5).



A Small Summary Analysis Attempt

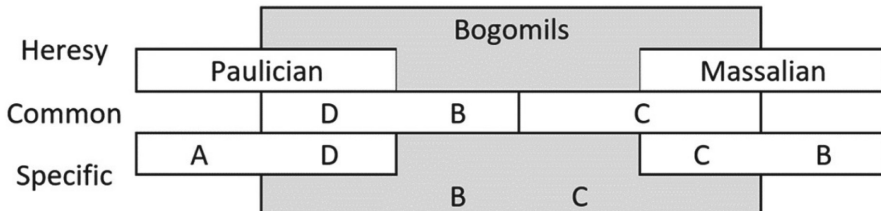
This paper does not claim to provide a final conclusion or summary, as it is merely a methodological experiment in an isolated environment. However, we could try to draw some general conclusions from the brief analyses presented so far.

Paulicianism displays a high degree of specifics in the category of cosmology (analysis 3a). The Paulician topos of the good creator god only in heaven (PlcZPD.27) consolidates the cosmological structure along axis A (analysis 5a). Bogomilism reveals similarities mainly with Paulicianism along axes B (most categorically through the idea of docetic incarnation), and D (most notably through the emphatic rejection of the veneration of material symbols and actions) (cf. analyses 1a,c; 2c). As a key connecting node between the two heresies appears the dualistic praxis associated with mutability and apparent service to a necessary evil (cf. analysis 4b). Secondly, similarities with Massalianism emerge, which are, however, substantial and accentuated along axis C—the dualistic creation–immanent evil (see analysis 2a,b).

The specifics of Paulicianism lie in cosmology (A) and praxis (D), while Bogomilism and Massalianism manifest their specifics in economy (B) and anthropology–angelology (axis C) (analysis 3). Along axis C, four Bogomil topoi consolidate the specifics of dualistic angelology (BgmZNR.n5,n9) and anthropology (BgmZNR.6,24) around the idea of the creation of man by the

fallen angel (evil deity) and the dual habitation of man by god or demons (analysis 5b).

Bogomilism seems to borrow and build upon dualistic ideas mainly from Paulicianism (quantitatively), but also from Massalianism (in terms of significance), forming a puzzle-like web combining and upgrading ideas from both dualistic teachings, which can be simplified as follows.



Instead of a conclusion: dogmatic self-reflection and a look ahead

This attempt to produce a methodological prototype for the comparative study of dualistic heresies employs dogmatic language and a systematic approach. Can we, however, derive at all a homogeneous and consistent dogmatic system describing the beliefs and teachings of the Bogomils in relation to other dualistic teachings in the Balkans? The question arises as to how relevant the dogmatic approach is, given the Neo-Bogomil neglect of dogmatism as a valid principle of Bogomil identification. A classical methodology presupposes a systematization of dogmatic structures of ideas and doctrines, relationships and hierarchies that are subject to classification. Often, this means a reduction of a multi-layered system to rows of related kernels (dogmatic ideas and predicates) that are subject to classification and comparison. Is this applicable and relevant, however, in the search for the answer to the question of what exactly is Bogomilism—its identity and relationship to other dualistic medieval heresies? The systematic approach purports to describe the dogmatic nature of the phenomena, while the environmental context remains the priority of a cultural-historical approach. Such phenomena as dualistic doctrines function differently in different contexts and cultures, in which the semantics of gestures and words should not be underestimated for the sake of authentic interpretation.

The following questions must be posed: how should unequal cultures and doctrines be compared, and how can we be sure to comprehend their dualism correctly? Is it possible to examine the concept of a cultural history and anthropology of dualistic cults from a critical perspective? If compara-

tive methodology presupposes a particular “translation” of cultural–historical phenomena into a dogmatic network and a universal “language”, how can we describe the limits of this “translational” approach? Consequently, the present study may be perceived as a form of digital inquisition. The question, therefore, arises as to how a reductional translation may be conducted in a valid manner, and whether it is possible to analyze a system as a set of ideas—such as types, kernels and relationships—without thereby losing its holistic character and meaning? Furthermore, the issue of anti–systemic otherness and transcendence is raised. The question to be answered here is how a methodological system can describe a movement and doctrine that is nowadays declared “non–systemic”? Moreover, it is important to consider whether systemic characteristics that prove and describe anti–systematicity are even possible.

The issue of identification is also associated with the differentiation between narratives, both textual and pictorial, which are attributed to and concerning the Bogomils. How should then conflicting or alternative “evidences” be handled? Is there a monolithic Bogomilism at all or variations of “Bogomilisms”, or variations of “languages” and “symbols” of Bogomilism occur? The posing of such inquiries gives rise to novel perspectives on the issues of interpretation and the authenticity of the corpus of artefacts, texts, symbols, and images pertaining to the history of dualistic heresies, particularly that of Bogomilism.

This paper constitutes a preliminary sketch and an exploratory attempt at formulating an approach, namely the design of a system that has the potential to incorporate the methods and tools of Artificial Intelligence. The system is intended to facilitate the successful description of contextual relationships, thereby contributing to the synthesis of materials pertaining to the history and identity of Bogomilism and other dualistic heresies. The generation of large datasets is required, and these may include references to topoi of primary and secondary literature, or language patterns from machine content analysis, organized into various data structures and models, such as neural networks, for example. This would provide flexible tools for comparative analysis, establishing stable patterns and criteria, content classification and verification, establishing the degree of homogeneity of data systems, and relationships. Consequently, the present research endeavor constitutes a preliminary step towards the integration of Artificial Intelligence in the study of Bogomilism, encompassing both its historical tradition and contemporary manifestations. The proposal made here is that the delineation of innovative methodologies for the future study of historical Bogomilism would provide a relevant basis for comparison and analysis of contemporary Neo–Bogomilism and its identifications.

Reference of the topoi

BgmZnr = EUTHYMII ZIGABENI, DE HAERESI BOGOMILORUM
NARRATIO (in: Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten*):

No.	Axis	Reference
1	B	95:5–12
2	B	95:13–17
3	B	95:18–20
4	C	95:21–24
5	C	95:25–27
6	C	95:28–31
7	C	96:1–5
8	C	96:6–8
9	B	96:12–13
10	B	96:14–18
11	D	96:19–28
12	D	96:29–97:5
13	D	97:6–10
13	D	97:10–13
14	D	97:14–20
15	B	97:28–34
15a	D	97:21–28
16	D	97:35–98:9
17	D	98:10–12
17a	D	98:13–20
18	D	98:21–28
19	C	98:29–99:8
20	B	99:9–15
21	B	99:16–22
22	D	99:23–29
23	D	99:30–100:4
24	C	100:5–10
25	C	100:11–14
26	C	100:15–20
27	D	100:21–27
28	D	100:28–101:7
29	D	101:8–12

30	D	101:13–24
31	B	101:25–29
32	D	101:30–34
33	B	102:1–8
34	D	102:9–11
35	D	102:12–13
36	D	102:14–16
n1	D	89:2–3
n2	D	90:5–7
n3	D	91:13
n4	D	91:15–17
n5	C	91:24–92:4
n6	C	92:3–4
n7	C	92:5–9
n8	A	92:9–16
n9	C	92:16–24
n10	C	92:24–29
n11	C	92:29–32
n12	C	92:32–34
n13	C	92:34–93:3
n14	C	93:3–6
n15	C	93:6–12
n16	A	Migne PG CXXX, 1300 C1–3
n17	C	93:12–15
n18	B	93:16–22
n19	B	93:26–30
n20	B	93:30–33
n21	B	93:33–94:5
n22	B	94:7–9
n23	B	94:9–12
n24	B	94:12–22

PlcZPD = EUTHYMII ZIGABENI PANOPLIA DOGMATICA, TIT. XXIV, ADVERSUS PAULICIANOS (in: Migne PG CXXX):

No.	Axis	Reference
1	D	1191–92
2	A	1193 B9–C1

3	D	1193 C1–3
4	B	1193 D1–4
5	B	1193 D6–12
6	B	1196 A1–5
7	B	1196 A6–7
8	D	1196 A8–A12
9	D	1196 A13–B1
10	D	1196 B1–2
11	D	1196 B3–10
12	D	1196 B12–C3
13	D	1197 A5–9
14	D	1197 A10–14
15	D	1197 A14–B2
16	D	1197 B3–5
17	D	1197 B5–9
18	D	1197 B9–12
19	D	1197 B12–14
20	D	1197 C1–6
21	D	1197 C6–10
22	D	1197 C11–14
23	D	1197 D1–7
24	A	1200 tit
25	A	1200 A1–2
26	D	1200 A13–14
27	A	1200 B8–10
28	A	1200 B10–13

MasZPD = EUTHYMII ZIGABENI PANOPLIA DOGMATICA, TIT. XXVI, ADVERSUS MASALIANOS (in: Migne PG CXXX):

No.	Axis	Reference
1	D	1273 B2–C3
2	B	1273 D9–12
3	B	1276 A5–8
4	B	1276 B6–7
5	C	1276 C13

6	C	1277 A12–B5
7	C	1277 B5–B11
8	D	1288 C5–10
9	D	1289 C1–5

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Sažetak

UVOD U KOMPARATIVNO–TEOLOŠKI PRISTUP ZIGABENOVU PRIKAZU BOGUMILSTVA

SAVA SHTONI KOKOUDEV

Pojava novih dualističkih pokreta u Europi, koji pretendiraju na kontinuitet sa srednjovjekovnim bogumilstvom, otvara aktualno pitanje doktrinarnih posebnosti, kao i srodnosti s povezanim dualističkim herezama na Balkanu. Time se nameće potreba za sustavnom analizom i sistematizacijom postojećega korpusa podataka o bogumilima i drugim dualističkim pokretima, kao i za komparativnom dogmatskom analizom raznorodnih svjedočanstava sadržanih u tom korpusu. Na izdvojenom i metodološki omeđenom korpusu izvora nastoji se primijeniti i verificirati određene metodološke pretpostavke komparativne dogmatske analize, s ciljem uspostavljanja kriterija sličnosti te oblikovanja komparativnog metodološkog modela za razlučivanje zajedničkih i specifičnih obilježja između bogumilstva, pavlikijanizma i masalijanizma. Analiza se temelji na ograničenom skupu izvora, usmjerenom na paradigmatškog autora koji u djelu *Panoplia Dogmatica* sustavno izlaže tri glavne dualističke hereze na Balkanu — Eutimija Zigabena.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: dualističke hereze, bogumilstvo, komparativna istraživanja, Eutimije Zigabn

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